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“A Critique of Anthropocentric  
Environmental Ethics”

by

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Ph.D. in Philosophy

Submission Date: 30/09/00



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## Declarations

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I, Jonathan Rimmer, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 98150 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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## Abstract

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*In recent history the relationship between humankind and the natural environment is a story about the unregulated progression of human beings at the expense of nature. Human advancement has brought the natural world to its present state of decay and disintegration. It may be thought then that a human centered ethic is simply inimical to the values and aims of environmentalism. However, this presupposition is deeply unreflective. There is not a necessary tension between the interests of human beings and the natural world. If human beings were to desist from present over consumptive practices and return to a way of life more harmonious with nature, then, at least on the face of it, there is good reason to think humankind and nature could flourish together. There is then the possibility that an enlightened human centered ethic of nature could meet the demands of environmentalism. The following work is an examination of that possibility. Can anthropocentric environmental ethics provide an adequate ethic of nature?*

*My approach to this question is particular in its manner. The thesis is primarily about the structure of anthropocentric ethics of the natural environment. The first part of the dissertation is an attempt to build a particular structure on the basis of those elements that are fundamental and central to anthropocentric ethical theory—a conception of nature, conception of human being, conception of interests and a conception of value. The aim is, given the basic elements listed, to produce the most theoretically advantageous account of the anthropocentric position. It will be theoretically advantageous in the sense that such a form of anthropocentrism, on the face of it, has the ability to accommodate certain intuitions that are central to an adequate ethic of nature—nature is non-instrumentally valuable, etc. I will call this account “the best possible defense” of anthropocentrism or by its other name “sophisticated anthropocentrism”. The result will be a human centered (rational human persons), non-speciesist, non-instrumental ethic of the natural environment.*

*The second part of the thesis will be, in the first instance, negative. I will look at two versions of the sophisticated anthropocentric ethical position. The first account will incorporate the aesthetic into its structure to produce sophisticated anthropocentric aesthetic protectionism. The sophisticated anthropocentric aesthetic will fail because it cannot ultimately account for the non-instrumental value of certain processes fundamental and central to the continued existence of nature. The second account will be more straightforwardly moral. However, it too will fail. First, it will be argued that the sophisticated anthropocentric view, though an improvement on previously existent human centered non-instrumentalisms of nature, cannot, in long run, meet the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable in a morally appropriate manner. Second, it will be argued that limiting the scope of morality (those to whom duties are owed) to rational human persons, a conception of the moral club central to the sophisticated view, is ultimately morally unacceptable because of those organisms that it excludes—non-rational members of the species *Homo sapiens*. The attempt to rectify this problem, it will be argued, in structural terms always facilitates a collapse into a form of non-anthropocentrism. As a result, the thesis is that anthropocentric*

*ethics, enlightened or unenlightened, cannot provide an adequate ethic of the natural environment.*

*The outcome of the thesis will not be totally negative. It will become apparent in the progression of the dissertation that an alternative environmental ethic is at hand. The alternative ethic, though sketched in brief in the final moments of the thesis, will keep what is most appealing about the anthropocentric story, discarding those elements that are theoretically disadvantageous. The outcome will point to a ratiocentric non-anthropocentric ethic of nature.*

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## Introduction

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In a report by the World Resources Institute it is claimed that “The past 100 hundred years have brought unprecedented gains in many of the indicators that we use to gauge progress in human development, from life expectancy to per capita income to education.”<sup>1</sup> It is a fact, in the given areas, that human beings have advanced and progressed. However, the progression of humankind is not without its cost. In the same report we are informed that:

“During the same period, however, human impact on the natural world has risen dramatically as the scope and intensity of human activities has increased. Although there has been progress recently in tackling air and water pollution problems in some countries, many negative trends, such as the loss of tropical rain forests and the build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, continue unabated.”<sup>2</sup>

In support of the above-mentioned finding the *United Nations Environment Programme Global State of the Environment Report* lists several relevant areas of concern<sup>3</sup>. First, “The use of renewable resources-land, forest, fresh water, coastal areas, fisheries, and urban air-is beyond natural regeneration capacity and therefore unsustainable”. Second, “Natural areas and the biodiversity they contain are

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<sup>1</sup> *World Resources Institute Research Center: Report on Global Trends*, (1999).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, (1999).

<sup>3</sup> The following four quotes are taken from *Global Environmental Outlook: United Nations Environment Programme Global State of the Environment Report*, (1999).

diminishing due to the expansion of agricultural land and human settlements.” Third, “The increasing, pervasive use and spread of chemicals to fuel economic development is causing major health risks, environmental contamination, and disposal problems.” Finally, “The complex and often little understood interactions among global biochemical cycles are leading to widespread acidification, climate variability, changes in the hydrological cycles, and the loss of biodiversity, biomass, and bioproductivity.” If the scientific data is correct, and the interpretation of that data is accurate, then we have a story about the unregulated progression of *mankind* at the expense of *nature*.

It may be thought then, given the catalogue of ecological malpractice described above, that it is simply inappropriate and almost paradoxical to attempt to base an ethic of the natural environment, in some shape, manner or form, on human beings. Nevertheless, in the following sections of this introduction, I want to suggest that an ethic of nature based on human beings is not straightforwardly ill conceived and, in principle, misplaced. In other words, I want to suggest that the subject matter of this thesis, anthropocentric environmental ethics, is still worthy of critical examination.

However, before I can make this suggestion more concrete I must provide a description of the anthropocentric position. I will start with the context that such a view is set in—environmental ethics—before I move to the nature of anthropocentric ethics itself.

## **Environmental Ethics**

The notion of an anthropocentric environmental ethic is set against the wider background of environmental ethics. What is environmental ethics? In his book, *Respect for Nature*, Paul Taylor writes:

“Environmental ethics is concerned with the moral relations that hold between humans and the natural world. The ethical principles governing those relations determine our duties, obligations and responsibilities with regard to the Earth’s natural environment and all the animals and plants that inhabit it.”<sup>4</sup>

We see then that environmental ethics lays an emphasis on a particular kind of relationship, the ethical relationship between human beings and the natural environment. But, this is not the end of it. The nature of a relationship is determined in part by the notion of value. Environmental ethics, in its attempt to determine what the relationship between human beings and nature ought to be, is concerned with values. Is nature to be valued merely in terms of use? Does nature have value that extends beyond the notion of instrumentality? Does nature have value that is independent of human beings? Do some parts of nature have more value than other parts of nature? Answers to the above-mentioned questions will have important implications for the sort of responsibilities and obligations that human beings have towards the natural environment. In other words, the (moral) value of nature and the (moral) value of human beings will in effect set the parameters of this most important relationship<sup>5</sup>.

There are in environmental ethics, broadly speaking, three different ways in which to give content to this most important relationship—anthropocentric, biocentric and

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature*, Princeton University Press, (1986), p3.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that there is no assumption of consequentialism here. I am not suggesting that environmental ethics is limited to theories of the good and that right actions are those actions that promote the good of a particular group of organisms. It is perfectly possible to have a non-consequentialist ethic where a right action (or duty) requires respecting the goodness of an organism. The obvious example is Kant where respect for the rational nature of persons is cashed out in non-consequentialist terms.

ecocentric ethics of the environment. I will return to discuss the latter two views later in the introduction. As indicated, I will deal with the former position immediately.

### **Anthropocentric Environmental Ethics**

In the literature anthropocentric ethics is described and defined in the following ways. The ethical theory of anthropocentrism is:

“the philosophical perspective asserting that ethical principles apply to humans only, and that human needs and interests are of the highest importance, and even exclusive value and importance. Thus, concern for nonhuman entities is limited to those entities having value to humans.”<sup>6</sup>

Or,

“the view that all environmental responsibility is derived from human interests alone. The assumption here is that only human beings.....have a direct moral standing. Since the environment is crucial to human well being and human survival, then we have an indirect duty towards the environment, that is, a duty which is derived from human interests.”<sup>7</sup>

Or,

“only humans are the locus of intrinsic value, and the value of all other objects derives from their contributions to human values.”<sup>8</sup>

I take these definitions to give a broad indication of the anthropocentric view. I do not want to endorse one or all of these definitions specifically, but pull out and describe

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<sup>6</sup> Suzan J. Armstrong & Richard G. Botzler, *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, McGraw-Hill, Inc., (1993), P275.

<sup>7</sup> *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

<sup>8</sup> Bryan Norton, *Why Preserve Natural Variety?* Princeton University Press, (1987), p135.

the major strands of thought that the three definitions put forward collectively. In other words, I want to unpack the definitions above to reveal what I take to be the most important basic structural claims of the anthropocentrist.

It looks like, given the definitions above, that there are three significant claims being made by the anthropocentrist. First, there is a claim about the derivation of value. The value of non-human nature *ought* to be derived from *only* the interests of human beings. Second, there is a claim about direct moral standing. Direct moral standing *ought* to be limited to human beings *alone*. Third, there is a claim about intrinsic value. Intrinsic value is limited to human beings alone. I will deal with the second claim immediately.

The claim that direct moral standing is limited to human beings *alone* I take to be a claim about to whom (direct) duties are *owed*. The anthropocentrist contends that duties are *owed only* to human beings. It is a claim about the *scope* of, as I will term it, the *moral club*. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the issue of the moral club is first and foremost an issue about *limits*, it should not be thought that the moral club is not connected to derivational issues in any way. If *only* human beings are members of the moral club, and given the first claim, the value of nature (animate and inanimate) is *only* to be derived from the interests of human beings, then, for the anthropocentrist, the value of nature (animate and inanimate) is *only* derived from the interests of members of the moral club. Of course, this does not apply to the derivation of value *alone*, but to the derivation of duties as well. From the passages quoted above we see that a human centered theory of environmental ethics holds that our responsibilities and duties “toward” nature are all ultimately *derived* from the duties we owe to members of the moral club—human beings. If we are to fulfil the duties we owe to

human beings, then there is a way in which we *ought* to act toward nature. In other words, the duties we have *regarding* (indirect) nature (animate and inanimate) are derived from the duties we *owe* to human beings<sup>9</sup>.

The implication of the position above is that something that has its value only derivatively from human interests cannot have direct moral standing. The truth of this is plain. If something were to have direct moral standing, then this would be to claim that that something has an *independent* moral worth. If that something has an independent moral worth, then the totality of its value is *not derived* from human interests alone. In other words, the non-derivational nature of direct moral standing rules out the possibility that something that derives its value *only* from human interests can be a member of the moral club. Does this mean that the claim—the value of nature ought to be derived from human interests—entails the claim—the scope of the moral club ought to be limited to human beings alone? It seems it must, because, in the framework of an anthropocentric ethic, the non-derivational nature of membership of the moral club necessarily limits the scope of such a club to human beings.

This is not to say, however, that the scope of the moral club is a dead issue for the anthropocentrist. It is possible for the anthropocentrist to adjust the scope of the moral club. The anthropocentrist can limit the moral club to members of the species *Homo sapiens* alone and derive the value of nature from the interests of the respective group or the anthropocentrist can reduce the scope of the moral club to include rational

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<sup>9</sup> There is the possibility of another set of duties. I am thinking here of non-derived duties. For example, I may have a duty not to cause an animal pain where the pain of the animal is making a direct demand on me. I have a duty not to cause pain because pain is bad. In this situation the duty is not derived from the interests of human beings or the interests of the animal. The animal is not an organism to whom duties are *owed*. There is simply a way I ought to act because pain is bad. This set of duties does not fit into the framework of the anthropocentric position because, as we are aware, the anthropocentrist claims that all duties we have “toward” nature are *derived* from the duties we owe to human beings.

human beings *alone* and derive the value of nature from the interests of that respective group. In both cases, despite the fact that the limits of the moral club are different, the value of nature is derived from the interests of human beings. I will return to the important issue of the scope of the moral club in chapter three.

The final claim made the assertion that intrinsic value is limited to human beings *alone*. The term “intrinsic value” is fraught with difficulties. I will look more closely at the concept in chapter four. However, at this early stage in the thesis, I will take the aforementioned claim to be a contention about the scope of the moral club. The claim that intrinsic value is to be restricted to human beings alone is the claim that only human beings have independent moral worth. Of course, as we are already aware, any claim about the scope of the moral club falls out of the principle about the derivation of value from the interests of human beings.

It has become apparent that there is one structural claim central to anthropocentrism that carries with it two important entailments. First, there is the claim that the value of nature ought to be derived from the interests of human beings. This entails, given certain facts about the nature of the moral club, that direct moral standing ought to be restricted to human beings alone. In addition, there is an entailment about the duties we have *regarding* nature. The derivation of value from the interests of human beings will provide a limit on the set of duties we have *regarding* nature. The duties we have *regarding* natural objects and organisms will depend on what *value* such natural items have for human beings. If, for example, a natural object is valuable to the welfare and well being of human beings, then we will have a duty *regarding* that respective natural object. If the natural object is not valuable to the welfare of human beings, then we will not have a duty *regarding* that respective natural object.

I have put in place a very basic outline regarding the structure of anthropocentric ethics. However, as I indicated earlier, it is not clear that such a position is not in direct opposition to the proper functioning of natural objects, processes and environments. In this regard I will put forward three arguments for thinking that anthropocentrism is not simply inimical to the requirements of an ethic of the environment.

### **The Place of Human Beings in Environmentalism**

The *United Nations Environment Programme Global State of the Environment Report* basically states that the unchecked exploitation and consumption of natural resources by humankind reveals and emphasizes an ever-increasing tension between the ecological workings of the biosphere and the *interests of human beings*. However, this is not reference to a *necessary* tension. It is merely a *contingent* fact that there is tension between the interests of humankind and nature. It does not follow from the fact that human beings live and act in a particular area that that area will undergo environmental destruction and disintegration. The tension between the two parties arises *only* when human beings take part in *certain* activities that place an unsustainable strain on natural environments. In other words, if human beings were to desist from, for example, mass deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels, and adjust their way of life in an appropriate manner, then it is quite possible that the tensions that exist today would dissipate and disappear in the future. It is entirely possible that a *human way of life* could again be harmonious with the workings of the natural environment. It seems then, on the face of it, that anthropocentrism may have the theoretical space necessary for a proper ethic of the environment. This is the first

reason for thinking that an examination of the idea of anthropocentric environmentalism is still a worthy project.

The second reason for thinking that anthropocentrism is still worthy of analysis comes forth from an objection that is made by certain prominent environmental philosophers. It is claimed by Holmes Rolston III<sup>10</sup> and Tom Regan<sup>11</sup> that anthropocentric ethics cannot provide a true ethic of nature because such an ethic is designed not *for* nature, but for the *use* of nature. In other words, according to Rolston and Regan, anthropocentric ethics ought to be rejected because a human centered approach to the value of nature cannot meet the widely held intuition that nature is, in some way, non-instrumentally valuable.

There are two obvious issues that come out of this objection to anthropocentric environmental ethics. First, philosophers like Rolston and Regan must justify the claim that a purely instrumental approach to nature is unacceptable. Second, it is not true that an anthropocentric ethic is limited *only* to an instrumental account of the value of nature. It is just not obvious, regarding the value of nature, that non-instrumentalism is restricted to non-anthropocentrism. I should say at the outset that I think a purely instrumental approach to the value of nature is unacceptable. However, regarding the second point, I think there is genuine scope for the anthropocentrist to attempt to develop non-instrumentalism within his theoretical framework. I will deal with the points in the order that they are presented.

There are at least two accounts of instrumentalism. I will start with the Strong version of Instrumentalism. According to Keekok Lee, Strong Instrumentalism is:

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<sup>10</sup> Holmes Rolston III, *Philosophy Gone Wild*, Prometheus Books, (1986) and *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in The Natural World*, Temple University Press, (1988).

<sup>11</sup> Tom Regan, "The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic," *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 3, (1981), pp20-21.

“the thesis that it is (always) justifiable for humans to use nature to promote ends or projects that will improve material well-being. In other words, every possible use of nature in the pursuit of such an ultimate goal is in principle justifiable because nature’s value for humans lies in its use or potential use for humans....It sanctions the use of parts of nature whether or not that use involves their destruction, and whether or not that destruction involves the final and ultimate disappearance of the unique and irreplaceable.”<sup>12</sup>

This account of instrumentalism places *no constraint* on the use of nature to further and fulfill the aims of human beings. It is an account that is all-inclusive regarding the fulfillment of human ends. It “covers a range of human ends from that of sheer survival at one pole...to that of maximizing profits for transnational companies at the other.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, human beings can use nature in any way they want as long as such use fulfils human ends.

Is there anything to suggest that the above-described account of instrumentalism is unacceptable? The findings, described in the *United Nations Environment Programme Global State of the Environment Report*, illustrate in graphic detail the legacy of an *unconstrained* instrumental approach and attitude toward nature. I am suggesting that the *United Nations* report is a description of the effects of a strong instrumentalist approach toward the natural environment. This will not trouble the strong instrumentalist at all. But, if we are really serious about producing an acceptable ethic of nature, then we must reject the position of the strong instrumentalist. In other

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<sup>12</sup> Keekok Lee, “Instrumentalism and the Last Person Argument,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol.15. Winter, (1993), pp334-335.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p338.

words, Rolston and Regan are right to claim that a purely instrumental approach to nature, in the sense advocated by the strong instrumentalist, is unacceptable.

But, this is not the only position open to the instrumentalist. There is a weaker view that places limitations and constraints on the use of nature. According to Weak Instrumentalism:

“...it is not always justifiable for humans to use or destroy nature in order to promote human ends because some important human ends can themselves be undermined by the extensive and indiscriminate transformation and destruction of nature. Minimally, in accordance with this position, the remaining wilderness areas and rain forests in the world should be left intact and protected from resource exploitation.”<sup>14</sup>

The main difference between the strong version and the weak version of instrumentalism can be summed up by their *resource* use and *non-resource* use of nature. The strong version treats nature merely as a resource; that that may be mined until it is empty. The weak version recognizes that nature is a means to promoting certain significant human ends. This is to say that certain parts of the natural environment must be protected because they are a means to the fulfillment of fundamental human interests. The element of *constraint*, missing in the case of the strong instrumentalist, is supplied, in the case of the weak instrumentalist<sup>15</sup>, by a

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<sup>14</sup> Keekok Lee, “Instrumentalism and the Last Person Argument,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol.15. Winter, (1993), p335.

<sup>15</sup> It may be thought that there is little difference between the strong and weak accounts of instrumentalism. The weak instrumentalist is just a more consistent instrumentalist than the strong instrumentalist. I think that there is some merit in this objection. However, I will not get into this debate because it would represent an unacceptable detour from the main body of the introduction. I will simply take note of the objection as it is not crucial to the main thrust of the thesis.

hierarchical structure of human ends where, perhaps, the end of survival sits firmly at the top.

The concerns offered by Regan and Rolston are no longer so obvious. The instrumentalist position can be used, in a very simple way, to justify the protection of *certain* parts of nature. However, it is no mistake that I refer to “certain” parts of nature. There is a problem with the view articulated by weak instrumentalism. What are we to say about those natural objects, processes and environments that are of no *use* to human beings? Those natural processes, objects and environments that are of no use in fulfilling the aims of human beings cannot fall under the umbrella of protection supplied by the instrumentalist position. The instrumentalist position, in terms of protection, is simply blind to, what I will term, “non-usable” nature.

It may be thought that “non-usable” nature refers to an insignificant portion of the natural environment. As a result, the instrumentalist has nothing to worry about. But, this cannot be correct. There are vast areas of nature on the planet Earth that are of no real use to human beings because they are so barren and inhospitable. I am thinking here of the vast desert scapes of the natural world. In a similar vein there are a considerable number of species that are of no real use to human beings, for example, those species of bacteria and plankton that reside at the bottom of the deepest oceans. The point I want to make here is that the instrumentalist is committed to saying the wrong things about these parts of nature. If there is no human end to be fulfilled regarding a particular part of nature, then there is nothing to be said regarding the justification of actions toward those parts of nature. The instrumentalist must simply be indifferent to those non-usable elements of the natural environment. They are not worth bothering about. However, an acceptable ethic of nature cannot be indifferent to

these significant parts of nature. It must have something more constructive to add. The conclusion is that instrumentalism *by itself* must be rejected.

Before I continue it is important to mention that the distinction made between strong instrumentalism and weak instrumentalism, in *broad* terms, unpins a distinction in the anthropocentric position between strong anthropocentrism and weak anthropocentrism. The strong anthropocentrist like the strong instrumentalist takes a purely unreflective instrumental approach to the value of nature. To quote Bryan Norton on this distinction ““Strong anthropocentrism” is the thesis that non-human species and other natural objects have value only insofar as they satisfy human demand values.”<sup>16</sup> The idea here is that strong anthropocentrism is taken to express the view that nature ought to be used as a means to the fulfillment of *any* human interest. However, the weak anthropocentrist like the weak instrumentalist takes a more reflective enlightened approach to the *use* of the natural environment when it comes to the fulfillment of human interests. The basic concept here is that nature ought only to be used to fulfil, to use the terminology of Bryan Norton, the “considered” interests of human beings where we understand the idea of a considered interest as “[an interest] which is based on careful deliberation, and is compatible with a rationally adopted world view, incorporating sound metaphysics, scientific theories, aesthetic values and moral ideals.”<sup>17</sup> Norton writes about weak anthropocentrism “the range of human values countenanced is much broader than in strong anthropocentrism because other species are considered valuable for their contribution to the formation of human ideals.”<sup>18</sup> The point is that the weak anthropocentrist values “non-human entities for

<sup>16</sup> Norton, B., *Why Preserve Natural Variety?* Princeton University Press, (1987), p12.

<sup>17</sup> Armstrong, S.J. & Richard G. Botzler, *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, McGraw-Hill, Inc., (1993), p276.

<sup>18</sup> Norton, B., *Why Preserve Natural Variety?* Princeton University Press, (1987), p12.

more than their use in meeting unreflective human needs: they value them for enriching the human experience.”<sup>19</sup> Of course, both positions, strong and weak, are at base instrumentalist. The weak anthropocentrist is simply a more enlightened, constructive and consistent instrumentalist than the strong anthropocentrist<sup>20</sup>.

The debate on instrumentalism, though useful, does not strike at the heart of the objection cited by Regan and Rolston. The great challenge in environmental philosophy is to produce an environmental ethic that accommodates the widely held intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable. It may be thought that anthropocentrism moves in the opposite direction from this objective. If, as I indicated earlier, the anthropocentric position is committed to evaluating nature in terms of the interests of human beings, then it appears that the anthropocentrist is committed to a purely instrumental approach to the value of nature. This objection is ill founded. The derivation of the value of nature from the interests of human beings depends crucially on the notion of interests and how we conceive of that notion. It is clear that not enough work has been done on the idea of human interests and the different types of interests that human being possess. I will address this issue head on in the latter part of chapter three. The point I want to make now is that anthropocentrism need not be necessarily committed to evaluating nature purely in terms of instrumentality. It may have the capacity to offer an alternative account of the value of nature that is still human centered. Given that human beings take an interest in things *for their own sake* there is reason to think that anthropocentrism need not be merely instrumentalist. I

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<sup>19</sup> Armstrong, S.J. & Richard G. Botzler, *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, McGraw-Hill, Inc., (1993), p276.

<sup>20</sup> If my contentions about instrumentalism are correct, then the same objections, regarding nature, that apply to instrumentalism will apply, broadly speaking, to both strong and weak anthropocentric environmental ethics.

will develop this anthropocentric non-instrumental account of the value of nature in detail in chapter four. However, in the interim, the second reason justifying an analysis of anthropocentrism is now in place; anthropocentric ethics has the *potential* to offer a “real” ethic of the natural environment.

The third and final reason, like the second reason, is born out of an objection to anthropocentrism. In the literature the anthropocentric position is often presented as a crude and unreflective approach to an ethic of the environment. In their book, *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*,<sup>21</sup> Suzan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler draw attention to the fact that the anthropocentric outlook regarding an ethic of nature is often seen as a “default position”. That is a position adopted with little thought and consideration of other possibilities. The problem with the above-described view is that it is ill informed and unreflective itself. It is important to realize that anthropocentrism is a position held by many thoughtful and reflective people. In the history of philosophy thinkers like Aristotle<sup>22</sup>, Aquinas<sup>23</sup>, Descartes<sup>24</sup> and Kant<sup>25</sup> thought that anthropocentrism was the correct (ethical) view. In the twentieth century the appeal of an anthropocentric environmentalism remains undimmed, except now the old guard have been replaced by thinkers like Bryan

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<sup>21</sup> Suzan J. Armstrong & Richard G. Botzler, *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, McGraw-Hill, Inc., (1993).

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Translated by David Ross, Oxford University Press, (1980).

<sup>23</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, “That Rational Creatures are Governed for Their Own Sakes, While Others are Governed in Subordination to Them,” *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Part II, chapter CXII, University of Notre Dame Press, (1975).

<sup>24</sup> Rene Descartes, “Discourse on Method,” *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Haldane, E.S. & Ross G.R.T. Translators, Cambridge University Press, (1969) and *Descartes’: Philosophical letters*, Trans. & Ed. Kenny A., Oxford: Clarendon, (1970).

<sup>25</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Trans. by H.J. Paton, Routledge: London & New York (1997), *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge University Press, (1996) and “Duties Towards Animals and Spirits”, *Lectures on Ethics*, Trans. by Louis Infield, New York, Harper and Row, (1963).

Norton<sup>26</sup>, W.J. McGee<sup>27</sup>, R.D. Guthrie<sup>28</sup>, Fraser Darling,<sup>29</sup> John Passmore<sup>30</sup> and W.H. Murdy<sup>31</sup>. In other words, to claim that anthropocentrism is a default position is simply misplaced in the context of past and present environmental philosophy. The rich philosophical tradition that supports the anthropocentric position demonstrates that such an outlook is worthy of further analysis and examination.

I propose then that the subject of an anthropocentric approach to an ethic of the natural environment is deserving of further critical investigation on three important grounds. First, the interests of human beings need not necessarily be in conflict with the proper functioning of nature. Second, anthropocentrism has the *potential* to accommodate the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable. Finally, the anthropocentric tradition in ethics is extensive and deeply reflective. As a result, this thesis seeks to answer the following question: *can anthropocentric ethics provide an adequate ethic of the natural environment.*

I want to approach the question described above in a particular manner. However, before I spell out this approach in greater detail certain issues need to be resolved. First, as I intimated earlier in the introduction, I need to describe those positions that oppose the anthropocentric outlook. Second, I need to fill out in some detail what an adequate ethic of nature needs to look like. It is against this standard that the adequacy

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<sup>26</sup> Bryan Norton, "Anthropocentrism and Non-Anthropocentrism," *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, (1984), *Why Preserve Natural Variety?* Princeton University Press, (1987) and "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Summer, (1984).

<sup>27</sup> W.J. McGee, "The Conservation Mentality," *American Environmentalism*, edited by Nash, R., New York: McGraw-Hill, (1990).

<sup>28</sup> R. D. Guthrie, "The ethical relationship Between humans and other organisms," *Perspective in Biology and Medicine*, University of Chicago Press, (1967).

<sup>29</sup> Fraser Darling, "Man's responsibility for the environment," *Biology and Ethics*, Biology Symposium number 18, Academic Press, (1969).

<sup>30</sup> John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Duckworth, (1980).

<sup>31</sup> W.H. Murdy, "Anthropocentrism: A Modern Version," *Science*, 187, (1975).

or inadequacy of the anthropocentric position will be measured. I now turn to the first task.

In broad terms the anthropocentric position can be contrasted with two other ethics of the environment—the biocentric and the ecocentric. I will start with the doctrine of biocentrism.

### **Biocentric Environmental Ethics**

One of the most prominent exponents of biocentric environmental ethics is the philosopher Paul Taylor. He writes:

“From the standpoint of a life centered theory of environmental ethics.....our duties towards nature do not stem from the duties we owe to humans....When a life centered view is taken, the obligations and responsibilities we have with respect to the wild animals and the plants of the Earth are seen to arise out of certain moral relations holding between ourselves and the natural world itself. The natural world is not there simply as an object to be exploited by us, nor are its living creatures to be regarded as nothing more than resources for our use and consumption.”<sup>32</sup>

A life-centered theory of environmental ethics, unlike a human centered theory, holds that our moral responsibilities and duties towards nature are all directly derived from the duties and obligations we have towards the *living*. The interests of living nature, and the subsequent duties founded on the basis of the aforementioned interests, place a constraint on the actions of human beings towards living nature *itself*. In other words,

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature*, Princeton University Press, (1986), p12.

there is a way in which we ought to act toward living nature because of the duties we *owe* to living nature.

It is important to be clear about what exactly is going on here. The claim is that ethical principles apply *directly* to living beings *alone*. Two important points come out of this (1) ethical principles do not apply directly to non-living nature and (2) the term “living” includes not only living nature, but human beings as well. This means we have duties *regarding* inanimate nature in virtue of the duties we *owe* to living nature. In the final analysis, a life-centered ethic is an extension of the *moral club*, beyond the human, to include and apply to non-human living nature. This project of extensionism carries with it some very important implications. First, like classical anthropocentrism (human centered approaches that value nature purely in instrumental terms), a life centered ethic claims that non-living nature is valuable merely in terms of instrumentality. However, unlike classical anthropocentrism, biocentrism asserts that non-human living nature is not *merely* valuable in terms of use, but is valuable in its own right; that is valuable in itself. Or, to use the words of Paul Taylor, “The living things of the natural world have a worth that they possess in virtue of their being members of the Earth’s Community of Life.” It is a worth that does not derive from the interests of human beings. It is worth that nature has in itself.<sup>33</sup>

Against the background of anthropocentrism and biocentrism we have witnessed an extension of the scope of ethical principles. Both the anthropocentrist and biocentrist

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<sup>33</sup>It should be noted that biocentrism comes in different and varying degrees. First, there is the very conservative biocentrism of Tom Regan. Regan argues that ethical principles should apply directly to mammals *alone*. See Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Routledge: London & New York, (1988). Second, there is the less conservative biocentrism of Peter Singer who claims that ethical principles should apply directly to sentient creatures *alone*. See Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge University Press (1993) and *Animal Liberation* (1990). Finally, there is the radical biocentrism of Paul Taylor. Taylor asserts that ethical principles should apply directly to all living organisms. See Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature*, Princeton University Press (1986).

make a particular claim about ethical principles. The proponents of human and life centered ethics both assert that the direct application of ethical principles must be *restricted* and *limited* to particular types of entities. The third position, to be contrasted with both anthropocentrism and biocentrism, claims that the restrictions and limitations described above are artificial and arbitrary. This is the claim of ecocentrism.

### **Ecocentric Environmental Ethics**

The world is made up of many different ecosystems that make up one big ecosystem called the biosphere. Or, as it is more commonly known, the planet Earth. The ecocentrist emphasizes a form of holism. The claim here is that ethical principles apply directly to the whole of the natural world itself. We see then that a world centered theory of environmental ethics holds that our moral responsibilities and duties towards nature are all ultimately derived from the duties and obligations we *owe* to the natural world itself; living and nonliving<sup>34</sup>.

Again it is important to be clear about what is going on here. The claim is that ethical principles apply directly to the natural world. Two important points come out of this (1) unlike anthropocentrism and biocentrism, ecocentrism asserts that ethical principles apply directly to non-living inanimate nature and (2) an ecocentric environmentalism includes not only living nature and non-living nature, but human

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<sup>34</sup> In their book, *Environmental Ethics*, Armstrong and Botzler make the point that there are two major forms of ecocentrism. First, there is the version of ecocentrism described above. Second, there is the more recently developed position of "Deep Ecology". We are told that the ideas of deep ecology "do not constitute an ethical theory defensible by rational argument in the usual Western sense. Rather deep ecologists call for a transformation of the fundamental principles guiding a long term relationship with the environment. These principles may include living a life that is simple in means but rich in ends; honoring the right of all life forms to live and flourish; empathizing with other life forms; maximizing the diversity of human and nonhuman life; and maximizing long-range universal self-realization." For more information on the deep ecological perspective see Naess, A. "The deep ecological movement: Some philosophical aspects," *Philosophical Inquiry*, (1987).

beings as well. In the final analysis, an ecocentric ethic is the final and ultimate extension of the scope of ethical principles. This project of extensionism carries with it some very important implications. Unlike classical anthropocentrism and biocentrism, an ecocentric ethic claims that inanimate nature is not to be valued merely in terms of instrumentality. This means that non-living nature is not *merely* valuable in terms of use, but is valuable in its own right; that is valuable in itself. It is a worth that is not derived from the interests of human<sup>35</sup> or non-human living beings<sup>36</sup>.

The extensionist project reflects and represents an important distinction between human, life and natural world centered ethics. This distinction can be clarified in detail by concentrating on the concepts of moral agent and moral subject. For the sake of brevity, ease and clarity I will concentrate on the distinction between anthropocentrism and biocentrism alone.

### **Moral Agents and Moral Subjects**

There is common ground between the anthropocentrist and biocentrist. Both positions agree about which beings are moral agents. However, the distinguishing feature between the two positions revolves around the notion of a moral subject. It is

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<sup>35</sup> People like Aldo Leopold and Holmes Rolston III advocate the ecocentrist position. See Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic" in *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches here and There* (1949). Holmes Rolston III, "Values in Nature", *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 3 (1981), "Values in Nature and the Nature of Value," in *Philosophy and the Natural Environment* Eds. Attfield, R. & Belsey, A. (1994).

<sup>36</sup> It should be noted that J.B. Callicott promotes an ethic of the environment that he refers to as ecocentric. He claims that a natural object has intrinsic value when that object is valued intrinsically by a human valuer. This means that the value of nature is *derived* from human beings despite the fact that the value of nature is intrinsic. The claims of Callicott depend upon a special understanding of the concept of "intrinsic Value". I will not go into this here. What I want to say is that Callicott's theory would be better described as anthropocentric. He admits himself, in the context of his theory, that the value of nature is "anthropogenic". The point is that my definition of ecocentrism is accurate while the labelling of Callicott's ethic is, to say the least, dubious. See J.B. Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, State University of New York Press (1989), "On the Intrinsic Value of Non-Human Species," in *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, State University of New York Press (1989), "Intrinsic Value in Nature: A Meta-ethical Analysis," in *The Electronic Journal of Analytic Philosophy* (1995) and "Non-Anthropocentric Value Theory and Environmental Ethics," in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 21, (1984).

here where the distinction arises. The anthropocentrist and biocentrist have different views about which beings are moral subjects. As a result, before I can progress, I must fill out in greater detail what the notions of “moral agent” and “moral subject” consist in<sup>37</sup>.

An agent is first and foremost a being who is the possessor of capacities by virtue of which it can *act* rather than merely *behave*. The most important capacities of an agent are the capacities for rational deliberation; that is the ability to weigh reasons against one another in order to determine a course of action open to choice. The ability to form reasons and the capacity to act out of recognition of, and make decisions on, the basis of reason. A *moral* agent is then a being that is a possessor of capacities by virtue of which it can act morally or immorally, can be the possessor of duties and responsibilities and can be held responsible for what he or she does. The most important capacities for a moral agent are the capacity to form judgements about right and wrong. The capacity for moral (rational) deliberation, that is the ability to weigh and consider moral reasons for and against various actions open to choice. The ability to make decisions on the basis of those reasons deliberated on. And, the ability to act on the basis of those decisions made<sup>38</sup>.

It may seem that the capacities described above, capacities that constitute the make up of a moral agent, are human capacities *alone*. In other words, we can simply equate

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<sup>37</sup> In this section I have drawn on a discussion about the notions of “moral agent” and “moral subject” by Paul Taylor. See Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature*, Princeton University Press, (1986).

<sup>38</sup> It may be thought that the definition of a moral agent is incomplete. For example, if we adhere to a Humean account of morality, then a being can only be a moral agent if that being has the capacity to sympathize; that is have other regarding sentiments. The point I want to make here is that the aforementioned capacity to sympathize can be included or deleted from the description of the notion of a moral agent. It depends on which moral theory you buy into. See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (1978) and *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Clarendon Press Oxford, (1975).

the class of human beings with the class of moral agents. However, such an equating of classes is incorrect. First, not all human beings are moral agents. Second, it is not the case that all moral agents must be human beings. I will deal with the former point first.

In the first category there are those human beings that permanently lack or are temporarily deficient in those capacities required for moral agency. For example, a newly born infant, the mentally retarded and the brain damaged do not possess the capacity for moral deliberation, do not have the ability to form judgements about right and wrong and cannot make decisions on the basis of reason. These beings are in biological terms human in virtue of the fact that they are members of the species *Homo sapiens*. However, despite species membership, these particular beings are not moral agents in virtue of the fact that they do not possess the requisite capacities for moral agency.

The second claim is that not all moral agents must be human beings. The argument here is that there are or at least there could be beings that possess the requisite capacities for moral agency, but are not human. It is conceivable that there are forms of extraterrestrial rational intelligence that are endowed with and possess the required capacities for moral agency. However, I do not need to prove one way or the other that there are such beings in existence. This is a matter for empirical enquiry. The very least I can claim is that it is not a conceptual truth that moral agency is restricted to human beings alone. Why? In the final analysis, (rational) human beings are moral agents in virtue of the fact that they have the capacity for rationality, not in virtue of being human. This means that rational non-human beings could be moral agents if they have the requisite capacities described above.

I have given a brief description of the notion of a moral agent. But, we are still left with a fundamental question to answer. What is the significance of a moral agent in the context of an environmental ethic? An environmental ethic is, like any ethic, a system of moral standards and principles. However, given this description of an ethic, we are left with a very important space to fill. What particular set of entities is to be obligated by the principles and moral standards of an (environmental) ethic? The answer is straightforward. Moral agents *alone* are to be obligated by the principles and moral standards of an ethic. Why is it that moral rules and standards obligate only those who possess the requisite capacities for moral agency? The reason is, if a moral principle or rule does apply and that rule is to be enforced or adhered to, then in order to enforce or adhere to that rule a being must, in the first instance, be able to use the rule as a normative guide to its own choice and conduct. This notion of rule use carries with it the requirement of certain capacities. The being in question must have the capacity to make moral judgements on the basis of the moral rule in conjunction with the ability to consider the rule as a reason for action and that the action open to choice is consistent with the rule. Or, to put it another way, the agent to whom the rule applies must be able to perform the action for that reason, because it is required by the rule.

What is a moral subject? The first point to make is that a being who is a moral agent is at the same time a moral subject. What does this mean? This means that moral agents are not only beings that have obligations and duties towards others but are themselves beings toward whom duties are *owed* (by other moral agents). A being who is both a moral agent and a moral subject is a being that can treat others rightly or wrongly and who himself can be treated rightly or wrongly by other moral agents.

However, it is important to realize that the class of moral subjects is larger than the class of moral agents. It is true that all moral agents are moral subjects. It is not true that all moral subjects must be moral agents. This can be substantiated with little reflection. A moral subject may be a being that does not possess the requisite capacities for moral agency, but is nevertheless the kind of being to whom duties are (directly) owed. For example, in the context of the human, moral agents may have a *direct* duty not to harm the mentally retarded (a moral subject without agentic capacities).

What can we say so far about the notion of a moral subject? First, a moral subject must be a being that can be treated rightly or wrongly. Second, a moral subject is a being towards whom duties and obligations are (directly) owed by moral agents. If we are to claim that a moral subject is a being that can be treated rightly or wrongly by a moral agent, then it must be the case that a moral subject can, in some sense, be benefited or harmed. It cannot make sense to say that a moral agent has a duty or obligation towards a being that cannot possibly be, *in some sense*, harmed or benefited. If a being cannot possibly be harmed or benefited, then it cannot be the case that a moral agent has a duty not to harm that being. The notion of duty in this context is simply misplaced. The same goes for the notion of benefit. If a being cannot be benefited, then moral agents can have no duty or obligation to benefit that being. We see then that a moral subject must be a being or entity that can be harmed or benefited in some manner.

I claimed at the beginning of this section that there is common ground between the position of the anthropocentrist and the biocentrist. Both outlooks agree that moral agency is restricted to a certain kind of being, a rational being. The area of dispute

revolves around and centers on the notion of “moral subject”. The anthropocentrist claims that the notion of “moral subject” is *restricted* to human beings *alone*. The biocentrist dismisses this claim arguing that the notion of “moral subject” should not be restricted to human beings alone, but should extend to include non-human life. This means, as I intimated earlier, within the framework of an anthropocentric ethic, that moral agents have duties *regarding* nature in virtue of the duties moral agents *owe* to human beings. However, in the context of a biocentric ethic, moral agents have duties *regarding* inanimate nature in virtue of the duties moral agents *owe* to animate nature (includes human beings) and moral agents have duties toward animate nature because animate nature is, according to the biocentrist, the kind of thing to whom duties are owed.

I have sketched out, though very briefly, three different positions regarding an ethic of the environment—the anthropocentric, biocentric and ecocentric. They are three possible bases for an adequate ethic of nature. I now turn to look at what an adequate basis for an ethic of the natural environment needs to look like.

### **An Adequate Ethic of Nature**

An ethic of nature is a set of beliefs or attitudes about how nature *ought* to be treated. It must, given the ecological crisis described at the beginning of the introduction, have something substantial to say about the *protection* of natural processes, objects and environments. In this respect, I want to suggest that three fundamental features must be encompassed in an adequate ethic of nature. First, an adequate ethic should not justify the protection of *all* natural objects. Second, it must be able to accommodate certain intuitions central to environmentalism. Finally, such an ethic must endorse a form of protection that acts out of recognition of what nature

actually is. I will deal with all of the above-mentioned points in the order that they are presented.

It may be argued that an adequate ethic of nature ought to justify the protection of *all* natural objects. There are three good grounds for denying the aforementioned claim. First, it is a simple point, but one that requires to be made. The basic biological, psychological and physiological needs of all living organisms demand and require the exploitation and consumption of natural objects to a limited extent. If a tiger is to survive and live, then it must exploit nature in the sense of killing and consuming prey. If a tree is to survive and reproduce, then it must exploit nature in the sense of taking nutrients and water from the soil. This is just one way of saying that an adequate ethic of the environment ought not to be committed to the protection of *all* natural objects because we ought not to commit ourselves to some sort of suicidal outlook. We are faced with a stark truth. Whether or not we place an emphasis on a human, life or world centered ethic an adequate ethic of nature cannot justify or attempt to justify the protection of *all* natural objects. Objections to natural resource exploitation can only surface once we go beyond the demands of biological and physiological necessity or once we encounter excessive levels of survival and reproduction.

Second, relating to a point made by Stan Godlovitch, “it would be impractical to preserve all species and all communities with an equal amount of support and endeavor. There is simply not enough money and scientific expertise to do this. This is our world.”<sup>39</sup> This point relates to the practical limitations placed on human beings by the circumstances of the present world. Even if we wanted to protect *all* natural

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<sup>39</sup> See Stan Godlovitch, “Evaluating Nature Aesthetically”, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, (1998), p121.

objects it is not within our economic and scientific capabilities to do so. An adequate ethic of nature ought not to demand the protection of *all* natural objects because such a demand requires the execution of an impossible economic and scientific task (for rational human beings).

Third, it simply is not possible to protect certain natural objects because they are so fleeting and momentary. It does not make sense to try and protect a particular wave as it roles ashore only to be extinguished by the sandy undulations of the beach. This is a project that is just not intelligible. Of course, it is possible to protect the conditions that make it possible for waves to role ashore. I would not deny this. But, it remains true that some natural objects such as waves cannot be protected. This truth is partly a result of the fact that nature is in a constant state of flux and partly the result of the fact that the duration of the existence of natural objects vary so greatly.

Given the reasons described above I conclude that an adequate ethic of the environment ought not to seek to justify the protection of all natural objects. However, this leads neatly to a consideration of those natural objects that ought to be protected.

I want to suggest that an adequate ethic of the natural environment ought to accommodate certain intuitions that are central to modern environmentalism. In the words of Bryan Norton, I will assume:

“that all environmentally sensitive individuals believe that there is a set of human behaviors which do or would damage the natural environment. Further, I assume that there is considerable agreement among such individuals about what behaviors are included in that set. Most would decry, for example, careless storage of toxic wastes,

grossly overpopulating the world with humans, wanton destruction of other species, air and water pollution, and so forth.”<sup>40</sup>

In other words, an adequate ethic of the environment, as a code of behavior for moral agents, must be able to meet a particular set of moral intuitions regarding nature. We ought not to pollute oceans with chemical discharge and crude oil. We ought not to take part in mass deforestation. We ought not to cause extensive soil erosion. We ought not to destroy the habitats of wildlife. We ought not to destroy and hunt to a state of extinction non-human living nature. We ought not to destroy and deface natural beauty. We ought to protect those processes and functions that are central and fundamental to the continued existence of nature. If an ethic of nature is to be adequate, then it must be able to accommodate moral intuitions of the type described above. If an ethic of the environment cannot, it simply fails to meet the demands of the environmental crisis before us<sup>41</sup>.

It should not be thought that the intuitions listed in the previous paragraph are exhaustive. They are a list of intuitions that refer to actions (beliefs or attitudes about how one ought to act). However, there are those moral intuitions that relate to the value of items (beliefs or attitudes about the value of things). As I have already indicated an adequate ethic of nature ought to be able to accommodate the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable. In addition, there are intuitions about the value of human beings. For example, the moral intuition that incapacitated human

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<sup>40</sup> See Bryan Norton, “Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Summer, Vol. 6., (1984), pp132-133.

<sup>41</sup> When we assert, for example, that oceans ought not to be polluted, we are making a claim of a certain sort. We are playing on the intuition that there are certain classes of natural object that ought to be protected in *any and all* circumstances. It can hardly be the claim of the environmentalist that we ought not to pollute the oceans in circumstances X, Y and Z, but we may pollute the oceans in circumstances A, B and C. This does not capture the protectionist attitude advocated by environmentalism.

beings are the sorts of beings to whom moral agents owe duties (a claim about direct moral worth). This and the other previously described intuitions provide examples of intuitions that an adequate ethic of nature must meet.

My third point is about the protection of nature. If an ethic of the natural environment is to be a candidate for an adequate ethic of nature, then the respective ethic must be able to accommodate the intrinsic properties of nature in its theoretical framework. What do I mean by this claim? In part, the environmentalist argues for and advocates the position that nature ought to be protected. However, a great deal depends on the concept of protection at work here. If it is preservation in the sense of keeping in a state of unchange, then the protection of nature is an incoherent notion. One of the most fundamental truths about nature is that it is in a constant state of flux. Thus, protection in this sense of preservation fails to recognize and accommodate an intrinsic property of nature. Far from protecting nature the aforementioned concept of “preservation” treats nature as some sort of cultural artifact. This demonstrates that an adequate ethic of nature must employ a conception of protection that is consistent with the intrinsic properties of nature. I will look at this issue in much greater detail in chapter two.

We can now begin to see what an adequate ethic of nature ought to look like. First, an adequate ethic of the environment ought not to justify the protection of all natural objects. Second, it ought to justify and accommodate certain sets of intuitions that are central to environmentalism. Finally, an ethic of nature ought to employ a conception of protection that is consistent with the intrinsic properties of the natural environment. This account of an adequate ethic provides a standard against which the adequacy or inadequacy of the doctrine of anthropocentrism is to be measured.

I am now in a position to spell out my *particular* approach to the question this thesis seeks to answer—*can anthropocentric ethics provide an adequate ethic of the natural environment*. I will develop what I will call the “best possible defence” of anthropocentrism (or by its alternative name “sophisticated anthropocentrism”) and measure the “best possible defence” against the requirements of an adequate ethic of the natural environment. If the “best possible defense” of anthropocentrism cannot meet the requirements of an adequate ethic of nature, then anthropocentric ethics cannot provide an adequate ethic of the natural environment. If, however, the “best possible defense” of anthropocentrism can meet the requirements of an adequate ethic of nature, then anthropocentric environmental ethics can provide an adequate ethic of the natural environment. I will argue that the “best possible defense” of anthropocentrism *cannot* meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature. Consequently, anthropocentric ethics *cannot* provide an adequate ethic of the natural environment. This is the conclusion and central claim of the thesis.

How is the “best possible defense” of anthropocentrism to be constructed? It is apparent from the principle central to anthropocentrism described earlier in the introduction—the value of nature ought to be derived from the interests of human beings—that any defense of anthropocentrism, including the “best possible defense”, will be made up of four important elements. First, there is a demand for an account of nature. What is nature? We cannot entertain any ethic of the natural environment without a comprehensive conception of nature. Second, given the derivation of nature’s value from human interests, we need an account of value. In what way is nature valuable? In what way are human beings valuable? Third, given the moral club is restricted to human beings, we require a theory about differing conceptions of

human being. Finally, given that the notion of interests is intimately linked to the value of nature, we require a theory about human interests<sup>42</sup>. I will argue, given the four elements described above, that the “best possible defense” must take a certain *form* if it is to avoid certain substantive objections and *attempt* to accommodate the intuitions that are at the heart of an adequate ethic of nature. Importantly, the thesis is an examination of the *structure* of anthropocentric environmental ethics. What sort of *structure* must an anthropocentric ethic adopt if it is to have any hope of approaching an adequate ethic of the natural environment?

Putting the methodological approach of this thesis to one side for the moment, the process of construction will begin in chapter two entitled “Nature and Naturalness” (I will return to the subject matter of chapter one at the end of this introduction). This chapter will address three themes. First, I will give an account of nature. Second, I will enlarge on this account to develop the idea of naturalness by degree. Third, I will develop in greater depth the previously described idea regarding the protection of nature. The first task of this chapter represents an attempt to give an account of a much-ignored subject in environmental philosophy—nature. The second undertaking is twofold in character. First, it represents an attempt to provide a more subtle and *developed* account of nature, an account that recognizes that the naturalness of an object, process or environment is a complicated mix of the artificial and natural. Second, it is an attempt to provide a decision procedure that can help accommodate the view that some natural objects must be exploited and destroyed—an intuition central to an adequate of the environment. If faced with a choice between two natural objects—one of the two must be consumed and destroyed—the most natural object

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<sup>42</sup> These elements are not put forward in a particular order. It is merely a description of the elements that make up an anthropocentric ethic.

will be the candidate for protection while the least natural object will be a candidate for consumption and exploitation<sup>43</sup>. The third task is an endeavor to develop a form of protection that acts out of recognition of what nature actually is.

In the initial stages of chapter three—“The Moral Club, Human Beings and the Concept of Interests”—I will put forward two differing conceptions of “human being”—“human being” in the sense of the member of the species *Homo sapiens* and “human being” in the sense of rational person-hood. I will name the respective anthropocentrisms that incorporate these conceptions of “human being” at their center as Radical and Conservative anthropocentrism. The difference between these two accounts of anthropocentrism will revolve around the extent and scope of the moral club. The radical account will include *all* members of the species *Homo sapiens* while the conservative account will include only those that possess the attribute of personhood (excluding those *Homo sapiens* that do not possess personhood). In respect to the best possible defense this will set up a choice between the radical and conservative outlooks. This choice will be resolved at the end of chapter five—“Discrimination, Speciesism and Species Concepts”.

In the latter half of chapter three I will look at the idea of interests. I will point out that there is a fundamental distinction to be made between something being in my interests and having an interest in something. The first element of the distinction will be cashed out in terms of well being. In this respect I will look at certain versions of the notion of well being arguing that the sophisticated view ought to adopt a need account of well being. It will be a small step from here to make a connection between

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<sup>43</sup> I fully recognize that naturalness is not the only factor that may be involved when it comes to decisions about which natural environment is to be protected and which is not. There are a whole number of other significant factors relating to economic value, cultural value, historical value, etc. Nevertheless, the degree to which an environment is natural may play a role in that decision procedure.

the interests of human beings and the instrumental value of nature. In regard to the second element of the distinction—taking an interest in something—I will look at three different ways in which a person may take an interest in something. I will opt for the version where to take an interest in something is to take an interest in something *for its own sake*. This version of taking an interest in something will fit into the structure of value to be developed in chapter four, ultimately explaining how the non-instrumental value of nature can be derived from human interests.

In chapter four, entitled “Three Distinctions in Anthropocentric Environmental Goodness,” I will argue, via a Korsgaardian interpretation of Kant, that the idea of the non-instrumental value of nature need not necessarily be restricted to non-anthropocentrism, but can be quite easily accommodated by an anthropocentric environmental ethic. This particular account of the non-instrumentally valuable will be built on the basis of three distinctions in goodness and the previously described interest (taking an interest in something for its own sake) human beings take in the environment<sup>44</sup>. The result will be an anthropocentrism that does not value nature merely in terms of *use* alone, but *for its own sake* as well.

In chapter five, I will argue that the contentious issue of speciesism—discrimination on the basis of species membership—has a profound influence on the form of the

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<sup>44</sup> It may be thought that the idea that the non-instrumental value of nature can be accommodated by an anthropocentric environmental ethic is far from being controversial and novel. For example, in his paper “Weak Anthropocentric Intrinsic Value” Eugene Hargrove gives an account of the non-instrumental value of nature in the context of an anthropocentric ethic. There are three points to be made here. First, the account that Hargrove gives is basically undeveloped. My account will be developed in detail and will be based on a Korsgaardian interpretation of Kant’s ethics. Second, such a version of anthropocentrism will provide a genuine opportunity for Kantian ethics to make a more positive contribution to environmental ethics. Third, Hargrove’s account involves some important conflation regarding value. My account will be free from such conflation. There will be other theoretical advantages to my account. But, I must leave that to chapter four. For more information on Hargrove see his paper “Weak Anthropocentric Intrinsic Value,” *The Monist*, (1992). I should say that the version of anthropocentrism to be developed will not be a version of the weak anthropocentric view described earlier in the introduction because, as I will argue, the view to be developed will go beyond the limits of instrumentalism.

“best possible defense”. If speciesism is a justified form of discrimination, then the “best possible defense” can be speciesist. If speciesism is not a justified form of discrimination, then the “best possible defense” of anthropocentrism has to be in some sense non-speciesist. I will argue that speciesism is an unjustified form of discrimination which means that the “best possible defense” of anthropocentrism must be in some sense non-speciesist. In this respect I will argue that species classification is arbitrary and problematic rendering any form of morality based on such a form of classification, by inheritance, arbitrary and problematic; thus rendering speciesist morality morally unacceptable. The ultimate result of this chapter will be a rejection of radical anthropocentrism (species based) leaving conservative anthropocentrism (non-species based) as the only option for the sophisticated outlook regarding the scope of the moral club.

In the interim conclusion I will pull the conclusions and thoughts of the previous chapters together to produce a brief summary of the “best possible defence” of anthropocentrism. I will not recount the entire structure of the best possible defense here; this will be reserved for the interim conclusion itself. But, the main elements will be (1) that human beings are intrinsically valuable (2) nature is not merely instrumentally valuable, but non-instrumentally valuable (3) the moral club, as I have termed it, is restricted to rational human persons (human moral agents).

In part two of the thesis I will look at different versions of sophisticated anthropocentrism. The first version will be a different version of the anthropocentric ethical view. I will develop and examine a version of the best possible defence that concentrates, in particular, on the aesthetic. I will call this version of the sophisticated outlook—sophisticated anthropocentric aesthetic protectionism (I will refer to it as

SAAP for the remainder of the thesis). The second version of the sophisticated outlook will concentrate more straightforwardly on the moral. I will simply refer to this version of the sophisticated view as sophisticated anthropocentrism.

In chapter six, entitled “Sophisticated Anthropocentric Aesthetic Protectionism,” I will look at a version of the sophisticated view that focuses on the aesthetic and incorporates the aesthetic into its structure. The basic idea being that the aesthetically valuable acts as, within the framework of SAAP, a necessary condition on which non-instrumental value is to be attributed to natural objects and processes. I will argue that SAAP cannot meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature. I will substantiate this claim on the basis of two main points. First, I will argue that SAAP cannot account for the non-instrumental value of fundamental natural processes. The claim will be that certain processes fundamental to the functioning and continued existence of the natural environment fail to be candidates for the attribution of non-instrumental value within the framework of SAAP due to the fact that they are aesthetically disvaluable. Second, even if we were to presuppose that those elements central to nature are in fact aesthetically valuable, then we would violate fundamental tenets of the anthropocentric position. Either way, SAAP fails to meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature.

In chapter seven, entitled “Sophisticated Anthropocentrism,” I will develop, in the first instance, two Kantian accounts of sophisticated anthropocentrism. I will argue that both accounts suffer from substantive structural problems. First, it will be demonstrated that both Kantian accounts of the sophisticated anthropocentric view do not, *ultimately*, meet the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable in a manner *suitable* for an adequate ethic of nature. This will be an issue about those

mechanisms that limit the capacity of interests to confer value. Second, I will argue that the scope of the moral club central to the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook is limited in a morally unacceptable manner. The sophisticated anthropocentrist is committed to excluding non-rational incapacitated human beings (that is members of the species *Homo sapiens*) from the moral club. I will propose a solution to this perennial problem. It will involve extending the moral club on broadly Kantian grounds to include incapacitated human beings. However, it will become apparent that such an extension must go beyond the domain of the human to the non-human if it is to be non-speciesist—rendering it non-anthropocentric. However, as I will make clear, the defeat of sophisticated anthropocentrism will not depend on a rejection of Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrism by itself. No matter what morally relevant capacity is chosen to solve the problem of the extent and reach of the moral club such an attempt at extension will always result in an overlap into the non-human domain resulting in a form of non-anthropocentrism. I will argue, given that there is an evolutionary continuum between human and non-human, there must be a continuum of morally relevant capacities. In other words, there is a structural problem. In terms of morally relevant capacities there is no clear cut off point between human and non-human animals. Anthropocentrism tries to make a moral distinction between human and non-human animals where no relevant distinction exists.

My conclusion, as I have intimated, will be that anthropocentric environmental ethics cannot meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature. In this sense the thesis is purely negative. However, on the more positive side of things, I will, in the conclusion, offer some reasons why, given the arguments of this thesis, there is good reason to think that we are pushed in the direction of ratiocentric non-

anthropocentrism. I will sketch, though briefly, what form a plausible version of ratiocentric non-anthropocentrism should take. This is the nature of the thesis.

So far I have given a description and explanation of the content of this thesis. But, I have not given an account of *how*, in methodological terms, this particular *moral inquiry* is to be pursued. There is good reason to think that this is required. I am referring to the fact that there has been an appeal throughout the introduction to intuitions and especially an appeal to intuitions regarding the notion of an adequate ethic of nature. The point being that a competent inquirer at this stage in the thesis may simply claim that the intuitions central to environmentalism are mistaken. In fact, claims the inquirer, there are different and better intuitions regarding an adequate ethic of nature, intuitions that an anthropocentric environmental ethic could well accommodate. In this situation we are simply playing on and trading with intuitions where no one set of intuitions seems better than any other set of intuitions. There does not seem to be some sort of independent standard that can adjudicate between the competing collections of moral beliefs. It is for this reason that I need to establish some sort of methodological foundation to my thesis as a whole. That is, a methodological foundation that justifies and advocates the use of intuitions in moral inquiry. Consequently, before I move directly to the subject matter of this thesis, I need to fill out the methodological foundation in some detail. This is the subject matter of chapter one.

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## Chapter One

### Moral Intuitions, Method and Moral Inquiry

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In the introduction to this thesis I made an appeal to certain intuitions (moral beliefs) about the status and treatment of the natural environment. I claimed that anthropocentrism, if it is to provide an adequate ethic of nature, must be able to accommodate a group of intuitions, for example, that nature is non-instrumentally valuable, that not all nature ought to be protected, etc. On the one hand, the appeal, in the execution of moral inquiry to intuitions<sup>1</sup> by itself cannot be considered controversial because all moral inquiry must start with some sort of appeal to intuition. Moral principles and meta-ethical theories do not mysteriously appear in the mind of a theorist perfect and complete. Instead, the philosopher starts inquiry and theory construction on the basis of a moral intuition or as it is commonly called a hunch. On the other hand, as I intimated at the end of the introduction, there is a genuine concern about which intuitions an inquirer can justifiably appeal to. Why must anthropocentrism adopt and accommodate the intuitions of this inquiry rather than the other way round? Why am I justified in appealing to a particular set of intuitions? This is an issue about methodology in moral inquiry.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to make a distinction here between two types of intuitions. First, there are those intuitions that issue forth from the use of examples. The inquirer may have an intuition about a particular thought experiment. Second, the inquirer may have intuitions about moral actions, value, principles and theories. He may hold these intuitions pre-reflectively or semi-reflectively. In this chapter I am referring to the later type of moral belief. For more information on the use of examples in moral investigation, see Dale Jamieson, "Method and Moral Theory," in *A Companion to Ethics*, Ed. Peter Singer, Blackwell Publishers, (1993), pp484-485.

In order then to settle the methodological issues of this thesis I will split the chapter up into two distinct sections. First, I will describe two dominant methodological approaches to moral investigation—ethical foundationalism and ethical coherentism—complete with a description of those problems that are commonly associated with the respective methodologies. Second, I will look at each example of methodology in more detail and explain how the intuitions of this thesis fit into *both* accounts of moral investigation. I should say at the outset that my aim in this chapter is not to privilege one methodology over another. It is not about coherentism versus foundationalism or coherentism being a marginally better methodology than foundationalism or vice versa. This is simply not the subject matter of the thesis and is certainly a subject that would require a thesis of its own. Instead, I am opting for the approach that the choice of methodology is not crucial to the thesis because (1) *both* methodologies have their own set of theoretical problems and (2) the intuitions of this thesis can fit into both methodologies quite comfortably.

### **Methodological Approaches to Moral Inquiry**

In contemporary ethics there are two significant approaches to the construction of moral theory—ethical foundationalism and ethical coherentism. The latter form of moral inquiry is currently in vogue while the former form of moral investigation does not enjoy such popularity. However, despite the current trends in moral inquiry, both forms of methodology encounter some important and distinct problems. I will deal with the former account of moral inquiry first.

In his book, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, Jonathan Dancy gives a description of the activities of the classical foundationalist:

“The classical foundationalist divides our beliefs into two groups: those which need support from others and those which can support others and need no support themselves. The latter constitute our epistemological foundations, the former the superstructure built on those foundations.”<sup>2</sup>

The foundationalist promotes a particular structure. As described above he divides beliefs into two important groups. First, there are those beliefs that do not need support from other beliefs. These beliefs may be described as self-justifying or self-evident. The second group of beliefs is those beliefs that are justified on the basis of their logical and evidential relations to the self-justifying or self-evident beliefs<sup>3</sup>. They may simply be inferred from the self-justifying beliefs that make up the foundation. It takes little imagination then to give an account of ethical foundationalism. We have two groups of moral belief. The first group is made up of self-justifying or self-evident moral beliefs while the second group is those moral beliefs (the superstructure that rests on the foundation) that are justified on the basis of their logical and evidential relations to the self-justifying beliefs that make up the foundation<sup>4</sup>.

Initially this approach to moral inquiry and theory construction seems attractive. We need only consider the nature of justification. According to the foundationalist, a set of beliefs (A) is justified by their relation to another set of beliefs (B) where the set of beliefs (B) is justified by their relation to a further set of beliefs (C), and so on. What we have here is a chain of justification. However, if anything is to be justified at all, then that chain of beliefs must terminate in a set of self-justifying beliefs. If the chain

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, Blackwell, Oxford U.K. & Cambridge U.S.A., (1985), p53.

<sup>3</sup> The classical statement of foundationalism is provided by Rene Descartes in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by J. Cottingham, Cambridge University Press, (1986).

<sup>4</sup> For a good survey on ethical foundationalism see Mark Timmons, “Foundationalism and the Structure of Ethical Justification,” *Ethics*, 97, April, (1987).

of beliefs does not terminate in a self-justifying belief or set of self-justifying beliefs, then we are faced with an infinite regress where no belief is justified. There must be self-justifying or self-evident moral beliefs. This is the foundation to which the foundationalist refers.

The foundationalist then is committed to self-justifying or self-evident moral beliefs. There are two fairly obvious objections that may be cited against the foundationalist in this respect. The first objection is directed at the idea of a “self-justifying” moral belief. The idea of a self-justifying belief may seem puzzling by itself. How can a belief justify itself? However, even if we accept that there are such beliefs<sup>5</sup>, it is not obvious that any interesting moral theory could be constructed on such a basis. For example, if we were to accept that the proposition “one ought not to inflict unnecessary harm on others” is an instance of a self-justifying moral belief, then it is difficult to see how any interesting and comprehensive superstructure of beliefs could be constructed on such a foundation. The problem is that self-justifying beliefs lead to, and result in, a severely impoverished form of moral inquiry.

The second objection revolves around the notion of a “self-evident” moral belief. There are two ways in which to cash out the idea of “self-evident”. First, there are many examples of logical truths that are termed “self-evident”. For example, the proposition that “all bachelors are unmarried men”. The problem with this account of “self-evident” is, like the case of self-justification before, that nothing very interesting in terms of moral investigation can be constructed on such a foundation. If, however, on a second account of “self-evident” we take such a term to mean that the inquirer

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<sup>5</sup> In his article, “The Justification of Moral Judgements,” E.J. Bond gives some examples of self-justifying moral beliefs. See E.J. Bond, “The Justification of Moral Judgements,” in *Ethics and Justification*, Ed. by Douglas Odegard. Academic Printing and Publishing, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (1988).

can simply “see” that a particular situation is morally wrong, then we are committed to some fairly common objections relating to metaphysical queerness and the possession of a special “perceptual” moral faculty<sup>6</sup>. It seems then that the idea of self-evident moral beliefs thwarts the pursuit of moral inquiry.

I am suggesting that the aforementioned objections offer some resistance to the idea of ethical foundationalism. It is a methodological approach to moral inquiry that is not without its own set of particular problems. I will now turn to consider the competing view—ethical coherentism.

Ethical Coherentism is the “view that [moral] beliefs can be justified only by their relation to other beliefs.”<sup>7</sup> Unlike Ethical Foundationalism no beliefs are justified independent of their relation to other beliefs. All beliefs in the whole are justified on the basis of their logical and evidential consistency to the other beliefs contained in the set. The more coherent a set of beliefs is the more justified such a set of beliefs become.

The methodological approach of Ethical Coherentism faces a problem that is quite similar to a problem faced by the traditional coherence theory of justification of belief. The claim of such a theory is that a more coherent set of beliefs is better justified than a less coherent set of beliefs. But, here comes the objection. There “is no reason to think this claim is true unless some of the beliefs” in the coherent system of beliefs “are initially credible—and not merely believed—for some other reason than

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<sup>6</sup> See J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Penguin Books, (1977).

<sup>7</sup> Dale Jamieson, “Method and Moral Theory,” in *A Companion to Ethics*, Ed. Peter Singer, Blackwell Publishers, (1993), P482.

coherence.”<sup>8</sup> This objection to coherentism is often referred to as the No-Credibility objection<sup>9</sup>.

The problem above expresses a particular worry. If justification is to be established purely on the basis of coherence, then it is perfectly possible to produce a coherent set of beliefs, all of which are false or not credible. It is conceivable that a set of beliefs, though completely false (or not credible), may all be logically consistent with one another. It seems then that coherence though necessary for justification, is not sufficient for the justification of moral beliefs.

In addition, the concentration on coherence alone brings with it some other unwelcome consequences. It is certainly possible that a Nazi regime could produce a coherent set of beliefs to guide the actions of their citizens. But, this would result, given the historical context, in a grossly immoral outlook. This possibility, in part, represents the further possibility of many very different coherent sets of beliefs that may or may not advocate morally acceptable outlooks. In other words, it simply emphasizes the fact that there can be an indefinite number of coherent sets of beliefs, none of which need be taken to constitute a true or credible moral theory.

So far I have described two methodological approaches to moral inquiry and their attendant problems. As I intimated at the beginning of the chapter I am simply voicing concerns about the respective methodologies while offering no solutions to such problems because this chapter is not and cannot be about a solution to the methodological worries of moral investigation. However, I am now in a position to give a more detailed account of the respective methodologies and, with such a detailed

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Brandt, *A Theory of the Right and the Good*, Clarendon Press: Oxford (1979). P20.

<sup>9</sup> For a good discussion of the “No-Credibility Objection” and a suggested solution to the problem see Michael DePaul, *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York, (1993).

account, a description of how the moral intuitions of this thesis fit into each respective version of moral inquiry. I will start with ethical coherentism.

In contemporary ethics the most influential form of ethical coherentism is John Rawls's method of reflective equilibrium<sup>10</sup>. I will concentrate on this model of ethical coherentism.

## The Method of Reflective Equilibrium

What is the method of reflective equilibrium?<sup>11</sup> In his article, "Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics", Norman Daniels describes the method of reflective equilibrium as:

"an attempt to produce coherence in an ordered triple of sets of beliefs held by a particular person, namely, (a) a set of considered moral

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<sup>10</sup> In contemporary ethics there is some debate about the status of the method of reflective equilibrium as a coherentist methodology. I do not want to enter into this debate as it would take me too far afield from the immediate subject matter of this chapter. But, for more information on the debate see Michael DePaul, "Reflective Equilibrium and Foundationalism," in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No.1, January (1986) and Roger P. Ebertz, "Is Reflective Equilibrium a Coherentist Model?" in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 23(2), (1993).

<sup>11</sup> In his article "In Defense of Wide Reflective Equilibrium" Kia Nielsen describes the history of "Reflective Equilibrium". Nelson Goodman and V.W. Quine we are told, in the first instance, developed it in another context. Subsequently, John Rawls applied and developed such a theory as an approach to political and moral inquiry. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1971), "Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics", *The Philosophical Review* 60 (1951), "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory", *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1980) and "The Independence of Moral Theory" in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* (1974/75). In the following years this theory has been further developed and supported by Norman Daniels, Kia Nielsen and Michael DePaul. See Norman Daniels, "Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics" in *Journal of Philosophy* (1979) and *Justice and Justification*, Cambridge University Press (1996). See Kia Nielsen, "On Needing a Moral Theory: Rationality, Considered Judgements and the Grounding of Morality", *Metaphilosophy* 13 April (1982), "Considered Judgements Again", *Human Studies* 5 April-June (1982), "On Sticking with Considered Judgements in Wide Reflective Equilibrium", *Philosophia* 13 3-4 (1985), "In Defense of Wide Reflective Equilibrium" in *Ethics and Justification* edited by Douglas Odegard, Academic Printing and Publishing, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (1988), "Relativism and Wide Reflective Equilibrium", *The Monist* (1993) and "Our Considered Moral Judgements", *Ratio*, 19 (1977-78). See Michael DePaul in *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York (1993) and Michael DePaul, "Two Conceptions of Coherence Methods in Ethics" in *Mind*, Vol. 96. (1987). I should say at the outset that this chapter draws on the later work of Daniels, Nielsen and DePaul because, as I have stated, Daniels, Nielsen and DePaul have developed and moved Rawls original idea to new levels. As a result, it seems appropriate to consider the newest and most innovative conceptions of reflective equilibrium, not the oldest and least developed.

judgements, (b) a set of moral principles, and (c) a set of relevant background theories.”<sup>12</sup>

We need to add a little more structure to the description of reflective equilibrium cited above. In the first instance, a person may begin the construction of a moral conception with a broad selection of moral judgements (intuitions). These judgements need not necessarily be of the same type. For example, the person in question may believe that one ought not to steal (a belief about how one ought to act), that courage is a trait that makes a person virtuous (belief about personality traits) and that happiness is good (a belief about things). These moral judgements that a person begins with are called, to use the terminology of Michael DePaul<sup>13</sup>, *initial moral judgements*. I will refer to these judgements as {IMJ}.

We see then that the process of theory construction, according to the method of reflective equilibrium, starts with a person’s {IMJ}. This is recognition by the method of reflective equilibrium that a person must start somewhere when it comes to the process of the construction of moral theory. However, despite this recognition, the method of reflective equilibrium does not allow all of the person’s {IMJ} to be used in the construction of a moral conception. The reason for this limitation is simple and straightforward. It is very probable that not all of a person’s {IMJ} have been formed in situations where, to quote Rawls, “our moral capacities are most likely to be displayed without distortion.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, it is unlikely in the first instance that a

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<sup>12</sup> Norman Daniels, “Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics” in *Journal of Philosophy*, (1979), p258.

<sup>13</sup> See Michael DePaul, *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York (1993). I should say at the outset that I will draw heavily on DePaul’s description of reflective equilibrium. Also, I am using his schematic system ({IMJ}, {CMJ}, {MT} and {BT}). It is purely for the sake of clarity.

<sup>14</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (1971), p47.

person's {IMJ} will be free from error and bias. As a result, the method of reflective equilibrium requires that a person filter her {IMJ} retaining only those moral judgements that the person is "confident and which have been made under conditions conducive to avoiding errors of judgement."<sup>15</sup> The judgements that remain after this initial process of filtration<sup>16</sup> are called *considered moral judgements*. I will refer to these judgements as {CMJ}.

The next step in the process of reflective equilibrium requires the person to formulate a moral principle or a set of moral principles (a moral theory) that explain and accommodate the person's {CMJ}. I will refer to the person's moral theory as {MT}. Let us call the person's first attempt at explanation and explication of her considered moral judgements by a particular moral theory or principle as {MT<sub>1</sub>}. And, let us name the person's first attempt to formulate her considered moral judgements as {CMJ<sub>1</sub>}. If {CMJ<sub>1</sub>} and {MT<sub>1</sub>} do not *cohere*, and it seems safe to assume that this will happen on the person's first attempt, then the person will have to make some sort of adjustment in her beliefs so that her moral beliefs cohere with her moral principles. For example, on reflection the person may realize that P<sub>1</sub> a principle in {MT<sub>1</sub>} cannot explain or account for J<sub>1</sub> a judgement about an action in {CMJ<sub>1</sub>}. In this situation, with a little thought, the person may work out a way in which the principle P<sub>1</sub> in {MT<sub>1</sub>} can be modified to give P<sub>2</sub>, a principle that can account for, is consistent with, or entails J<sub>1</sub> in {CMJ<sub>1</sub>}. In this situation with P<sub>1</sub> discarded for the modified principle P<sub>2</sub> the person now has a different (differing only in the modification of P<sub>1</sub>) set of moral

<sup>15</sup> Norman Daniels, "Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics," *Journal of Philosophy*, (1979), p258.

<sup>16</sup> There are at least five conditions that make up the process of filtration that make possible the move from {IMJ} to {CMJ}. The five conditions are (1) conceptual clarity (2) relevant information (3) rationality (4) impartiality and (5) coolness. For more information on each condition of the filter see Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Routledge: London and New York, (1983). pp121-150.

principles {MT<sub>2</sub>}. As a result, after the first step in the person's attempt toward the coherence of her beliefs the ordered pair is [{CMJ<sub>1</sub>}, {MT<sub>2</sub>}].

At this point it is important to note that the replacement of P<sub>1</sub> by P<sub>2</sub> to form {MT<sub>2</sub>} is not the result of the examination of the logical and evidential relations between {CMJ<sub>1</sub>} and {MT<sub>1</sub>} *alone*. This is one way of saying that the goal of coherence is not achieved *solely* by an appeal to logical and evidential relations. The replacement of P<sub>1</sub> by P<sub>2</sub> to form {MT<sub>2</sub>}, *in part*, results from the fact that the inquirer has a greater degree of commitment (confidence) to her belief J<sub>1</sub> in {CMJ<sub>1</sub>} than her belief P<sub>1</sub> in {MT<sub>1</sub>}. It is for this reason, *in part*, that {MT<sub>1</sub>} is revised to form {MT<sub>2</sub>} rather than a revision that involves a move from {CMJ<sub>1</sub>} to {CMJ<sub>2</sub>}. So, we see that the inquirer's degrees of commitment regarding his or her beliefs can have and may have a *profound* influence on the development of moral theory.

It is very unlikely that the person will produce a coherent system of beliefs after just one adjustment. So it seems reasonable to conclude that a whole series of adjustments will be required if the person's considered moral judgements and moral principles are to cohere. This requires a repeated adjustment and readjustment of the person's consider moral judgements and moral principles. This is to say that adjustment is not restricted to moral principles alone, but includes the adjustment of considered moral judgements as well; "a person's considered moral judgements, nor her moral theory, are favored as she attempts to bring her beliefs into"<sup>17</sup> a coherent set of beliefs. We might say in this situation that there is a method of give and take between the person's moral judgements and moral principles in the process of producing coherence among the two aforementioned parties of moral belief. As a result, once this process of give

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<sup>17</sup> Michael DePaul, *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York, (1993), p17.

and take is over, once the person's considered moral judgements cohere with the person's moral principles, then we can say that the person's moral beliefs are in a state of *narrow reflective equilibrium*. We may refer to this set of moral beliefs as the set  $[\{CMJ_n\}, \{MT_n\}]$ .

However, this is not the end of the method of reflective equilibrium. According to Daniels:

“We do not simply settle for the best fit of principles and judgements, however, which would give us only a narrow equilibrium. Instead we advance philosophical arguments intended to bring out the relative strengths and weaknesses of the alternative sets of principles. These arguments can be construed as inferences from some set of relevant background theories.”<sup>18</sup>

We see then that the final stage of the method of reflective equilibrium requires the inquirer to upset and disrupt her state of narrow reflective equilibrium by increasing the scope of give and take to include background moral and non-moral theories. The inquirer “is to achieve this by considering alternatives to  $\{MT_n\}$  along with philosophical arguments designed to decide among these alternative theories.”<sup>19</sup> To put the idea in simple terms the final stage of reflective equilibrium is an “attempt to achieve coherence among the beliefs a person holds in narrow reflective equilibrium and the background theories [the person] accepts.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Norman Daniels, “Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics” in *Journal of Philosophy*, (1979), p258.

<sup>19</sup> Michael DePaul, *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York, (1993), p19.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p19.

The idea is that the inquirer's choice of moral theory (moral principles) must be informed by and cohere with the inquirer's broader philosophical views and theories. In other words, the beliefs that the person holds in narrow reflective equilibrium must cohere with the person's philosophical beliefs about, for example, the nature of persons or rational decision making or the role of morality in society. Consequently, when an argument or background theory provides a successful alternative to  $\{MT_n\}$ , say  $\{MT_m\}$ , it demonstrates that the moral principle accepted in narrow reflective equilibrium does not cohere with the background beliefs of the person. Let us call the person's first set of background beliefs and theories  $\{BT_1\}$ . As a result, an argument (based on the implications of background theories) that the person finds to be decisive against  $\{MT_n\}$  demonstrates that though  $[\{CMJ_n\}, \{MT_n\}]$  are coherent, the set of beliefs  $\{CMJ_n\}, \{MT_n\}, \{BT_1\}$  are not. Again, it should not be thought that one set of beliefs is foundational and takes priority over the other sets of belief. The method of reflective equilibrium does not advocate that all other beliefs must cohere with the background theories and beliefs of the person involved. Instead, just as before, there is a process of adjustment and readjustment, a process of give and take, relative to the degrees of commitment to beliefs on behalf of the inquirer, between the considered moral judgements, moral principles and background theories held by the person in question. To quote DePaul:

“When an argument reveals a conflict between background philosophical beliefs and moral beliefs, it is an open question which will be revised. The decision must be made on the basis of a person's degree of commitment to the propositions involved, and the logical and

evidential relations among these propositions and the other propositions she accepts or rejects.”<sup>21</sup>

Of course, it is unlikely that coherence will be achieved between the person’s moral judgements, moral principles and background theories by one adjustment alone. In fact, in all probability there will be a series of adjustments and readjustments between the aforementioned parties of moral beliefs before coherence is achieved. However, once this series of adjustments is made, once evidential and logical relations have been examined and degrees of commitment to certain beliefs accounted for (and this process has gone well), then the inquirer has a coherent set of beliefs resulting in the set  $[\{CMJ_w\}, \{MT_w\}, \{BT_w\}]$ <sup>22</sup>.

It may be thought at this point that the description of the method of reflective equilibrium is now complete; we have a state of *wide reflective equilibrium*. After all, we now have an ordered triple of sets of beliefs held by a person. I think this is correct<sup>23</sup>. However, it is important to note, for some theorists, Daniels in particular, that the aforementioned description of reflective equilibrium is incomplete. For Daniels some extra structure is required; wide reflective equilibrium can only be

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<sup>21</sup> Michael DePaul, *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York (1993) p20.

<sup>22</sup> When I refer to the set of beliefs  $[\{CMJ_w\}, \{MT_w\}, \{BT_w\}]$  I am referring to an ideal situation, that is ideal coherence. This has implications for the actual. In actuality we cannot expect most inquirers to achieve the ideal described above because such a project is not a practical possibility for most inquirers. It would take far too long. But, this is not a weakness of the method of reflective equilibrium. The ideal gives the actual inquirer a clear direction in which to travel regarding the pursuit of moral inquiry.

<sup>23</sup> There are different versions of wide reflective equilibrium. For example, Michael DePaul advocates a radical version of wide reflective equilibrium. The radical account differs from the conservative account, described in the text, in its approach to belief revision. Unlike the conservative account the radical account allows for a discontinuous revision of beliefs when the move from narrow reflective equilibrium to wide reflective equilibrium is made. In other words, the radical account allows for the phenomenon of moral conversion. In the introduction of background theories the inquirer may reject and replace all of his considered moral judgements and principles for a completely new set of considered moral judgements and principles that cohere with his background theories. For more information on this account of reflective equilibrium see Michael DePaul, *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York, (1993).

achieved if the person's beliefs satisfy an independence constraint. He is concerned that a person may accept a moral theory that is an accidental reformulation of her considered moral judgements<sup>24</sup>. In order to avoid the specter of an accidental reformulation, and in order to give {BTw} a substantive and productive role in the method of reflective equilibrium, the person's background theories must support her moral theory in a manner that is independent of the match between {MTw} and {CMJw}. As a result, according to Daniels, if the inquirer is to achieve a point of wide reflective equilibrium, then "some interesting, nontrivial portions of the set of considered moral judgements that constrains the background theories and of the set that constrains the moral principles must be disjoint."<sup>25</sup>

I do not want to look at this claim of Daniels in any detail, as this would represent a detour that is not really required for the purposes of this thesis. But, in brief there is a basic point to be made about his position. It is not at all obvious how such a constraint is supposed to function. Michael DePaul echoes this concern when he writes "I'm not confident that I really understand how Daniel's independence constraint is supposed to work. I suspect that this is because I do not know what he intends "constrains" to signify."<sup>26</sup> But, what is the nature of this constraint?<sup>27</sup> In what way does, for example, subset {CMJwm} constrain {MTw}? We certainly cannot construe the nature of the

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<sup>24</sup> For more information on this point see Norman Daniels, "Reflective Equilibrium and Archimedean Points," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 10, (1980).

<sup>25</sup> This means that if the set [{CMJw}, {MTw}, {BTw}] is to constitute a system of beliefs in wide reflective equilibrium there must be two proper subsets of {CMJw}, subsets {CMJwm} and {CMJwn}, where (1) subset {CMJwm} constrains {MTw} and (2) subset {CMJwn} constrains {BTw} and where (3) both subsets {CMJwm} and {CMJwn} are disjoint. See Norman Daniels, "Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics," *Journal of Philosophy*, (1979), p259.

<sup>26</sup> Michael DePaul, *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York, (1993), p21.

<sup>27</sup> I should say at the outset that the points made about the independence constraint draw heavily on the work of Michael DePaul. See Michael DePaul, *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York, (1993).

constraint merely in terms of coherence alone because, as is obvious, {CMJw} coheres with both {MTw} and {BTw}. In other words, if coherence were the constraint, then the notion of constraint would, though applying to subsets {CMJwm} and {CMJwn}, apply equally to {CMJw}. This is to say that nothing in terms of independence would be gained by formulating the aforementioned additional subsets. On the other hand, it does not seem that we can cash out the notion of constraint in terms of explanation and explication. For example, it may be claimed that the subset of beliefs in {CMJwm} alone constrain the set of beliefs in {MTw} because the beliefs in {MTw} must explain and explicate the beliefs in {CMJwm}. However, this cannot be the case because in the process of reaching reflective equilibrium the beliefs held in {MTw} must explicate and explain *all* of the beliefs and judgements in {CMJw}. If the beliefs in {MTw} do not explain and explicate all of the beliefs and judgements in {CMJw}, then it is clear that {MTw} is not complete in the first place. This is just another way of saying that the explanation and explication of {CMJw} by {MTw} cannot be restricted to certain subsets of {CMJw} because the method of reflective equilibrium requires that *all* the beliefs in {CMJw} can be explained and accounted for by {MTw}<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup>There is a similar and related concern voiced by D.W. Haslett in his article "What is Wrong with Reflective Equilibria?" If the inquirer deliberately does not use all of her considered moral judgements to reach narrow reflective equilibrium in an attempt to achieve one half of the independence constraint described by Daniels (in other words, the inquirer deliberately creates a subset of beliefs ({CMJwm}) in her considered moral judgements to constrain her moral principles ({MTw})), then such an independence constraint fails on two counts. First, the inquirer has not employed the method of reflective equilibrium because the inquirer has not engaged her entire set of considered moral judgements to achieve narrow reflective equilibrium. Second, if the inquirer sets out to satisfy the independence constraint by deliberately creating subsets within her complete set of considered moral judgements, then it is apparent that the independence constraint is highly artificial. This is just another way of saying that such a deliberate attempt to avoid the restatement of considered moral judgements in the moral principles and background theories of the inquirer serves only to provide a more sophisticated version of reflective equilibrium that is still open to the charge of circularity. A similar story can be told about the other half of the independence constraint (the inquirer deliberately creates a subset of beliefs in {CMJw} that constrain her beliefs in {BTw}). See D.W. Haslett in his article "What is Wrong with Reflective Equilibria?," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 37, (1987).

For the sake of brevity and focus I will not pursue this point any further. The independence constraint is meant to provide a solution to a particular concern about the methodological structure of a version of ethical coherentism. As I indicated at the beginning of the chapter I am not in the business of providing solutions. The main task of this chapter is to demonstrate that the thesis, in methodological terms, is compatible with versions of either coherentism or foundationalism. As a result, with this particular problem noted, I can now move on to give a description of how the moral intuitions and theories of this thesis fit into the method of reflective equilibrium.

### **Reflective Equilibrium and the Intuitions of this Thesis**

This thesis is made up of three significant elements. First, there are those considered moral judgements that are contained in the idea of an adequate ethic of nature. Second, there is a moral theory—ethical anthropocentrism. Third, there are background moral/non-moral beliefs and aesthetic theories.

The set of considered moral judgements that refer to, and make up, an adequate ethic of nature consist of a set of moral beliefs that are *in principle* revisable. Against this background, the moral theory of anthropocentrism will be required to explicate, explain and accommodate the aforementioned considered moral judgements to form a coherent system of beliefs. The result of this process will be the “best possible defense” of anthropocentrism. The basic idea is that part one of the thesis arrives at some sort of *narrow reflective equilibrium*.

I intimated in the introduction that there might be some sort of problem with this approach. Why should anthropocentrism adopt and accommodate the intuitions of this inquiry rather than the other way around? In the context of reflective equilibrium the question can be put in an equivalent manner. Why should the moral theory of

anthropocentric environmentalism be revised exclusively against the considered moral judgements of the inquiry rather than vice versa? The problem seems to be that revision takes only one direction. However, given the description of the method of reflective equilibrium cited earlier this is not a problem at all. The principle of belief revision relies on two factors. First, revision (and through revision the discarding of beliefs) is based on an examination of the logical and evidential relations between beliefs. Second, revision of beliefs is relative to degrees of commitment. There is nothing, in the context of reflective equilibrium, to stop the inquirer being more committed to his set of considered moral judgements and, as a result, revising his moral theory *exclusively* against his considered moral judgements. There is no commitment here to a form of foundationalism because it still remains the case that every considered moral judgement is *in principle* open to revision. This is simply a consequence of adopting a coherentist methodology<sup>29</sup>. This means, most importantly, that I have a methodological justification for the specific approach of this particular moral inquiry. I can justifiably revise anthropocentrism against the considered moral judgements of this thesis.

In part two of the thesis I introduce background moral and non-moral theories, for example, theories about environmental aesthetics and evolutionary continuums. The idea here is that the moral theory of anthropocentric environmentalism must be revised and replaced if we are to reach anything like *wide reflective equilibrium*. My contention is that the moral theory of anthropocentrism ought to be replaced with some form of non-anthropocentrism. However, to substantiate this claim *fully* would take me beyond the limits of this particular thesis. The crucial point here is that *wide*

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<sup>29</sup> This possibility is recognized by Michael DePaul. See Michael DePaul, *Balance and Refinement: Beyond Coherence Methods of Moral Inquiry*, Routledge: London and New York, (1993). P22.

*reflective equilibrium* will not be achieved within the physical limits of this thesis. But, this purely physical limitation will not affect the fact that the process of reflective equilibrium can underwrite, methodologically, this particular moral inquiry. In this regard, in the conclusion of the thesis, I will offer some reasons to suggest that a non-anthropocentric alternative may well be able to accommodate the considered moral judgements and background theories of this thesis. These claims will at least bring wide reflective equilibrium into the view of the inquirer.

I have completed my description of ethical coherentism in the form of reflective equilibrium. In addition, I have demonstrated how the intuitions of this thesis fit into such a methodology. I now turn to consider ethical foundationalism.

### **Ethical Foundationalism and the Intuitions of this Thesis**

I claimed at the beginning of the chapter that classical ethical foundationalism has a two-tier structure. There are those beliefs that are self-justifying (or self-evident) and there are those beliefs that are justified on the basis of their relation, logical and evidential, to the beliefs that are self-justifying. The former set of beliefs (the self-justifying) have a special epistemic status in virtue of the fact that they support those beliefs that are not self-justifying. In other words, the former set of beliefs make up our moral epistemological foundations while the latter are built and rest on such foundations.

It is important to be clear about what is going on when it comes to the doctrine of classical ethical foundationalism. The beliefs that make up the foundation of the inquiry are taken to be, in principle, *unrevisable*.<sup>30</sup> They are unrevisable, according to

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<sup>30</sup> This claim to unrevisability is articulated by Roger P. Ebertz in his paper "Is Reflective Equilibrium a Coherentist Model?", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 23,2, (1993).

the classical foundationalist, because such beliefs are self-justifying or self-evident. If we are then to use a classical foundationalist methodology as a basis for moral inquiry, then all other *proposed* moral intuitions will have to be accepted or revised against those beliefs that make up the foundation. Unlike the method of reflective equilibrium there will be no process of give and take where every intuition is *in principle* revisable. In addition, there will be no recourse to the inquirer's levels of commitment to a moral intuition. Instead, the direction of revision will be asymmetrical. The non-foundational moral intuitions and moral theories will always be accepted, based on or revised against the foundational, but the foundational will never be revised, accepted or based on the non-foundational. This is how moral inquiry for the foundationalist is to be pursued.

How do the intuitions of this thesis fit into the foundationalist methodology described above? The intuitions that make up what I have termed "an adequate ethic of nature" may act as a ground (foundation) for the justification of other moral theories and beliefs. In other words, I will take it that the intuitions contained in "an adequate ethic of nature" have the status of self-justified moral beliefs. It is against these moral intuitions that *proposed* moral beliefs and theories can be accepted, revised or discarded. The account promoted here is truly foundational because the intuitions contained in "an adequate ethic of nature" maintain and possess a special epistemic status in relation to the other moral beliefs of the inquiry. The moral beliefs contained in "an adequate ethic of nature" do not get their justification as a result of their relationship with other moral beliefs. However, other moral beliefs depend for their justification on those beliefs contained in the set of beliefs that make up "an adequate ethic of nature." This makes the first part of the thesis an attempt to base

anthropocentrism on the moral intuitions that make up the foundation. In other words, the theory of anthropocentrism is revised against those beliefs that make up the foundation, not the other way round. The second part of the thesis demonstrates that the attempt to base anthropocentrism on the aforementioned set of foundational moral intuitions, in the long term, must ultimately fail. If we were to adopt a foundationalist methodology, then this would be the investigative nature of the thesis.

The methodological foundations of the thesis are now in place. The inquiry that I am about to undertake may employ a coherentist or foundationalist methodology. This means that I can now focus my attention squarely on the inquiry itself. As I explained in the introduction, the first element of the inquiry is a detailed examination and discussion of the concept of nature. I now turn to the execution of this project.

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## Chapter Two

### Nature and Naturalness

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At the beginning of this thesis it was claimed that the discipline of environmental ethics “is concerned with the moral relations that hold between humans and the natural world.”<sup>1</sup> It is important then that we know what is meant by the term “natural world”. The inquirer cannot begin to determine the nature of the relationship between humankind and nature until the idea of nature is defined and filled out in detail. Of course, in the empirical realm, a great deal has been written about nature. The ancient Greeks, renaissance scientists and evolutionists<sup>2</sup> have all tried to provide an account of the nuts and bolts of the natural environment. However, despite the attention nature has received in the pursuit of empirical research, the discipline of environmental ethics has virtually ignored the conceptual issues that surround such an item<sup>3</sup>. Surprisingly, the concept of nature in environmental ethics remains a *relatively* unexplored domain<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature*, Princeton University Press, (1986). P3

<sup>2</sup> For a general summary of all three positions on nature see R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, (1964).

<sup>3</sup> The evidence of this neglect is all too obvious in those journals that cater specifically for philosophy and the environment. The *Journal of Environmental Ethics* and the journal *Environmental Values*, with twenty six years of publishing between them, have only two articles that attempt to analyze the concept of nature head on. See Jeanne Kay, “Concepts of Nature in the Hebrew Bible,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 10. (1988), Roger, T. Ames, “Taoism and the Nature of Nature,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 8. (1986).

<sup>4</sup> The related discipline of Environmental Aesthetics is also guilty of such an omission. In his paper, “Nature as an Aesthetic Concept,” (as yet unpublished), Donald Crawford makes the point that the concept of nature has received little attention. He points out that in a special edition of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* entitled “Environmental Aesthetics” the contributors offer little clarification on the concepts of “nature” and “environment”. See *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56.2 Spring, (1998).

This disregard for the concept of nature by philosophers, though I suggest this tentatively, is perhaps symptomatic of a wider disregard for nature by people in general. This makes the chapter's purpose twofold. First, it is an attempt to provide certain elements that will make up the structure of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook. Second, it is an endeavor to redress a notable omission in the discipline of environmental ethics. It is a demonstration of a regard and respect for nature.

What is nature? In an attempt to fill out the concept of nature in more detail I will consider those few definitions of nature that appear in the literature. In the course of this project it will become apparent that a more subtle account of the natural is required. This more subtle account will recognize that the naturalness of a process, object or environment is rarely an all or nothing affair. I will advocate and develop in *detail* the idea of naturalness by degree. In the later part of the chapter I will develop an account of protection that is sensitive to the *nature* of nature. The resultant account of nature and its protection will provide one plank of the sophisticated view. However, before I move directly to consider certain concepts of the natural I will make some comments on the idea of "environment".

### **The Concept of Environment**

In the context of environmentalism the idea of "environment" is often equated with the sublunary natural world in its entirety. In this setting nature just is "the environment". In the words of David E. Cooper "...the definite article and the singular noun indicate that there is just one big environment—the biosphere."<sup>5</sup> I should say at the outset that I do not want to subscribe to this equating of ideas. If we

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<sup>5</sup> David E. Cooper, "The Idea of Environment," in David E. Cooper & Joy A. Palmer, Eds. *The Environment in Question*, London Routledge, (1992), P167.

buy into the findings and claims of ecology, then it is the case that the world is one macro ecosystem that is made up of many micro ecosystems that are in turn made up of even smaller micro ecosystems and so on. The intention then is that the idea of “environment” can and may be applied equally to macro ecosystem and micro ecosystem alike. This means that the macro ecosystem often referred to as the biosphere is *an* environment, but not *the* environment. This is simply to claim that the concept of “environment” can be applied to smaller individual ecosystems as well as the global ecosystem known as the biosphere<sup>6</sup>. For example, a human being may find herself in *a* forest environment, which is in turn part of *a* planetary environment known as the Earth.

The fact that the concept of “environment” can be applied to different ecosystems of different size ought to alert us to the possibility of different senses of the term “environment”. In other words, there is reason to think that different ideas may be associated with the term. The *Oxford English Reference Dictionary* defines the term “environment” as “surroundings”. However, this definition of “environment” does not offer enough precision. In a trivial sense it may be claimed that one is *surrounded* by everything on the planet Earth. In this sense the environment would be the ecosystem known as the biosphere. But, in another sense it is true to say, for example, that St Andrews and Stirling are *surrounded* by the sea, but only in the case of St Andrews can we really claim that the sea is part of the town’s environment. In other words,

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<sup>6</sup> There is some discussion about the use of the global and local senses of “environment” in the literature. For more information on this discussion see David E. Cooper, “The Idea of Environment,” in David E. Cooper & Joy A. Palmer, Eds, *The Environment in Question*, London Routledge, (1992) and Nigel Dower, “The Idea of the Environment,” in *Philosophy and the Natural Environment*, edited by Robin Attfield & Andrew Belsey, Cambridge University Press, (1994).

there is the suggestion that the idea of “surroundings”, and with it the idea of “environment”, need not be necessarily all inclusive, but exclusive and local.

Are we talking about geographical proximity in this context? In a sense we are and in a sense we are not. Let me explain. If I were to deposit an arctic fox in the middle of the desert, then it could be claimed that the fox is *out* of its *environment*. The phrase, the fox “is like a fish out of water” comes to mind in this context. This means, despite the fact that the fox is in a particular *surrounding* (the desert) *immediate* to the fox, the fox is not in its *own* surroundings (the arctic). The example demonstrates that there is a difference between *being* in an environment and *having* an environment. The point is that there are two senses of “surroundings” that are distinct from one another. The former sense of “surroundings” is a concept of the environment that does have the idea of geographical proximity at its center. Of course, there will obvious problems associated with the idea of a limited geographical proximity. At what point is a particular set of surroundings no longer geographically proximate? The latter sense of “surroundings” goes beyond the idea of geographical proximity *alone* to refer to the environment that the organism in question belongs to. What is meant by “belongs to”? The organism in question “belongs to” an environment when the respective organism can be said to have adapted and evolved to that environment. The arctic fox “belongs to” the arctic environment in virtue of the fact that the animal in question evolved and adapted to that environment. For example, the whiteness of the fox’s coat is a successful attempt to adapt to the snowscapes of the arctic. In respect to “belonging”, we might try and stress a *causal* relation here in that “to belong” to an environment, the respective environment can be said to have caused and continues to cause the adaptation and evolution of the organism. This is what it means to say that an

organism belongs to its surroundings. The idea of belonging then makes sense of those propositions that make reference to the possession of an environment, when, for example, we refer to the arctic fox's environment.

There is the further idea of an environment as a "field of significance"<sup>7</sup>. How is the idea of a field of significance to be understood? In the arctic scene the droppings of an arctic hare will be of significance to the arctic fox because the fox "knows" that such an object is a sign of prey. In other words, the droppings mean something to the fox. However, in the desert, the large expanse and abundance of sand will mean nothing to the fox. There will be nothing of significance to the fox; it will be *surrounded* by a meaningless jumble of objects.

It may be thought that the idea of environment in terms of a field of significance equates with the previously described concept of the environment that is cashed out in terms of surroundings one belongs to. The thought may be that the surroundings to which an organism belongs must be its field of significance. However, this claim bears up to little scrutiny. It is perfectly possible for an organism to have a field of significance that is not the surroundings to which it belongs. Take the example of an arctic fox that is separated at birth from its mother, is removed from the arctic, and brought up by a surrogate fox in the desert. The desert would be the field of significance for the arctic cub despite the fact that it *belongs* to the arctic environment. So, there is a clear distinction to be made between the idea of environment in the sense of field of significance and the idea of environment in the sense of surroundings one belongs to.

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<sup>7</sup> This idea can be found in the work of D.A. Cooper. See David E. Cooper, "The Idea of Environment," in David E. Cooper & Joy A. Palmer, Eds, *The Environment in Question*, London Routledge, (1992).

The analysis above, though brief, fleshes out four differing concepts of the environment. First, there is the traditional and holistic concept of the “environment” where “The Environment” refers to the natural biosphere in its entirety. Second, there is the concept of “environment” in the sense of surroundings that are geographically proximate to the respective organism or object in question. Third, there is the concept of environment in the sense of surroundings to which one belongs. Finally, there is the concept of “environment” in the sense of a field of significance—significant to an organism.

It should be obvious to the keen observer that some of the concepts of “environment” described above need not be restricted to nature alone. The last concept of environment could be applied to some very ordinary human settings such as the office or factory floor. This I take to be a virtue of the account. However, this chapter is not about particular artificial human environments. It is about nature. How are we to conceive of nature and, as a consequence, the naturalness of an environment?

### **Nature as the Totality of Everything**

Consider the following definitions of nature offered by three philosophers. In his paper, “Nature”<sup>8</sup>, John Stuart Mill claims that “Nature” may mean:

“...the sum of all phenomena, together with the causes which produce them; including not only all that happens, but all that is capable of happening.....it means all the powers existing in either the outer or the inner world and everything which takes place by means of those powers.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John Stuart Mill, “Nature,” in *Three Essays on Religion*, London, (1874).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p374.

In a similar vein Holmes Rolston III comments that “Nature [may be] defined as the aggregate of all physical, chemical, and biological processes.”<sup>10</sup> Concurring with this view Malcolm Budd writes “In one sense, everything is part of nature, for there is a sense in which nature is just the totality of everything that is the case.”<sup>11</sup> This is the character of the totality view.

It is important to realize that these versions of the totality view do not equate with one another exactly. If nature may be defined as the totality of everything, in the manner that Mill and Budd suggest, then there is nothing against which the natural can be contrasted. Even the “supernatural” cannot be contrasted with the natural as the supernatural will be part of the totality. The same cannot be said of Rolston’s version of the totality view. He makes an explicit reference to the physical in his definition of nature. If the supernatural refers to the immaterial, then the natural can be contrasted with the supernatural because the supernatural will not be included in the totality. Of course, given the dubious credentials of the supernatural there may be no practical difference between the accounts, only a conceptual difference.

There are some obvious points to be made about the totality view. If nature is just the totality of everything in the sense promoted by Budd and Mill, then humankind is straightforwardly part of nature. Despite the fact that human beings are capable of intentional action on the basis of rational deliberation, human beings and the activities of human beings are natural. However, Rolston’s account of the totality view does

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<sup>10</sup> Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World*, Temple University Press, (1988), P33. In addition, see Holmes Rolston III, “Nature for Real: Is Nature a Social Construct,” *The Philosophy of the Environment*, edited by T.D.J. Chappell, Edinburgh University Press, (1997) and Holmes Rolston III, “Biology and Philosophy in Yellowstone,” *Biology and Philosophy*, 5, (1990).

<sup>11</sup> Malcolm Budd, “The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 36, No. 3, July (1996), P208.

offer some room for manoeuvre. In this respect, again, his reference to the physical in his definition of the natural is very important though he does not seem to realize it himself. He claims that “If nature is defined as the aggregate of all physical, chemical and biological processes, there is no reason why this should not include human agency.”<sup>12</sup> This is basically a restatement of the view that follows from the totality view of Mill and Budd. But, there is an obvious problem. It cannot be the case that there are *no* reasons not to include human agency and human beings under the banner of the physical. If I were a dualist of the Cartesian variety, then it would be the case that the totality of a human being cannot be accounted for in terms of physical, chemical and biological processes *alone*. In Cartesian terms the totality of the residue is explained by reference to an immaterial substance—the non-physical. There are reasons then for not including the human mind under the concept of nature if nature is defined as the aggregate of all physical, chemical and biological processes.

What I want to suggest, given Rolston’s definition of nature, is that we have no *good reason* to exclude human beings from such a description. The claim that human beings consist, in part, of some immaterial substance is not the most parsimonious way to explain the constitution of humankind. The same goes for human agency. To claim that human agency is, in part, the result of (caused by) rational deliberation in an *immaterial mind* is not the most parsimonious way to explain human action. In other words, human beings and human agency can be accounted for in terms of physical, biological and chemical processes. If we stick to the principle of parsimony, then we have good reason to include human beings under the concept of nature described above.

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<sup>12</sup> Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World*, Temple University Press, (1988), P33.

The totality view of nature and with it the idea that man is part of nature has some very impressive supporters. The evolutionary theory of Darwin stresses that human beings, far from being distinct from animals, are through the process of gradual adaptation and change on a continuum with the rest of the animal kingdom. On the implications of Darwinism, Callicott writes:

“...as Darwin himself elaborately argued, there is a seamless continuity between gradually evolved man and our fellow voyagers in the odyssey of evolution. Bluntly put, we are animals ourselves, large omnivorous primates; very precocious to be sure, but just big monkeys nevertheless. We are, therefore, a part of nature, not set apart from it. We are one sort of living, feeling being among many others.”<sup>13</sup>

In addition, the totality view of nature gains support from the new and rising science of ecology. Such a science emphasizes the interconnectedness of the parts (ecosystems) of the biosphere. In this context humankind is one part that may be interconnected to many other parts. Human beings are not distinct. They do not sit outside the interconnected whole.

There are then some very good reasons supporting the totality view of nature. However, there remain two important points to be made about the totality view. First, such an outlook may be used to support some sort of holistic non-anthropocentric approach to environmentalism. As I have claimed the view that *everything* is natural seems to play down any distinction between human beings and nature or between living nature and inanimate nature. As we are aware, the ecocentrist argues that the

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<sup>13</sup> J. Baird Callicott, “The Role of Technology in the Evolving Concept of Nature,” *Ethics and Environmental Policy*, Edited by F. Ferre & P. Hartel, (1994), P64.

distinctions inherent in anthropocentrism and biocentrism are arbitrary. So, the totality view can offer some support to the cause of ecocentrism.

The second point I want to make is a very important criticism of the totality view. The totality view of nature does not seem to relate to contemporary environmental concerns. In the modern era environmentalists are deeply worried about the destruction and disintegration of the natural environment through the rational agency of human beings<sup>14</sup>. However, if everything is natural, including the agency of human beings, then there is not environmental destruction as such, there is only environmental change. The world remains, despite the activities of human beings, completely natural under the totality view. There seems to be no way of saying what is wrong about the destructive practices of human beings toward nature when everything remains, despite those practices, natural. This is evidence that the totality view is just not sensitive enough to deal with the concerns central to environmentalism.

It should be obvious to any competent observer that the totality view encounters the above described objection due to the fact that it includes rational agency in its account of nature. There is reason then to think, at least on the face of it, that an account of nature that excludes rational agency will be a better and more accurate account of the natural. This brings me to consider those definitions of nature that attempt to exclude human agency from their account of the natural.

### **The Exclusion View of Nature**

I will start with what may be considered to be the strongest version of the exclusion view of nature. In his paper, "Faking Nature," Robert Elliot claims that nature means

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<sup>14</sup> I am referring to those examples of rational agency that result in the destruction and disintegration of natural environments. Environmentalists are not concerned about rational agency itself as rational agency need not and often does not result in environmental degradation.

“something like ‘unmodified by human activity’ in any way.”<sup>15</sup> There are similar ways in which to express this definition of nature. For example, we may define nature as “a process, situation or system free from human influence”<sup>16</sup> or a process, situation or system not affected by human agency in any way. Unlike the totality views of Budd and Mill, this concept of nature can be contrasted against a second party; namely the artificial where the artificial is that that is modified, affected or influenced by human agency.

Before I examine the implications of this definition of nature it is worth spending a little time on the concept of the artificial. It is certainly not a conceptual truth that agency (intentional action) is restricted to rational human beings *alone*. One need only conceive of a form of extraterrestrial rational intelligence capable of intentional action to establish the truth of the aforementioned claim. This means that an acceptable account of the artificial will have to drop any reference to a particular group of beings and replace that reference with a further reference relating to “rational agency”<sup>17</sup>. This means that the artificial *is that that is modified, affected or influenced by rational agency in any way*.

There is an obvious problem with this definition of the artificial. It includes certain groups of human beings. There are many instances where human beings are influenced in some way by rational agency. In his article, “Natural and Artifactual”, Yeuk-Sze Lo writes:

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Elliot, “Faking Nature,” *Inquiry*, 25, (1982). P84 and Robert Elliot, “Intrinsic Value, Environmental Obligation and Naturalness,” *The Monist*, 75, (1992). P151-152.

<sup>16</sup> Jay E. Anderson, “A Conceptual Framework for Evaluating and Quantifying Naturalness,” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 5. No.3. September (1991). P348.

<sup>17</sup> It is important that this modification is made to the definition of the artificial otherwise one could be committed to the view that though two objects have been influenced by rational agency, only one object is artificial.

“...some people take fertility pills to increase the chance of pregnancy. In unfortunate cases in which pregnant women are HIV positive, they make take certain medicines to reduce the chance of their fetuses getting the virus. In cases in which fetuses have developed diseases, such as spina bifida, they may need to have *in utero* surgery to correct the condition. The human infants born as a result of those medical interventions have been subjected to human planning and technological control.”<sup>18</sup>

The implication of this definition of the artificial is that the above-described groups of human infants are artifacts. If being influenced by rational agency amounts to nothing more than taking medicine, then there will be very few human beings that do not fall under the category of artifact. In fact, if the idea of being influenced by rational agency is defined very broadly, where for example, we are talking about being psychologically influenced by rational agency, then virtually every human being would have to be considered as an artifact. This view is simply not credible given that human beings possess bodies that contain genetic codes that have evolved over millions of years. The implication being that such an account of the artificial fails to recognize that certain attributes of the human body cannot be considered, straightforwardly, artifactual. The point being that the human body<sup>19</sup> cannot be *totally*

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<sup>18</sup> Yeuk-Sze Lo, “Natural and Artifactual: Restored Nature as Subject,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Fall, (1999), P254.

<sup>19</sup> It seems that the totality view would be better suited to accommodate the position that human beings are, in a fundamental manner, part of nature. However, this is to miss the point of the project of the chapter. It is important to realize that human beings are not only part of the natural world, but part of the artificial world as well. This is why, in part, I am developing the idea of naturalness by degree (artificiality by degree) in more detail. Of course, this account will be developed shortly.

divorced from the natural because at a very fundamental level the *majority* of the human body is part of nature.

The above-mentioned concern is symptomatic of a further and more damaging concern about the strong exclusion view of nature. However, before I consider this problem directly it will be worth mentioning positions that lend support to the exclusion concept of nature.

The attempt to exclude (human) rational agency from the natural is in essence the view that man is in some important aspect apart from nature. In contemporary environmental philosophy we find this view best articulated in the work of Robert Elliot. He writes:

“Human agency is in fact importantly different from other kinds of agency, such as the agency of nonhuman animals, of plants, of acids, of geophysical forces and the like. Human agency involves an array of higher order intentional states, is mediated by a heavy inclusion of culture, social organization and highly structured economic arrangements and is exaggerated by technological capacities. While humans are the result of, and are embedded in, natural processes, it is not merely metaphorical to say that they have partially transcended the natural.”<sup>20</sup>

It is not altogether clear that the account of human (rational) agency described by Elliot represents a difference in type from the agency of “higher” animals or simply represents such a difference in degree that we have the “equivalence” of a difference in type. There are certain groups of non-human animal that “are almost certainly

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Elliot, “Extinction, Restoration, Naturalness,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 16, Summer (1994), pp151-152.

higher order intentional systems and arguably some exhibit culture, social organization and rudimentary economic arrangements.”<sup>21</sup> I will not pursue this issue here. The point is that rational human agency, in the guise of “man apart from nature” *seems* to offer support for a genuine distinction between the artificial and natural. Of course, Elliot is a great deal more liberal than his historical predecessors are when it comes to the ascription of intentional states and agency to organisms. He is happy to countenance the idea that, for example, chimpanzees have the capacity for agency. But, for his predecessors, Descartes, for example, there is a very different story to be told about the distinction between human beings and the non-human world. He affirmed the idea that thinking and conscious experience were restricted to the human (immaterial) mind alone. He argues that all *other* phenomena (except God) are only part of the material realm. This is to say that every non-human entity, animate and inanimate is without thought and conscious subjectivity. For Descartes, non-human animals are mere automata<sup>22</sup>. This offers a very sharp distinction between man and nature that in turn may be thought to support the artificial/natural distinction inherent in the strong exclusion view of nature.

Despite the above-described support for the strong exclusion view there is an obvious problem. There are very few objects and environments on the planet Earth that have not been modified, affected or influenced in *some way* by rational agency. In the Arctic and Antarctic icebergs, despite their high level of purity, have been found to contain certain particulates of pollutants. This means that some of the most remote areas of the natural world, though not literally touched by the hand of man, have been

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p 152.

<sup>22</sup> Descartes, R., *Descartes: Philosophical Letters*, Kenny, A., translator and editor, Clarendon Press: Oxford, (1970) and Descartes, R., “Discourse on Method,” *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Haldane, E.S. & Ross G.R.T. Translators, Cambridge University Press, (1969).

*affected* and *influenced* in some way by rational agency. This means given the ubiquitous nature of particle pollutants virtually nothing, if anything at all, is natural according to this account of nature. The problem is that it takes very little to modify, affect or influence a natural process, object or environment by rational agency. Of course, a proponent of this definition could point out that such a definition is adequate once we move from our far too parochial focus on the planet Earth to consider cosmological environments. If we were to make this move, then the vast majority of the universe, barring the unknown activities of forms of extraterrestrial rational intelligence, would be natural. However, given that the focus of environmentalism, as we understand it today, is primarily concerned with the planet Earth, this geographical limitation has serious implications for the application of this particular concept of the “natural” to processes, objects and environments.

This particular exclusion view of nature encounters a similar sort of problem that is encountered by the totality view. In the same way that it is not credible to claim that everything is natural it is not credible to claim that everything is unnatural in the sense of being artificial.

I will now consider a weaker account of the exclusion view of nature. This is a view that can be contrasted with the artificial and distinguished from the strong exclusion view of nature given above. I will refer to it as the non-product view of nature.

### **The Non-Product View of Nature**

In his paper, “The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” Budd offers a second and more subtle account of the natural. He argues that “what is natural should be opposed

not to what is man-made but to what is artificial (a product of human artifice).”<sup>23</sup> In a similar manner, in his book, *Thinking About Nature*, Andrew Brennan writes that processes, objects and environments are natural “when their existence is not dependent on a certain kind of human management, production or interference.”<sup>24</sup> On this account the natural *is that that is not the product of rational agency in any way*.

It may seem at this point, given the definition above, that there is not an obvious difference between the non-product view of nature and the strong exclusion view. If some thing is a product of rational agency, then that something has been affected and influenced in some way by rational agency. I will flesh out the difference between the two accounts in what is to follow.

Before I move to consider the implications of the non-product view of nature it will be helpful to say a little on the idea of a “product”. The activities and intentional actions of rational beings are not the only source of products and production on the planet Earth. It is factually correct to claim that Bees *produce* honey through fairly complex processes of collection and storage. It is accurate to claim that most forms of plant life *produce* oxygen during daylight hours through complex physical and biological mechanisms. The point is that reference to “rational agency” is of critical importance to the non-product view of nature. If such a reference were excluded, then such a view would exclude certain activities that are considered to be straightforwardly natural. We can begin then to see, on the non-product view, how objects will be separated into the natural and artificial (unnatural). Brennan comments that “Ginseng root and willow bark are natural medicines...while painkillers,

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<sup>23</sup> Malcolm Budd, “The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 36, No. 3, July (1996), P208.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Brennan, *Thinking About Nature: An Investigation of Nature, Value and Ecology*, Routledge (1988), p88.

stimulants and antibiotics synthesized in laboratories are not.”<sup>25</sup> This is the nature of the non-product view.

What are the implications of this view? It is correct to claim that the non-product view of nature does not cast its net as far and as wide as the strong exclusion view I described earlier. It is not the case that virtually everything is artificial on the non-product conception of nature. It is evident, returning to the example of the iceberg, that the iceberg though affected by rational agency in the form of pollutants, is not a product of rational intentional action. We, as human beings, do not construct from natural parts (water, etc.) icebergs through processes of refrigeration. Physical and biological processes that are completely free from human production practices produce icebergs. This means that, on the non-product view, unlike the strong exclusion view, an iceberg is natural, not artificial.

There is an obvious advantage to the non-product view of nature. It is simply more in tune with intuition. On such an account the great wilderness areas of the planet and the oceans of the world are deemed to be natural even though they are affected in some way by chemical pollutants. The great wilderness areas and oceans are not a product of human activities. The non-product view of nature is straightforwardly more sensitive to the nature of objects.

But, is it sensitive enough? Concerns about the non-product view of nature become pronounced once we move from the less problematic examples of wilderness areas to environments that are heavily populated and dominated by the activities of human beings. I am referring, in particular, to those environments that are shaped by the industrial and manufacturing activities of Western Civilization. For example, it is

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p89.

apparent in Britain today, through the utilization of modern industrial agricultural practices, that the vast majority of the countryside is the *product* of rational (human) agency. The patch work pattern of fields, produced in part through the removal of hedgerows, is emblematic of humankind's re-arrangement of the environment. If most of the countryside is the product of rational agency, then very little of that same countryside is natural. Once again we are faced with a situation that is not very satisfactory given the character of the countryside. It is not credible to claim that the countryside is absolutely artificial when the trees that straddle the farm road possess a genetic make up that has evolved over hundreds of thousands of years. It is not convincing to argue that an agricultural landscape shaped, in part, by glacial movements and the workings of the elements is completely unnatural. The problem is that the non-product view of nature, though more sensitive to the character of objects and environments than the strong exclusive view, is still not sensitive enough to accommodate certain obvious observations about the environment in which we live.

It may be argued at this point that I have done a disservice to the non-product conception of nature. My claim that the agricultural countryside is a *product* of rational agency is simply too strong or at worst, unconvincing. The eagle-eyed observer may claim that it is difficult to see how the soil that makes up, in part, the constitution of the fields is a product of rational human agency. It is difficult to understand how the trees that line the farm road can be said to be products by the hand of man. There is merit in this objection. It is fair to say that the components of the arrangement are not strictly speaking the products of rational agency, but the arrangement of those components is a product of rational agency. It is in this sense that the countryside can be said to be a product of rational agency. But, this sense of

the term “product” is not unfamiliar to us. We would want to claim that a house made from granite blocks is a *product* of rational agency even though the granite of which the house is constructed is not literally produced by human beings. My claim that the countryside can be taken to be a product of rational agency stands and with it my objection to the non-product view of nature.

Of course, it is very easy to understand why Budd and Brennan’s non-product view of nature fails. The fact of the matter is that a product is, more often than not, a mix of the natural and artificial; the natural element being supplied by the components that make up the arrangement and the artificial element being supplied by the arrangement of the components by rational agency. If we conceive of the artificial *purely* in terms of that which is the product of rational agency, then by necessity the natural elements that make up the product are deemed artificial.

I have given three accounts of nature—the totality view, the strong exclusion view and the non-product view (or, weak exclusion view). It should be apparent by now that all of the respective accounts of the natural have serious failings. But, each account fails for one very good reason. The three mentioned accounts are not versatile enough to recognize that the world today, due to the widespread proliferation of human activity, is a complicated mix of the natural and the artificial. They are simply not sensitive enough to the nature of objects. The answer to this problem is to produce an account of the natural that does recognize such a complicated mix<sup>26</sup>. It will be an answer that recognizes that natural processes, objects and environments are, more

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<sup>26</sup> It would be very easy at this point to fill out the idea of naturalness by degree by reference to the latter two accounts of nature discussed previously. We could simply claim that the degree to which an object is natural corresponds to the degree to which the object is affected by rational agency or the degree to which it is the product of rational agency. This description of naturalness by degree is simply too vague. The explanation has to be more detailed. The following section is an attempt to produce in detail three different ways in which to conceive of naturalness by degree.

often than not, to a *degree* natural and to a corresponding *degree* unnatural (artificial).

It is to this issue that I now turn.

### **Nature and Naturalness by Degree**

The philosopher Paul Taylor endorses the idea<sup>27</sup> of naturalness by degree. In his book, *Respect for Nature*, Taylor writes:

“What we must recognize is that no sharp line can be drawn between natural ecosystems and those that are not natural. Perhaps the most appropriate method for making the distinction is to think of natural ecosystems as belonging at one end of a continuum that extends from ecosystems similar in all essential respects to those in existence before humans appeared on Earth, through a gradation of degrees of increasing influence, to the opposite end of the spectrum, where ecosystems are completely regulated and even produced by human beings. Examples of the latter are farms, golf courses.....We might call these ‘artificial ecosystems’...”<sup>28</sup>

The idea of naturalness by degree is not a new one. But, it is certainly an idea that remains to be developed and worked out in greater detail. The quoted passage above represents one of the more extended accounts of naturalness by degree to be supplied by philosophers, but even this more extended account is at best brief and at worst simply vague. My aim then is to put more meat on this all too bare bone.

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<sup>27</sup> There is a very brief reference to the idea of “naturalness by degree” in the work of Holmes Rolston III. See Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World*, Temple University Press, (1988), pp35-36. In addition, Robert Elliot does mention the idea of naturalness by degree, but denies that it is a viable concept. See Robert Elliot, “Extinction, Restoration, Naturalness,” in *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 16, Summer (1994), P143.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature*, Princeton University Press, (1986), P5

In a scientific paper entitled “A Conceptual Framework for Evaluating and Quantifying Naturalness,”<sup>29</sup> Jay E. Anderson offers three ways in which the idea of “degrees of naturalness” of a process, object or environment may be conceived<sup>30</sup>. The degree of naturalness of an environment corresponds to:

(A) The degree to which the system would change if humans were removed from the scene.

Or

(B) The amount of cultural energy required to maintain the functioning of the system as it currently exists.

Or

(C) The compliment of native species currently in an area compared with the suite of species in the area prior to settlement<sup>31</sup>.

I will consider these accounts of naturalness by degree in the order that they are presented.

The first account of naturalness by degree is hypothetical in nature. It is not suggesting that human beings ought to be removed from certain environments. It is simply suggesting that we can approximate the degree of naturalness (and the degree

<sup>29</sup> Jay E. Anderson, “A Conceptual Framework for Evaluating and Quantifying Naturalness,” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 5, No.3, September (1991).

<sup>30</sup> There is a short exchange of views on the idea of evaluating and quantifying naturalness between Jay E. Anderson and Frank Gotmark. For more information see Jay E. Anderson, “A Conceptual Framework for Evaluating and Quantifying Naturalness,” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 5, No.3, September (1991), Frank Gotmark, “Naturalness as an Evaluation Criterion in Nature Conservation: A response to Anderson,” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 6, No. 3, September (1992) and Jay E. Anderson, “Reply to Gotmark,” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 6, No.3, September, (1992).

<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that the three principles of naturalness by degree refer specifically to the naturalness of environments. However, this is nothing to stop principle (A) and (B) being modified so that the principles can apply to objects and processes. For example, in the case of (A) the degree of naturalness of a process corresponds to the degree to which the process would change if humans were removed from that process. In the case of (B) the degree of naturalness of an object corresponds to the amount of cultural energy required to maintain the functioning of the object as it currently exists. Importantly, there is no easy application of principle (C) to objects and processes. It is better to think that this principle is restricted to environments *alone*.

of artificiality) of an environment by considering the amount of change that environment would undergo if humans were removed. In other words, the hypothetical account (as I will call it) of naturalness by degree is similar to, but not the same as, the exclusion view described earlier. It is the same in the sense that rational agency is removed from the environmental scene, different in the sense that *hypothesized change* is the measure of the degree of naturalness and the corresponding degree of artificiality.

The key word in the hypothetical account is the word “change”. In a similar manner to Anderson I want to suggest that the *magnitude* of change and the *direction* of change may have a profound influence on the degree of naturalness of an environment<sup>32</sup>. An absolutely (or as near as one can get to an absolutely natural environment) natural environment on this system of measurement will be a system that functions “in essentially the same way if humans were removed.” There are some fairly obvious examples of this type of environment. If those few human beings that inhabit the Arctic were removed, then that particular ecosystem would continue almost unchanged. The point being that human beings in the arctic have not modified or impaired key ecosystem processes to any significant extent. In this case there would be a low magnitude of change signifying an environment that is to a high degree natural. The direction of change would be from a high degree of naturalness to an even higher degree of naturalness as key ecosystem processes recovered completely from

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<sup>32</sup> What is change relative to? What is the reference point? The point of reference relates directly to the time of application. If we were to apply principle (A) in the year 2000, the point of reference regarding the measurement of change would be the year 2000—How much would the environment change in 2000 if human beings were removed from the world? The answer to this question will tell us how natural and unnatural our present world is. Of course, there is nothing to stop the same principle (A) being applied in the future, but the reference point would become the future year chosen.

the minimal amount of human interference. This sort of hypothetical case tells us that wilderness areas like the arctic are to a very high degree natural.

If, however, the removal of human beings would result in the collapse of a particular environment, then it would be safe to conclude that that environment is to a very low degree natural. For example, if human beings were to be removed from a modern industrial agricultural environment, then such an environment would experience a dramatic amount of collapse and disintegration. The landscape would become choked with huge populations of weeds, which would in turn lead to enormous infestations of insects. Most crop plants would perish because without the application of chemical sprays resistance to attack from fungal disease and insect damage is removed. In this situation there would be a large *magnitude* of change. However, the direction of change would be very different to the direction of change cited in the previous example of the arctic. It would be change in the direction of disintegration. The point is that in this example human beings have modified and changed key ecosystem processes to such an significant extent that it may take millennia for these key ecosystem processes to recover; that is if they can recover at all. The hypothetical case informs us that such environments are natural to a very low degree.

So far I have dealt with easy examples. But, there are those environments, despite being the victims of substantial modification, that may “rebound spontaneously toward what [they were] before humans arrived. The system may change considerably, but the direction indicates that key processes and components were intact.”<sup>33</sup> It is not easy to produce examples of environments that spontaneously rebound to what they were like

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<sup>33</sup> Jay E. Anderson, “A Conceptual Framework for Evaluating and Quantifying Naturalness,” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 5. No.3. September, (1991), P349.

before the intrusion of human beings. But, a return to the agricultural sector may help provide some sort of explanation of what is meant here. If human beings were to be removed from an agricultural environment that practiced organic farming, then despite those substantial modifications that are inherent in such a farming practice the same environment would certainly bounce back to something near its original natural state. Intact hedgerows would continue to house and protect many different species of animal and insect. Grass fields would continue to grow and recover, as such species of grass do not depend on protection from artificial fungicides and insecticides. Eventually this would result in the return of certain species of meadowland grass. There would be no restriction on the movement of animals as they made and picked their own way through gaps in the hedges; resulting in a return to seasonal migration. The point is that the neatly rowed fields of the organic environment, with the exclusion of human beings, would undergo a substantial amount of change in a *relatively* short period of time. But, the direction of change would move in the opposite direction of environmental disintegration indicating that key ecosystem processes were intact. This means that an environment that has a fairly high degree of intrusion can, nevertheless, have a relatively high degree of naturalness.

There are a couple of important points to make about the hypothetical account of naturalness by degree described in principle (A). First, the discussion above demonstrates that the degree of naturalness of an environment need not necessarily be filled out in terms of change that refers to environmental disintegration. The example of the organically farmed environment shows that the degree of naturalness of an environment can be filled out in terms of change that refers to environmental regeneration. I make this point so that any temptation to replace the principle in (A)

with the principle (A<sub>1</sub>)—the degree of naturalness of an environment corresponds to the degree to which such an environment would disintegrate in the absence of human beings—is ill advised. Second, there is a causal connection implicit in principle (A). The degree of naturalness of an environment is the degree to which an environment would change if the causal influences of human beings were removed. There must be reference to causal influences because only causal influences can have an affect on the degree of naturalness of an environment.

I will now consider the second way in which to think about the degree of naturalness of an environment. That is, the idea that the degree to which an environment is natural corresponds to “the amount of cultural energy required to maintain the functioning of the system as it currently exists.” What does Anderson mean by the term “cultural energy”? He claims that cultural energy is “auxiliary energy derived from hydroelectric, natural gas, nuclear, or fossil-fuel sources and managed and used by human cultures.”<sup>34</sup> The idea is that the amount of cultural energy required to maintain the critical functions of an environment will provide a measure of naturalness and, by implication, artificiality.

There are two important differences between the first account of naturalness by degree and the second account. First, principle (A) determines the degree of naturalness of an environment on the basis of *change* while the principle in (B) makes such a measurement on the basis of *quantities*—amounts of cultural energy. Second, principle (A) makes a measurement on the basis of *excluding* the actions and activities of human beings where as principle (B) makes a measurement on the basis of *including* those actions and activities of human beings expressed through the

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<sup>34</sup> Jay E. Anderson, “A Conceptual Framework for Evaluating and Quantifying Naturalness,” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 5. No.3. September, (1991), P150.

management and utilization of cultural energies in environments. For example, it is apparent that in the case of the arctic that *no* cultural energy is used, nor need be used, to support those key ecosystem processes that maintain such an environment. This means that such an environment is to a very high degree natural and to a very low degree artificial in virtue of the fact that the amount of cultural energy required to “maintain the system as it currently exists” is negligible. On the other hand, it is obvious that an industrial agricultural landscape requires a substantial amount of cultural energy to support such an environment. It is a fact that large quantities of herbicides, insecticides, artificial oil based fertilizers and high technology machinery are necessary to maintain those environments that produce the majority of human foods. This is to say that such an environment is to a high degree artificial and is to a low degree natural in virtue of the fact that it takes large amounts of cultural energy “to maintain the functioning of the system as it currently exists.”

It may be inquired at this point how the degree of artificiality and the degree of naturalness of a human being fits into this picture. After all, up to this point, I have only referred to environments, not human beings. I do not think there is much of a problem here because we can conceive of *cultural energy*, in the case of human beings, in terms of medicines, invasive surgery, etc. The degree to which a particular human being is natural/artificial will correspond to, for example, the amount of medicines and surgery required to maintain the functioning of a human being as he or she currently exists. If, for instance, the functions of a human body are maintained by a life support machine, then the functions of that human body would be to a high degree artificial and to a low degree natural in virtue of the fact that large amounts of cultural energy are being used to maintain the aforesaid human bodily functions as

they currently exist. I take it that the point is made about the second conception of naturalness by degree. I now move to consider the third conception.

The last conception of naturalness by degree relates to “the complement of native species currently in an area compared with the suite of species in the area prior to settlement.” Anderson informs us that “an inventory of the compliment of native species that remains in an area, compared to those present prior to settlement, provides another measure of naturalness.”<sup>35</sup> I should say at the outset that I have reservations about this conception of naturalness by degree. It is not at all obvious how the third conception of naturalness by degree is meant to work or if in fact that it can work. I take it that an environment that does not experience any change in the number of native species before and after the settlement of human beings is to a very high degree natural. If there is a decrease in the number of native species after settlement, then the particular area is to a lesser degree natural. And, if there is an increase in the number of species after settlement, then the particular area is again to a lesser degree natural (human settlement may cause an influx of non-local species). But, the difficulty is that native species populations fluctuate in perfectly natural ways. The history of the natural world before the appearance of man is a history that includes the continuous and successive extinction of species. It is then perfectly possible that a native species may become extinct through wholly natural processes in an environment that includes human beings. In other words, it is conceivable that the settlement of human beings in an area may have nothing to do with the extinction of a particular native species. This means, according to principle (C), that such an environment would be *measured* as being less natural even though extinction took place through wholly natural processes.

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<sup>35</sup> Jay E. Anderson, “A Conceptual Framework for Evaluating and Quantifying Naturalness,” *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 5. No.3. September, (1991), P351.

There is, however, a way in which to respond to the reservation that I have just described. What we need to do is to introduce a causal relation. The measurement of naturalness and artificiality must only be based on those native species that human beings have *caused* to become extinct or have *caused* to flourish in numbers. The native species that flourish or become extinct due to purely natural causes will be excluded from the measurement. I am suggesting then that principle (C) be modified to include a causal relation that refers to the activities of human beings. This saves the third conception<sup>36</sup> of naturalness by degree<sup>37</sup>.

I should make it clear that I am not privileging one conception of naturalness by degree over another. I am leaving the choice of conception open. I am simply offering different ways in which to conceive of and account for the complicated mix of the natural and artificial that exists in the world that confronts us. It helps to account for and explain why a particular object, process or environment may be to a degree artificial even though that same environment may contain genetic codes evolved over many thousands of years.

There is a second advantage to the idea of naturalness by degree, an advantage that is crucial to environmental policy. I claimed in the introduction that a mature and adequate ethic of nature would not seek to justify the protection of *all* natural

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<sup>36</sup> In the introduction, I indicated that I would, in chapter five, provide arguments against present methods of species classification. I will argue that species categories are arbitrary and theoretically problematic. Of course, the claims of chapter five must affect the authority of the principle described in (C). However, there is a simple solution to this problem. The principle in (C) need only be replaced by (C1) where (C1) replaces the term "species" with the term "native organisms" to read—the degree to which an environment is natural corresponds to the compliment of native organisms currently in an area compared with the suite of native organisms in the area prior to settlement.

<sup>37</sup> It may be thought that the addition of the causal relation to principle (C) means that (C) collapses into the principle described in (A). However, there is a fundamental difference between the two respective principles. The principle in (A) works on the basis of excluding the causal influences of human beings where as the principle in (C) works on the basis of including the causal influences of human beings. It is for this reason that principle (C) does not collapse into principle (A).

processes, objects and environments. In this respect I offered three arguments to support the aforementioned contention. I will not repeat them here. However, this means that certain tough choices must be made regarding the protection of natural objects and environments. We, as human beings, must choose to protect some natural objects and environments while at the same time choose not to protect other particular natural objects and environments. How is the choice to be made? If we are in the business of protecting the natural, then it seems reasonable to conclude that the environments and objects that are to a high degree natural ought to be protected while the environments and objects that are to a low degree natural ought not to be protected<sup>38</sup>. In other words, the idea of naturalness by degree acts as a mechanism that enables choices to be made about objects and environments that compete for protection.

I have provided what I take to be a more workable account of nature. It is an account that is sensitive to the complicated mix of the natural and artificial. In addition, such a conception of nature allows *choices* to be made regarding *what* object and *which* environment ought to be protected. However, this still leaves the question of *how* nature ought to be protected? I want to suggest that the idea of protection must be consistent with the intrinsic properties of the natural. In other words, the idea of protection, and the act of protection must work on, and out of a recognition of, what nature actually is, that is out of a *respect* for nature.

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<sup>38</sup> I am not claiming that choices regarding environmental protection are based on considerations that relate to the idea of naturalness *alone*. Clearly, there is a whole range of competing criteria that may be used to make a choice between two environments. Nevertheless, naturalness (the degree to which an environment is natural) as part of the equation plays an important role.

## The Protection of Nature

I want to suggest, though in very broad terms, that there are at least two ways in which we can conceive of the protection of nature. We can conceive of protection in terms of preservation and conservation. I will deal with the latter concept first. The former concept, that of preservation, a concept that will turn out to be of more interest regarding the protection of nature will be examined at greater length in the remainder of the chapter.

In his book, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, John Passmore provides a definition of conservation. He writes, "To conserve is to save....I shall use the word to cover only the saving of natural resources for later consumption."<sup>39</sup> The conservation "ethic", as it may be termed, saves natural objects, processes and environments *for* future *use*. In other words, the conservationist in saving natural resources for future use values nature on a purely *instrumental* basis; "the conserver of forests has his eye on the fact that posterity, too, will need timber..."<sup>40</sup> Of course, the conservation ethic need not be filled out purely in terms of economic use. We can conserve nature for its beauty where the beauty of nature is seen as a *means* to positive aesthetic experiences. Nevertheless, the point to follow should be by now an obvious one. I claimed in the introduction that an anthropocentric ethic, if it is to be an adequate ethic of nature, must be able to accommodate the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable. A Conservation "ethic" by *itself* directly opposes the aforementioned intuition. As a result, a sophisticated anthropocentric ethic cannot adopt an account of protection that

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<sup>39</sup> John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Duckworth, (1980), p73.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p73.

is filled out in terms of conservation *alone*. We must go beyond the simple demands of the conservationist movement.

We are led then to the concept of preservation. But, how is this concept to be understood in the context of the protection of nature? Passmore writes, “Where the saving is primarily a saving *from* rather than a saving for, the saving of species and wildernesses from damage and destruction, I shall speak, rather, of ‘preservation’.”<sup>41</sup> It seems that preservation is to be understood in terms of being saved *from* the (excessive) activities of human beings, “the preserver hopes to keep large areas of forest untouched by human hands.”<sup>42</sup> This is essentially the idea of preservation in the sense of non-interference. I want to suggest at the outset that this account of protection is consistent with the intrinsic properties of nature. It is an account of protection that may act out of recognition of what nature is in actuality. However, the connection between preservation in the sense of non-interference and the protection of nature remains to be explained. I now turn to this task.

### **Preservation and Protection**

Setting to one side for the moment the idea of preservation in the sense of non-interference, what do we ordinarily mean by the term “preservation”? According to the *Oxford English Reference Dictionary* the word “preservation” means “to keep in an unchanged condition”. This definition reflects, in particular, preservationist policies and attitudes towards human artifacts. For example, when archaeologists talk about preserving artifacts they mean that they wish to keep the found artifact in an unchanging condition (unchanged condition from the moment of discovery). For

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<sup>41</sup> John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Duckworth, (1980), p73.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p73.

instance, the Marie Rose, flagship of Henry VIII, is constantly sprayed with water so that the hull of the excavated ship does not deteriorate (start to dry out, crumble and decompose), does not *change* in any substantive manner. The same considerations apply when human beings are concerned with the preservation of artworks. Human beings make a great deal of effort to keep artworks in a condition of unchange. In the environment of a gallery the effects of light and humidity are controlled so that the minimum amount of change (in the form of deterioration) takes place. Of course, in the long term, despite the best attempts of curators and those expert in preservationist techniques, art works will change. But, more importantly, the attempt to preserve particular objects reveal mans' *intent* to keep certain objects in an immutable state. In other words, the *aim, in part*, for the marine archaeologist and the gallery curator in preserving artifacts is to keep the aforementioned objects in a constant state of unchange.

If we define "preservation" in terms of intending to keep objects in a state of immutability, then it is apparent that the above mentioned conception of preservation clashes with one fundamental truth about nature. Nature is dynamic. It is in a state of constant flux. To quote Collingwood on this matter, "Greek, Renaissance and modern thinkers have all agreed that everything in the world of nature<sup>43</sup>, as we perceive it, is in a state of continuous change."<sup>44</sup> It is important to note at this point that the notion of change relating to nature can be cashed out in two different and important ways. First,

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<sup>43</sup> R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, (1964). P13.

<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that the ancient Greeks had a very different concept of change compared to the concept of change we have today. The ancient Greeks thought that change was cyclical rather than progressive. However, the latter concept of change became dominant once obvious examples of progressive change were considered. For example, a human infant moves from youth to middle age and from there to old age and eventually death. There is only progression here. There is no return to an original state.

there is the idea of gradual change—change by gradations—central to the evolution of organisms. This conception of change inherent in living nature will have profound implications regarding anthropocentric views on the scope of the moral club. I will return to the issue of gradual change in chapters five and seven. Second, and more to the point of this chapter, there is the previously described phenomenon of continuous change<sup>45</sup>. We cannot and do not experience the same natural scene twice. A wave chasing its way to the seashore constantly changes in height, breadth and color (white breaker to blue breaker) until extinguished against the sand of the beach; a clouded skyline is altered at every moment by the force of a prevailing wind; and a snow scene is remade in every passing second by the heat of the sun in Spring. In short, if we fill out the notion of preservation in the traditional manner, then it is not possible to preserve nature.

It may be argued that at this point I have simply overstated the case. It may be claimed that my argument is groundless because my argument for the constant mutability of nature is biased. I (mistakenly) concentrate on examples of natural objects that are by their very nature fleeting and momentary. In other words, I have not considered those natural objects that are *taken to be* more permanent and unchanging, for example, mountains.

However, an appeal to those natural objects that seem to be unchanging is not productive in the context of preservationism. Those natural objects that seem to be immutable, like mountains and land masses do in fact change over time, vast periods of time, it just happens that change is very slow. Mountain ranges are thrown up by

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<sup>45</sup> It should not be thought that the idea of gradual change equates with the notion of constant change. The evolution of an organism by gradations need not be constant; that is the evolution of an organism may not take place at a steady pace. This claim presupposes the truth of punctuatedism. I will not go into the details here. I will leave this discussion to chapter five.

volcanic action or movements of the Earth's tectonic plates, mountain ranges are eroded by glacial movement and the action of the elements. As a result, over a period of billions of years a mountain or a landmass will change dramatically. If anyone is in any doubt about this we need only consider the natural phenomenon of the Grand Canyon. Soil erosion over a vast period of time has created vast trenches in the surface of the Earth. The point here is that there is a tension between "human" time and geological time. Human life is of insufficient duration to witness a noticeable amount of change, in what are taken to be the more permanent features of nature, because of the duration of geological cycles. All nature is constantly changing. It is just a fact about nature that different natural objects enjoy different rates of change. As a consequence, the difference in change between a wave and a mountain is a difference in degree. It is not the case that one changes and the other does not.

What I want to suggest here is that the idea of preservation cashed out in terms of immutability is an inappropriate conception regarding the protection of nature. It is fundamentally flawed as it attempts to keep in a state of unchange that which by its very nature is in a constant state of change. The preservationist may reply that the above mentioned description of preservationist attitudes is not what is meant by the "preservation" of nature. Of course, as I have mentioned there are alternative accounts. But, the account I am presently considering does have some resonance within environmentalism. We need only reflect on the policy and attitudes taken towards species in danger of extinction. For hundreds of thousands of years, nature due to environmental and preditorial change, has put to the sword billions of different specie of living organism. Nevertheless, despite nature's own predisposition for the extinction of species, human beings through environmentalism, insist on trying to save

and keep in place endangered species whether or not the source of endangerment is natural or artificial. This amounts to a deliberate policy of unchange towards nature.

The upshot is that the notion of “preservation” cashed out in terms of immutability should be rejected. It may be thought at this point in the chapter that little has been achieved by discarding this notion of preservation; the debate has been more about the semantics of environmentalism. However, it is not a trivial finding that the language of environmental preservationism, far from being harmonious with nature, is in fact in direct opposition to the natural. It reflects a cloaked disregard and disrespect for nature. Or, to put it another way, the language of environmental preservationism hides a deeper and more worrying form of anthropocentrism in the sense that preservationism harbors the belief that human beings have in their power the ability to keep unchanged the ever changing. In other words, the very rhetoric of environmental preservationism is a conscious or unconscious guise for mans’ belief in his own supremacy over nature. Preservationism, in the sense defined is symptomatic of humankind’s lasting desire to tame the natural.

We have then two good reasons to reject the immutability account of environmental preservationism. First, it is an empirical and logical impossibility to preserve nature. Second, environmental preservationism should be rejected because it represents the worst excesses of the anthropocentric position. What do I mean by the “worst excesses”? The concept of preservation under consideration is an attitude and policy that is not harmonious, but discordant with the natural. It is in effect a *disrespectful* attitude to nature because it ignores what nature actually is (in a constant state of flux). This point may not bother the strong anthropocentrist who evaluates all natural objects in purely instrumental terms. However, if we are to develop a more sophisticated form

of anthropocentrism, one that accords a certain amount of *respect* towards nature, then it is apparent that the attitude and policies taken towards nature have to be to some extent harmonious with the intrinsic properties of the natural.

This leads us naturally to consider the first idea of preservation described at the very beginning of this section—preservation in the sense of non-interference. This concept of preservation can be found in the literature. In his article, “The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic,” Tom Regan writes, “By the ‘preservation principle’ I mean a principle of nondestruction, noninterference, and generally, nonmeddling.”<sup>46</sup> If we adopt, as far as is possible an attitude and practice of non-interference toward natural objects, processes and environments, then those natural objects, processes and environments will be able to pursue a constant state of change uninterrupted. This is to say that preservation in the sense of non-interference is consistent with, and acts out of recognition of, what nature actually is. It is an account of preservation that can genuinely accommodate the idea of protecting nature (there is no contradiction—keeping in a state of unchange the ever changing)<sup>47</sup>.

What is the point of developing this account of protection? If, I am, in the context of this thesis, to develop a sophisticated account of anthropocentrism, it must be an account that has as part of its make up a conception of protection that is sensitive to the *nature* of nature. If we are to avoid the worst aspects of crude anthropocentric

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<sup>46</sup> Tom Regan, “The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 3., Spring, (1981), p31.

<sup>47</sup> It may be thought that this account of protection is inadequate because it cannot accommodate human attempts to regenerate nature. For example, human beings will often try to reestablish species, previously endangered by the activities of human persons, in wilderness environments. The first point to make is that this is the resurrection of nature, not the protection of nature. The second point is that nature has an incredible capacity to claim back, in the long term, any ground lost to it in the short term through the inappropriate activities of human beings. For example, an agricultural field that is left fallow for a period of time is soon reclaimed by nature; bushes, plants, rabbit burrows soon take the place of neatly rowed crops. In other words, nature is its own best custodian.

views (mentioned earlier), if we are to give anthropocentric ethics a good run for its money, then it is absolutely essential that the sophisticated version of anthropocentrism incorporates into its structure an account of protection that is consonant with the intrinsic properties of the natural. In essence it is a form of respect.

In the course of this chapter a great deal has been said about nature. I have argued that the naturalness of objects, processes and environments is rarely an all or nothing affair. Rather, it is usually a complicated mix incorporating the artificial. In addition, I have provided an account of protection—preservation in the sense of non-interference—that is more adapted to the intrinsic character of nature. The main focus then has been, in one form or another, on what nature *is*.

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## Chapter Three

# The Moral Club, Human Beings and the Concept of Interests

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The first element of the sophisticated outlook is now in place. We have an account of nature and with it a description of its protection. However, three fundamental elements remain for the anthropocentrist—human beings, interests and the value of nature. There can be no doubt that an analysis and development of the ideas of “human being” and “interests” are prior to two important elements of the anthropocentric position. The point is simple. We cannot get clear about the limits of the moral club until there is clarity about the concept of “human being”. We cannot get clear about the derivation of nature’s value until we are clear about the ways in which we conceive of the idea of (human) “interests”. The project of this chapter then is to provide clarity on both issues.

The first half of this chapter will concentrate on the idea of “human being”. I will introduce two differing, though familiar, concepts of “human being”—“human being” in the sense of member of the species *Homo sapiens* and “Human being” in the sense of rational person-hood. These different conceptions will provide different perspectives on the limits of the moral club. I will call the respective anthropocentrisms that incorporate these conceptions of “human being” at their center—Radical and Conservative anthropocentric ethics. This will set up a choice.

Should the sophisticated outlook opt for the Radical or Conservative form of anthropocentrism? I will leave this issue hanging until chapter five where it will be addressed head on.

The second half of the chapter will concentrate on the idea of interests. The claim of the anthropocentrist is that nature ought to be *evaluated in terms of the interests of human beings*. As I indicated in the introduction, it may be thought, given the description of the principle above, that we can only be describing an instrumental approach to the value of nature. However, it does not follow, at all, from the principle above that the anthropocentrist must be committed to instrumentalism. The manner in which we spell out the derivation of nature's value, and the resultant account of the value of nature, will depend heavily on what exactly is meant by the term "interests". In this respect, I will develop a crude, but basic distinction in interests—the distinction between "having an interest in" something and something being in my "interests". I will look at the latter account of interests first. This will involve an examination of different versions of *well being*. I will argue that certain versions of well being have to be ruled out because (1) they are inconsistent with the theory of value to be developed in the following chapter and (2) they do not support the claims of the anthropocentric view. I will argue for the basic needs account of well being. It will be a short journey from here to draw a connection between this account of interests and the instrumental value of nature.

The former account of interests will be developed last. In a similar manner to the analysis of the latter conception of interests I will look at different versions of the former conception. I will opt for an account that focuses on the idea of taking an interest in something *for its own sake*. This conception of interests will, ultimately,

underwrite the non-instrumental value of nature. However, it is important to realize that the development of this account of interests is in preparation for the structure of value to be developed in chapter four. Only once this structure of value is in place will it become obvious how the non-instrumental value of nature is derived from the aforementioned concept of interests. I now turn to address the idea of “human being”.

### **The Idea of “Human Being”.**

What is a human being? This seemingly simple question admits of many answers. For Aristotle “man” is defined as a rational animal. It is rationality that sets “man” apart from the rest of nature. Or, a human is a featherless biped<sup>1</sup> or an organism that at birth has the greatest weight in relation to adult body weight or is a creature with the largest brain in relation to its body size. Or, at a less technical level, a human being is a tool user or an organism that possesses language or a creature that possesses a particular type of emotional life. There are, of course, some obvious problems with the definitions given above. There are species of chimpanzee that use tools. However, the anthropocentrist would not want to define them as human. There are species of ape that possess a very rich emotional life, but again the anthropocentrist would not want to include them under the banner of “man”. There are then many conceptions of “human being” that are not without their own particular set of conceptual problems. However, I want to focus on what may be termed the more *recognizable* accounts of the conception of “human being”.

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<sup>1</sup> The definitions given above represent attempts to give necessary and sufficient conditions for being a human being. It is then a particular approach to the definition under consideration. See John Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*, 3<sup>rd</sup>. Edition, Routledge, (1990), pp126-130 and D.Davis, *The Unique Animal*, London: Pyrtaneum Press, (1981), pp21-22.

## Two Conceptions of Human Being

In his book *Practical Ethics*<sup>2</sup> Peter Singer offers two different conceptions of “human being”. He writes:

“It is possible to give “human being” a precise meaning. We can use it as equivalent to “member of the species *Homo sapiens*”. Whether a being is a member of a given species is something that can be determined scientifically, by an examination of the nature of the chromosomes in the cells of living organisms.”<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, regarding the first conception, Singer is making an appeal to a *species* concept of human being; in this instance organisms are classified into species groups on the basis of the physical similarity of chromosome<sup>4</sup> numbers<sup>5</sup>. Concerning the second conception of “human being” he writes:

“There is another use for the term “human”, one proposed by Joseph Fletcher, a Protestant theologian.....Fletcher has compiled a list of what he calls “indicators of humanhood” that includes the following: self-awareness, self-control, a sense of the future, a sense of the past, the

<sup>2</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, (1993).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. P85.

<sup>4</sup> Organisms are categorized into species on the basis of chromosome numbers, as the cells of each species possess a characteristic number of chromosomes. For example, human cells have 46, cotton plants have 52, turkeys have 82 and some ferns have 1000.

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that the classification of organisms into species on the basis of chromosome numbers has its own set of particular problems. What can we say about those organisms that suffer from Down's Syndrome? For example, a Down's Syndrome child has one extra chromosome compared to what may be termed a “normal” child. If we stick strictly to categorization on the basis of chromosome numbers, then the Down's Syndrome child will be a member of a different species. In addition, it is important to note that this is not a problem that restricts itself to the human domain. The phenomenon of Down's Syndrome affects many other primate species.

capacity to relate to others, concern for others, communication and curiosity.”<sup>6</sup>

The second conception is basically a list of capacities and attributes that “human” beings are *typically* taken to possess. It is an appeal to a type. Or, to put it in another manner, human beings are the *sort* of beings that possess self-awareness, self-control, etc.

Before I move to consider the implications of these two conceptions of “human being” in the context of the “best possible defense” of anthropocentrism I will make a few additional comments about the latter conception.

It may be thought that there is a glaring omission in Fletcher’s list of indicators of human-hood. There is no direct reference to the possession of the capacity for rationality. It is perhaps, given the ubiquitous nature of such a capacity among “human” organisms, the first item that would and should appear on the above-described list. This conclusion is by itself too swift. The items on the list could be described as *aspects* of rationality. However, it is not clear that Fletcher has mentioned all the relevant aspects. He has, for example, failed to mention our capacity to reflect and the reasoning processes that are involved in reflection. The simple point to make here is that, implicitly, rationality is included in the list. It is not excluded. This means, given the list does include the capacity for rationality, that the list is basically a description of rational personhood. I am pulling on what may be termed a popular conception of “human being”, that which a normal human being consists in. We have then two conceptions of “human being”. The first conception I will refer to as the

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, (1993), p86 and J. Fletcher, “Indicators of Humanhood: A Tentative Profile of Man” in *The Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 2. No.5., (1972).

“species” conception and the second conception I will refer to as the “person” conception<sup>7</sup>.

It is clear, with little reflection, that the species conception and the person conception of “human being” ought not to be equated. It is a simple fact that not all members of the species *Homo sapiens* are “human beings” according to the person concept of “human being”. There are members of the species *Homo sapiens* that do not possess the capacities and attributes required for personhood. For example, a newborn infant is not self-aware, does not have self-control and is not rational<sup>8</sup>. The very same claim can be made about other members of the species *Homo sapiens* such as those that are brain dead, irrational, retarded and suffering from cerebral degenerative diseases.

Does anything rest on the distinction between the two conceptions of “human being”? As we are aware from the introduction an anthropocentric ethic limits the moral club to human beings *alone*. This means that direct moral standing is restricted to human beings which is to say that human beings are the only organisms to whom duties are *owed* by moral agents. The point is that the scope and limits of the moral club will depend on which conception of “human being” is at the center of an anthropocentric ethic. If an anthropocentric ethic uses the species conception of “human being”, then the moral club will be restricted to *all* members of the species *Homo sapiens alone*. If an anthropocentric ethic employs the person concept of

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<sup>7</sup> There is a conceptual problem with the person conception of “human being”. It is perfectly possible that an extraterrestrial organism could possess all of the capacities and attributes on the list. This would mean that such an organism would be classified as “human” according to such criteria. It seems, at least, that we would want to claim that such extraterrestrial organisms are not human despite the fact that they are human like. This is a problem for the anthropocentrist. However, I will take it that the person concept is limited in its application to the planet Earth.

<sup>8</sup> Human infants do not develop a sense of self until they are eighteen months old.

“human being”, then the moral club will be restricted to “human” persons *alone*, excluding certain members of the species *Homo sapiens*. The essential point here is, given that we are talking about what *sort* of human being can be at the center of an anthropocentric ethic, that the person concept of “human being” limits the moral club to moral agents *alone* while the species concept of “human being” extends the moral club to include moral subjects that are not moral agents<sup>9</sup>. I will call anthropocentrism based on the species concept of “human being” Radical anthropocentrism and anthropocentrism based on the person concept of “human being” Conservative Anthropocentrism<sup>10</sup>.

There are a number of points I want to make about both versions of anthropocentrism. I will start with a concern about the conservative account.

It may be thought that I have slipped into error, that my conclusion is too swift. If the moral club, according to the conservative account of anthropocentrism is restricted on grounds of the possession of particular capacities, then any non-human animal possessing the same particular capacities would have to be included in the moral club rendering the particular ethic non-anthropocentric rather than anthropocentric. For example, it may be claimed that the chimpanzee and orangutan ought to be included in the moral club central to the conservative conception in virtue of the fact that the

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<sup>9</sup> It may be thought that the transition from human persons to moral agents is problematic. I seemed to have introduced the concepts of moral agent and moral subject from nowhere. However, this is incorrect. I am trying to spell out different approaches to a “human centered” ethic of nature. The person conception of “human being” is basically a description of the capacities required for moral agency, while those members of the species *Homo sapiens* that fail to have the requisite capacities for moral agency fulfill the conditions required to be moral subjects (on the radical account). In this respect I refer the reader to the section on moral agents and subjects in the introduction of this thesis.

<sup>10</sup> It is no mistake that I use the labels of “Radical” and “Conservative” when referring to the different types of anthropocentrism. In the literature the very same language is used when referring to different types of biocentrism that restrict the moral club to different sets of living organisms. For example, the biocentrism of Tom Regan is conservative in its nature because it only seeks to extend the moral club to include all mammals where as the biocentrism of Paul Taylor is radical in the sense that he wants to extend the moral club to include all living beings, not just mammals.

respective groups of organism possess the attribute of self-consciousness (self-consciousness is an attribute on Fletcher's list of indicators of humanhood). However, it is important to realize that this objection does not stand. The point is a simple one. As I indicated earlier the conservative account limits its moral club to moral agents alone. There is no non-human organism in nature that has the capacity for moral agency; one need only consider what is required to be a moral agent in order to realize this is correct. This means, as long as we concentrate on the capacity for moral agency, the conservative account does not slide into a limited form of non-anthropocentrism<sup>11</sup>.

It should be noted that it is in the interests of the anthropocentrist to accept this line of reasoning. If it were the case that the conservative account ultimately suffered a slide into non-anthropocentrism, then there would be no choice between the differing accounts of anthropocentrism because, ultimately, one account would not be anthropocentric. The anthropocentrist would be forced to accept the radical account of anthropocentrism as part of the sophisticated view. This, however, is of the greatest significance. If it turns out that the radical outlook, as a speciesist morality, is morally unacceptable, then the defeat of anthropocentrism will be swift. If the radical outlook is not morally unacceptable, then anthropocentrism can stagger on. I do not want to preempt the arguments of chapter five—"Discrimination, Speciesism and Species Concepts", but it is fair to say that it is in the interests of the anthropocentrist that the choice stands, otherwise defeat looms nearby on the horizon.

So far I have attempted to demonstrate that the choice is real between conservative and radical anthropocentrism by demonstrating that the conservative account is a

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<sup>11</sup> There are obvious examples of ethics that have at their center the conservative anthropocentric outlook toward the limits of the moral club, for example, the ethics of Immanuel Kant and John Rawls.

viable option. However, it may be argued that I have looked at the wrong version of anthropocentrism when it comes to the viability of the proposed choice. It may be claimed that the radical account is a straw man; the point being that such a position is not held by anyone or any institution. The upshot is that the choice between radical and conservative anthropocentrism is apparent, not real.

The simple fact of the matter is that there are substantive and viable versions of radical anthropocentrism. There is a strand of thought in Christian ethics that espouses the radical outlook when it comes to the scope of the moral club. In a passing commentary on the motivations of the Christian tradition Peter Singer writes:

“There was a specific theological motivation for the Christian insistence on the importance of species membership: the belief that all born of human parents are immortal and destined for an eternity of bliss or for everlasting torment. With this belief, the killing of *Homo sapiens* took on a fearful significance, since it consigned a being to his or her eternal fate. A second Christian doctrine that led to the same conclusion was the belief that since we are created by God we are his property, and to kill a human being is to usurp God’s right to decide when we shall live and when we shall die. As Thomas Aquinas put it, taking a human life is a sin against God in the same way that killing a slave would be a sin against the master to whom the slave belonged. Non-human animals, on the other hand, were believed to have been placed by God under man’s dominion, as recorded in the Bible...Hence humans could

kill non-human animals as they pleased, as long as the animals were not the property of another.”<sup>12</sup>

If the claims of the above quoted passage are correct, then there can be no doubt that the Christian tradition takes members of the species *Homo sapiens* to have a special moral status. However, if the observer is not impressed by an appeal to God and with it Christian ethics, then there remain more *contemporary* examples of the radical outlook. In his article, “Anthropocentrism: A Modern Version,” W.H. Murdy argues that Darwin’s evolutionary theory establishes what he calls a modern form of anthropocentrism. I will not recount his entire argument here, but the following quote will demonstrate that he pulls on a species concept of “human being”. He writes:

“To be anthropocentric is to affirm that mankind is to be valued more highly than other things in nature—by man. By the same logic, spiders are to be valued more highly than other things in nature—by spiders. It is proper for men to be anthropocentric and for spiders to be arachnocentric. This goes for all other living species.”<sup>13</sup>

It is the final reference to species in the quote above that demonstrates that the version of anthropocentrism, promoted by Murdy, is an example of the radical outlook. This said, it should not be forgotten that the radical version of anthropocentrism is deeply embedded in the fabric of our present society. We go to great lengths to protect the human embryo while at the same time actively endorsing experimentation on non-human species that have rich cognitive and emotional lives. The point being that the most marginal member of the species *Homo sapiens* is a member of a moral club that excludes the most complex and sophisticated members of non-human species groups.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, (1993), pp88-89.

<sup>13</sup> McMurdy, W.H., “Anthropocentrism: A Modern Version,” *Science*, Vol. 187., (1975), pp1168-1172.

The point, I believe, is made. The conservative and radical accounts of anthropocentrism are by themselves real options. This means that there is a *real* choice to be made regarding the respective accounts. Should sophisticated anthropocentrism adopt the conservative or radical view? I will return to answer this question in chapter five. I now turn to consider different conceptions of interests.

### **The Different Conceptions of Interests**

In his paper “Rights, Interests, Desires<sup>14</sup> and Beliefs,” R.G. Frey makes an important distinction regarding the concept of “interests”. He writes:

“To say that “Good health is in John’s interests” is not at all the same thing as to say that “John has an interest in good health.” The former is intimately bound up with having a good or well being to which good health is conducive, so that we could just as easily have said “Good health is conducive to John’s good or well being,” whereas the latter—“John has an interest in good health”—is intimately bound up with wanting, with John’s wanting good health. That these two notions of “interest” are logically distinct is readily apparent: good health may well be in John’s interests, in the sense of being conducive to his good or well being, even if John does not want good health, indeed, even if he wants to continue taking hard drugs, with the result that his health is irreparably damaged; and John may have an interest in taking drugs, in the sense of wanting to take them, even if it is apparent to him that it is not conducive to his good or well being to continue to do so. In other

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<sup>14</sup> R.G. Frey, “Rights, Interests, Desires and Beliefs,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No.5 July, (1979).

words, something can be in John's interests without John having an interest in it. And John can have an interest in something without its being in his interests."<sup>15</sup>

We have then two distinct senses of the concept of interests. There is the sense in which something is in my interests and there is the sense in which I have an interest in something or take an interest in something. I should say at the outset that I take this distinction in interests to be, in *broad terms*, correct. Clearly, it is possible to take an interest in something that is not in my interests. However, I do not want to endorse Frey's particular version of the distinction on the grounds that his latter conception of interests is overly stretched. It sounds odd in the extreme to describe a compulsive want for drugs as taking an interest in drugs. This is not an appropriate way in which to use the concept of interests. This gives me the opportunity to modify the distinction offered by Frey and construct an alternative taxonomy of interests. This said, I will return to the latter conception of interests later in the chapter. In the meantime, I will spell out the first less problematic conception of interests in terms of a *good or well being*.

### **Interests in the Sense of a Good or Well Being**

In his book, *Well Being*, James Griffin<sup>16</sup> discusses several different conceptions of the idea of well being. In the opening chapter he looks at three different utilitarian accounts, that is, mental state<sup>17</sup>, actual desire and informed desire accounts of well

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p234.

<sup>16</sup> James Griffin, "Utilitarian Accounts," in *Well-Being*, Clarendon Paperbacks, Oxford, (1986).

<sup>17</sup> For a classical statement of mental state well being see J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Fontana Press, (1962) and J. Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Fontana Press, (1962). For a description and short discussion on the mental state account see Shelly Kagan, "The Limits of Well Being," in *The Good Life and the Human Good*, edited by Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr., and Jeffrey Paul, Cambridge University Press, (1992).

being. I will not discuss or consider these accounts of well being in any detail because these accounts are, ultimately, inappropriate and incompatible with the theory of value to be developed in the following chapter. I cannot mix a utilitarian account of well being with the Korsgaardian Neo-Kantian view on the value of nature. The opposition between Kantian ethics and Utilitarianism means that the aforementioned views on well being must be ruled out<sup>18</sup>.

I now wish to move on to consider two further accounts of well being: the need account of well being and the perfectionist account of well being. The need account of well being is much closer to the idea of well being expressed in the distinction in interests advocated by Frey. However, before I move to consider the need account I will give a brief analysis of perfectionism.

### **Perfectionism and Well Being**

In an attempt to draw some differences between desire accounts, objective need accounts and perfectionist accounts of well being Griffin writes the following:

“Desire accounts aim at capturing everything that comes into human well being. Objective [need] accounts aim at explaining a narrower conception of well being, one thought to be needed by moral theory. Perfectionist accounts aim at explaining a notion not clearly moral in a modern sense, closer at points to prudential value theory, but more

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<sup>18</sup> There is another reason for discarding the utilitarian conceptions of well being. The distinction I make between well being and desire (having an interest in something) cannot be made if we adhere to utilitarian accounts of well being. The reason for this is obvious. If we conceive of well being in terms of the fulfillment of actual or informed desires, then well being and having an interest in something are essentially one and the same thing.

concerned with what a good life is for humanity in general.....perfectionist accounts focus on a species ideal.”<sup>19</sup>

From a historical perspective perfectionism takes a particular form. It makes the claim that there is an ideal form of human life to follow. According to Griffin, historically, the most important version of the perfectionist outlook, the Aristotelian perspective:

“says nothing in the first instance about how we ought morally to act but tells us rather what makes an individual life good—a form of ‘prudential perfectionism’, in contrast to ‘moral perfectionism’. It says that there is an ideal form for human life to take, a form in which human nature flourishes and reaches perfection.”<sup>20</sup>

However, there is no substantive reason to think that the idea of perfectionism<sup>21</sup> ought to be restricted to the human species alone. In his article “Two Theories of Good” L.W. Sumner explains the logic of perfectionism. He writes:

“While it is tempting to think that the good which is foundational to ethics must be the human good, this restriction must be defended, lest it seem a mere unthinking speciesism.....Philosophical debates in environmental ethics have shown how difficult it is to provide the needed defense. For a perfectionist ethic it would surely be impossible. Perfectionism begins by telling us that excellence, by the standards of one’s kind, is a good thing. What reason could perfectionism have for narrowing this claim to one particular kind? Why should human

<sup>19</sup> James Griffin, “Objective Accounts,” in *Well-Being*, Clarendon Paperbacks, Oxford, (1986). P56.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p56.

<sup>21</sup> Griffin takes the most famous version of the above-described account of perfectionism to be that provided by Aristotle. However, Griffin does look at, though briefly, alternative accounts of perfectionism such as the Superman account found in the work of Nietzsche.

excellence be worth promoting for its own sake, but not the excellence of any other kind of thing? The logic of perfectionism drives it in the direction of holding that the good of the members of any natural kind is intrinsically valuable, and furthering that good is the ultimate point and rationale of ethics.”<sup>22</sup>

We see then that the logic of perfectionism drives us toward a system of morality that is based on natural kinds or as they are normally called species. To quote Sumner on this matter, “perfectionist evaluation imposes on an individual standards derived from the species as a whole; it enforces the hegemony of the natural kind.”<sup>23</sup> He continues, “you will be compelled to live up to the ideal reflecting the standpoint of the species.”<sup>24</sup> On this account the level of well being for any organism is in direct proportion to how near the life of the organism gets to the ideal of its respective species.

If, as Griffin and Sumner contend, perfectionism is based on species groups, and if, as Sumner claims, the logic of perfectionism drives in the direction that the good of the members of *any* natural kind is intrinsically good, then perfectionism is totally unsuited to provide a base for a sophisticated anthropocentric ethic or for that matter any anthropocentric ethic of the natural environment. The reason for this contention should be obvious. The claim that the good of members of any natural kind has intrinsic value is (1) the claim that non-human life has a moral worth that is not derived from the interests of human beings and (2) the claim of the radical biocentrist, not the anthropocentrist. This is to say that perfectionist accounts of well being

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<sup>22</sup> L. W. Sumner, “Two Theories of the Good,” in *The Good Life and the Human Good*, edited by Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr., and Jeffrey Paul, Cambridge University Press, (1992), P6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p10.

possess the structure of a non-anthropocentric ethic of the environment. This means that sophisticated anthropocentrism cannot utilize perfectionist accounts of well being because such accounts are totally at odds with one of the central tenets of anthropocentric environmental ethics—the value of nature ought to be derived *only* from the interests of human beings.

The point made above should not be lost on the observer. The discussion on interests in this chapter, not only provides a basis for the value of nature, but also demonstrates that certain accounts of interests are unsuitable for an anthropocentric ethic. I now turn to a more appropriate account of well being.

### **The Need Account of Well Being**

It is now time to consider what I take to be the most relevant and important conception of well being in the context of this chapter—the need account of well being (I will explain the importance and relevance of such an account shortly). The first point to make is that needs may be split up into two distinct groups. First, there are those needs that are instrumental. They are the needs we have because of the ends we *happen* to pursue. For example, if I am to pursue the sport of golf, then I need a set of golf clubs. If I am to run quickly, then I need to train. Second, there are those needs we have just in virtue of the way in which we are physically and psychologically *constituted*. For example, we need food to survive, we need water to hydrate and we need rest in order to function. They are what may be termed *basic* needs. There is, of course, an obvious and important difference between the two types of needs. Needs, in the former sense, are matters of *choice*. I do not really need to play golf. I do not really need to run quickly. However, needs, in the later sense, being physically and psychologically basic, are *not* matters of choice. They are the needs we have because

of the *type* of organisms we are. The way we are “built” dictates that we have certain basic needs and that these needs must be met. There is a sense in which we are simply the *instruments* of such needs. These needs must be met otherwise psychological or physical harm will *automatically* result. Basic needs are, to use the words of Griffin, “what we need to survive, to be healthy, to avoid harm, to function properly.”<sup>25</sup>

I should say at the outset that I wish to subscribe to a needs account of well being that concentrates exclusively on basic interests. The reason being that:

“It is obvious that instrumental needs as such have no moral weight; some have and some have not. But, basic needs, on the other hand, seem to have a quite special moral importance simply in virtue of being basic. For one thing, the presence of the notions of health, harm and proper function make statements of basic need normative—in the proper, strict sense of the term and is not contrary of “descriptive”. They all involve a norm falling below which brings malfunction, harm or ailment. And that explains why basic needs have an especially strong link with obligation: my ailment makes a claim on others that whims, hankerings, pleasures, and even happiness cannot.”<sup>26</sup>

Of course, the consequentialist will deny the claim that instrumental needs, as such, have no moral weight. The fulfillment of instrumental needs may certainly increase utility. However, the position of the consequentialist was ruled out earlier in the chapter. As a result, the claim of the consequentialist need not concern us here. The real point is that it is correct and proper to adopt a basic needs account of well being because basic needs are straightforwardly morally significant. This said, we are now in

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<sup>25</sup> James Griffin, “Objective Accounts,” in *Well-Being*, Clarendon Paperbacks, Oxford, (1986). P42.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* P42.

a position to give a definition of well being; *well being is the extent to which basic needs are met.*

There is a common concern about the basic needs account of well being described above. It is very easy to identify some basic needs, but not so easy to identify others. The examples of basic needs that I chose at the beginning of the section are obvious ones. But, there may be other basic needs that go beyond the demands of rudimentary human biology and psychology. Is education a basic need? If so, how much education is required to meet this basic need? Are we talking about mere literacy or an education that enables one to ask the great questions of life? Is vacation time a basic need? Is work a basic need? How does the nature of a society affect the nature of basic needs? What may be a basic need in one society may be a luxury in another. For example, in Third World countries education may be seen as a luxury rather than a basic need. What about needs on an individual basis? A person of high intelligence may *need* a high degree of intellectual stimulation where a person of lower intelligence may not. The answers to these questions reside in what is *definitional* of basic needs. This much is obvious. However, I will not address that issue here because it would represent an unacceptable detour from the main focus of the chapter and thesis. I simply note for the moment that there is the possibility that the range of basic needs may extend beyond the most rudimentary demands of our psychology and biology<sup>27</sup>.

This said, with the above described concern noted, it does not take too much imagination to draw a connection between the instrumental value of nature and the need account of well being; those natural processes, objects and environments that are

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<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that Griffin finds the basic needs account of well being to be unsatisfactory. I will not look at his arguments for this contention, as this would represent an unacceptable detour from the main emphasis of the chapter. For his criticisms of the basic need account of well being see James Griffin, "Objective Accounts," in *Well-Being*, Clarendon Paperbacks, Oxford, (1986), pp40-55.

a *means* to meeting the basic needs of human beings are objectively instrumentally valuable. For instance, rainwater will be objectively instrumentally valuable in virtue of the fact that rain water is, in part, a *means* to meeting the basic human need of health. In a similar manner, vegetation will be objectively instrumentally valuable in virtue of the fact that vegetation is a *means* to meeting the basic need for food. This is then a very straightforward account of the instrumental value of nature.

At the beginning of the section I mentioned that the above-described account of interests (basic need account of well being) is the most relevant and important in the context of this chapter. It is, I should add, the most relevant and important in the context of the thesis as well. It is an *important* account of interests because such an account is referred to and widely used in environmental philosophy. The biocentrist, Paul Taylor<sup>28</sup>, uses such a concept to try and justify an extension of the moral club to include non-human life. The ecocentrist, Holmes Rolston III<sup>29</sup>, attempts to use the very same concept to extend the limits of the moral club to include the biosphere in its entirety. On the other hand, the needs account of well being is *relevant* because it ties in very neatly with the Korsgaardian Neo-Kantian account of the value of nature to be developed in chapter four. Korsgaard writes:

“The condition of our lives make various things valuable to us in various ways.....it is the conditions themselves that make the things good, that provide various reasons for their goodness.....What we call

<sup>28</sup> Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature*, Princeton University Press (1986).

<sup>29</sup> Holmes Rolston III, “Values in Nature”, *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 3 (1981), “Values in Nature and the Nature of Value,” *Philosophy and the Natural Environment*, eds. Attfield, R., & Belsay, A., Cambridge University Press, (1994).

virtues just are the features of the thing, that given our constitution and situation, we find appealing or interesting or satisfying to our needs.”<sup>30</sup>

The contention is that Korsgaard draws on a connection between the needs human beings have in virtue of the way they are constituted and value. The consumption of water is *good* for a human being in virtue of the way that human beings are constituted. The consumption of education is *good* for human beings given the rational and intellectual capacities that they have. The point I wish to make is that the needs account of interests that helps to underwrite the instrumental value of nature (in the framework of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook) will fit in very neatly to the theoretical structure to be developed in chapter four.

I have given then an uncomplicated account of the instrumental value of nature. The account rests squarely on the basic need conception of well being. Of course, there are other ways in which to account for the instrumentality of nature. There are other sets of interests to which nature may be a means. The aesthetic interests of human beings may demand that nature is a means to some particular aesthetic experience. The economic interests of man may render nature a means to some form of monetary gain. However, if I were to run through every account of interests that could explain the instrumentality of nature the project would become overlong. The aim then, in this section of the chapter, has been to provide a minimal account of the instrumental value of nature. However, as I intimated earlier, the basic needs account is well chosen because it is an account of well being that has moral import, not only in the context of environmental ethics, but in the context of ethics in general.

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<sup>30</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness”, *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No. 2, (1983), P189.

Before I move to consider the second conception of interests offered by Frey it is important to make a few comments on another less obvious distinction—the distinction between present and future interests (I am still dealing with interests in the sense of well being). Of course, I am thinking here of the distinction between the interests of present human beings and the interests of future human beings. It may be claimed, and often is contended, that there is a way in which we ought to act toward the natural environment out of a respect for the interests of future human beings. The slogans for this argument are commonplace. We ought to protect nature for our children's children and our children's children's children (and so on). There is, however, a real problem with such argument. The position involves an obvious paradox. To quote Bryan Norton on the matter:

“...no system of ethics built exclusively upon the adjudications of interests of present and future individuals can govern current decisions and their effects on future individuals because current environmental decisions determine what individuals will exist in the future.”<sup>31</sup>

The point is a simple one. I will use Parfit's example of the paradox in this regard<sup>32</sup>. His insight is that current policies will have an effect on how many individual human beings and which individual human beings will exist in the future. If we adopt a policy of high consumption and high birth control rates, then many different individual human beings will exist in the future than would exist if a policy of low consumption and low birth control rates were adopted. If the policy of high consumption and high

<sup>31</sup> Bryan G. Norton, “Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol.6., Summer, (1984).

<sup>32</sup> For more information on this paradox see D. Parfit, “Energy Policy and the Further Future,” in *Energy and the Future*, Eds., MacLean, D. & Brown, P.G., Totowa, N.J. Rowman and Littlefield, (1983) and Bryan Norton, “Environmental Ethics and the Rights of Future Generations,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 4., (1982).

birth rates results in a natural environment that is harmful to the interests of human beings that are in fact born in the future, then these human beings cannot complain that they would be better off had more moderate policies been adopted toward the environment because, had a more moderate policy been adopted, the respective individuals would not exist. The crucial point is that, "Parfit's paradox shows that current policy cannot be governed by reference to...the interests of future individuals, because those policies determine who those individuals will be and what interests they will have."<sup>33</sup>

There are at least two moves that can be made regarding the idea of the interests of future human beings. First, we can simply discard the idea of future interests and concentrate on the interests of presently existing human beings. We ought to protect nature for those children that are presently existing. There is a way in which we ought to act toward the natural environment out of a respect for the interests of infant human beings. Second, we can reject the idea of an individualistic approach to interests in favor of a non-individualistic approach. This means that the anthropocentrist would not concentrate on the idea of individual human interests, but on the notion of the interests of a human generation. This is Norton's move. However, I will not pursue these points here as they are not crucial to the overall project of the thesis. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that there is a distinction to be made between present interests and the future interests<sup>34</sup> of human beings, and that the idea of future

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<sup>33</sup> Bryan G. Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol.6. Summer, (1984), p141.

<sup>34</sup> For more information on the notion of future human interests see Joel Feinberg, "The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations," *Philosophy & Environmental Crisis*, edited by W.T. Blackstone, University of Georgia Press, (1974), pp43-68, Robert Elliot, "The Rights of Future People," *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 6., No. 2. (1989) and Richard T. De George, "The Environment, Rights, and Future Generations," in *Ethics and Problems of the 21st Century*, Eds. Goodpaster, K.E., & Sayre, K.M., (1979), pp93-105.

interests is problematic. I now turn to consider the second conception of interests.

### **Interests in the Sense of Taking an Interest in Something**

There are several ways in which we may conceive of the idea of “taking an interest in” or “having an interest in ” something. First, there is having an interest in something in the sense of having a part of or owning a part of something. Second, there is taking an interest in something in the sense of having a hobby or pastime. Third, there is taking an interest in something in the sense of being absorbed by something. Fourth, there is taking an interest in something for the sake of something else. Finally, there is taking an interest in something for its own sake. I will deal with the different versions of interests in the order that they are presented above. In other words, I will move from the least important conception of interests to the most relevant given the project of this chapter.

The first conception deals with the idea of possession. If, for example, I were to claim that I *have an interest in* the computing giant IBM, then it would be to claim that I *own* or *possess* a number of shares in that particular company. It is then a conception that is concerned with possession and ownership. It is simply not relevant given the project of this chapter.

The second idea deals with the concept of having a hobby or pastime. What *interests* do you have outside of work? The examples of this sense of having an interest are numerous. There are those that have an interest in the practice of gardening. There are people that have an interest in the collection of stamps. However, this conception of “having an interest in” does not strike at the heart of the account of interests that I wish to develop. As a result, I will set it to one side.

The third version looks at the idea of being absorbed in something. There are clear cases where an observer may be interested in something in an almost trance like state. I am thinking here of instances where the attention of an observer is consumed, whether the observer knows it or not, by a particular subject matter. This can happen in almost any context. For example, a person can be absorbed by the story line of a novel moving from page to page oblivious of the world around her or absorbed, in the sense of being attracted to, or fascinated by another fellow human being. It is the nature of human beings to take an interest in other human beings. I will return to this conception of interests shortly.

The fourth way in which to conceive of “taking an interest in something”, that is in the sense of taking an interest in something for the sake of something else, is straightforwardly connected to the idea of instrumentality. If, for example, I take an interest in a particular person for the sake of getting to know her friend, then the interest I have in that person is instrumental in nature because I am only interested in that person as a means to a further end—meeting her friend. I will not spend any time on this conception of taking an interest in something because I have already dealt with the instrumentality of nature.

Finally, there is the idea of taking an interest in something for its own sake. As I intimated in the introduction, it is this conception of interests that suggests anthropocentrism need not be restricted to instrumentalism alone. There are many examples of this form of human interest. For instance, the art critic may take an interest in an art object not merely for the sake of some aesthetic pleasure or experience, but for the sake of the art object. This is to say that the art critic takes the art object to have a worth that exceeds mere instrumentality. The craftsman may take

an interest in the construction of furniture, not just as a means of remuneration, but for its own sake. It is an activity that is *worth* doing regardless of the instrumental benefits. In other words, the activity has a non-instrumental value. In both cases, it is in this sense that non-instrumental value can be derived from the interests of human beings.

I have described, though briefly, how non-instrumental value may be derived from the interests of human beings. However, there is an obvious problem with this account of interests and the resultant account of non-instrumental value. It is a problem that arises out of Frey's original distinction. I can take an interest in something even though it is not in my interests. This means that I can take an interest in something for its own sake even though that thing is not *good* for me. In addition, I can take an interest in something for its own sake even though it is not *good* for other human beings. For example, I may take an interest in the torture of innocent human beings for its own sake. The point is that the present account of interests by itself cannot provide a satisfactory account of non-instrumental value. It allocates value to items that are simply not *valuable*. There must be some sort of mechanism put in place that limits the capacity of interests to *confer* value. There must be some way of drawing a distinction between what we *happen* to take an interest in for its own sake and what we *ought* to take an interest in for its own sake. I will return to offer a solution to this problem, via Korsgaard and Kant, in the last quarter of the following chapter. In the meantime it has become apparent that the aforementioned conception of interests—taking an interest in something for its own sake—will be used to underwrite an anthropocentric account of the non-instrumental value of nature.

Before I move to the subject of the next chapter a brief comment regarding the relationship between taking an interest in something and value is in order. The first point to make is, given the idea of taking an interest in something in the sense of being *absorbed* by something, it is possible to take an *interest* in an object without taking an *interest* in that object either for its own sake or for the sake of something else. For example, I may take an interest in a kite flying in the sky in the sense of being *absorbed* by the kite or the flight of the kite without taking an interest in it for its own sake or the sake of anything else. This means that it is possible to take an interest (in the sense of being absorbed) in an object without valuing that object in any way. This ought to alert the anthropocentrist to an important distinction in human interests—the distinction between evaluative and non-evaluative interests. Clearly, a non-evaluative interest is of little use to the sophisticated anthropocentrist as such an interest can say nothing *at all* about the value of nature or any other object for that matter. The obvious conclusion is that, for the anthropocentrist, the non-instrumental value of nature must be derived from a subset of human interests—the evaluative.

The project of this chapter is now drawing to an end. I have set up a choice between two forms of anthropocentrism—the conservative and the radical. The choice, as I indicated earlier, will be resolved in chapter five. I claimed, at the beginning, that the value of nature in the context of an anthropocentric ethic will depend greatly on the way we understand and conceive of the concept of interests. The discussion on interests provided certain elements crucial to the sophisticated view. We now have a straightforward and it must be said relatively simple position on the well being of human beings. This provided a minimal account of the instrumental value of nature. Of course, the real challenge is to provide an anthropocentric non-instrumental

account of the value of the natural environment. The first step to meeting this challenge was taken in developing the idea of interests in the sense of taking an interest in something for its own sake. However, this aforementioned type of human interest will only be able to meet the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable in a particular framework of value. The following chapter is an attempt to build and explain that required framework.

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## Chapter Four

### Three Distinctions in Goodness for Anthropocentric Environmentalism

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If an anthropocentric environmental ethic is to meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature, then such an environmental ethic must be able to accommodate certain intuitions; one of the most important being that nature is non-instrumentally valuable. However, the challenge to provide an anthropocentric non-instrumental account of the value of nature may be seen as an impossible project to fulfil. Certain philosophers, Regan<sup>1</sup> and Rolston,<sup>2</sup> to mention two, claim that an anthropocentric ethic is simply an environmentalism designed *solely* for the *use* of nature. In other words, there is an equating of ideas; anthropocentric ethics and instrumentalism are seen to be one and the same thing. As a result, any attempt to provide a non-instrumental account of the value of nature will automatically produce a move to non-anthropocentrism.

This equating of ideas is simply mistaken. The respective terms refer to fundamentally different matters. The term “anthropocentrism” refers to the idea of being “human centered” while the term “instrumentalism” refers to “a way of valuing filled out in terms of use alone”. There is clearly a distinction to be made here. This means that non-instrumentalism in the context of an anthropocentric ethic remains an

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<sup>1</sup> See Tom Regan, “The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 3, (1981), pp20-21.

<sup>2</sup> Holmes Rolston III, *Philosophy Gone Wild*, Prometheus Books, (1986) and *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in The Natural World*, Temple University Press, (1988), p1.

open question. An inquirer can genuinely consider the idea of an anthropocentric non-instrumental account of the value of nature. As I intimated in the introduction there is some reason to think that such an inquiry will be fruitful. After all, it is a fact about human beings that we do not just value objects instrumentally, but non-instrumentally as well. Of course, the aforementioned fact by itself does not provide a non-instrumental account of the value of nature. There is a long way to go from the aforementioned fact to such an account. The journey from the fact that human beings value non-instrumentally to a comprehensive and theoretically based anthropocentric non-instrumental account of the value of nature is then the project of this chapter.

I claimed, in chapter three, that the second conception of interests—interests in the sense of taking an interest in something for its own sake—would underwrite an account of the non-instrumental value of nature. In other words, there will be a sense in which the non-instrumental value of nature can be derived from the aforementioned interests of human beings. However, I cannot give a proper description of the role of the above-mentioned concept of interests in the respective account until I have first of all put in place a particular framework regarding the structure of value. In the first instance my aim in this chapter is to describe a particular approach to the structure of value. I will then look at two views that exemplify the approach—Kantian and Moorean ethics. For the purposes of the anthropocentrist I will reject Moore leaving the way open for Korsgaard's interpretation of Kant. Only once this work is done will it become clear where the above-described conception of interests sits in the structure of value making explicit the connection between human interests and the non-instrumental value of nature. It is in the course of the above-described process of this

chapter that I will develop three distinctions in goodness for anthropocentric environmentalism. I now turn to the first two distinctions.

We are told by Christine Korsgaard that “it is rather standard fare in philosophy to distinguish two kinds of...value”<sup>3</sup>. The contrast to which she refers is the distinction between “intrinsic value” and “instrumental value”<sup>4</sup>. Usually, in philosophy, the concept of “instrumental value” is filled out in the following manner: an object or action has instrumental value if it is valued for the sake of something else. For example, a car is valued for the sake of travelling. On the other hand, according to Korsgaard, “a common explanation of the supposedly contrasting kind, intrinsic goodness, is to say that a thing is intrinsically good if it is valued for its own sake”. We are forced into this claim because it is the only alternative to something being valued for the sake of something else (instrumental value). However, claims Korsgaard, the words “intrinsic value” do not mean “to be valued for its own sake,” instead the words “intrinsic value” mean “it has goodness in itself”. How are we to understand this claim? Korsgaard is clear on this matter, “intrinsic value” refers “to the location or source of the goodness rather than the way we value the thing”. If this account of intrinsic value is correct, then it becomes apparent that the contrast between intrinsic and instrumental is false and deceptive. The “natural contrast” claims Korsgaard is between intrinsic value and extrinsic value where we understand the term “extrinsic value” to refer to “the value a thing gets from some other source” other than

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<sup>3</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness”, *The Philosophical Review* XCII, No. 2, (1983). All the quotes in this paragraph come from the aforementioned paper—see pp169-170.

<sup>4</sup> For supporting material see Christine Korsgaard, “Aristotle and Kant on the source of Value,” *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, Cambridge University Press, (1996) and “Kant’s Formula of Humanity,” *Kant-Studien* Vol. 77, (1986).

itself<sup>5</sup>. Given this claim we are faced with another “natural contrast” between a thing that is *valued* instrumentally (valued for the sake of something else or a means) and a thing that is *valued* for its own sake (as an end or as a final good). According to Korsgaard, we have two distinctions in goodness:

- (1) The distinction between things *valued* for their own sakes and things *valued* for the sake of something else—between ends and means—between final and instrumental goods.
- (2) The distinction between things that have value in themselves and things that derive their value from another source—between intrinsically good and extrinsically good.

It ought to be noted that, strictly speaking, Korsgaard provides only one distinction in goodness, the distinction between intrinsic goodness and extrinsic goodness. However, the important distinction that Korsgaard makes is a fundamental distinction; the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction refers to the *circumstances* in which things are good (the locus of value) while the final good/instrumental distinction refers to the *way* things are *valued*. The first distinction refers to the idea of the *valuable* while the second distinction refers to *valuing*.

It should be obvious, even at this early stage, to the informed observer that the two distinctions described above offer the possibility of a more versatile account of the value of nature. But, it may be asked more versatile than what? As a result, I will fill out in some detail the limiting nature of the “standard fare in philosophy” to contrast

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<sup>5</sup> I should say at the outset that Korsgaard’s reference to the idea of “source” in respect to the goodness of an object is unclear and not particularly helpful. For example, it is not clear at all how an object that has intrinsic value can be the source of its own goodness. For the moment it will be more helpful to concentrate on the idea of location. I will offer more clarification on this matter as the chapter progresses.

intrinsic value with instrumental value. Once this description is in place it will become readily apparent how the two distinctions allow the anthropocentrist to offer a more flexible account of the value of the natural environment.

### **The Equivalence Theory**

Korsgaard suggests that the “standard fare in philosophy” to contrast intrinsic value with instrumental value is under the influence of a theory. It is a theory that claims that the two distinctions in goodness described above are the same, that is equivalent to one another. The claim is that (1) final good or ends that are valued for their own sake are equivalent to, or the same as intrinsic goods and (2) instrumental goods, things valuable as means, are equivalent to, or the same as extrinsic goods.

In the first instance Korsgaard considers the first part of the equivalence. She contends that this thesis may be held in two distinct ways. First, we may claim that anything we value for its own sake, in virtue of the way we value it, is “intrinsically valuable”; and that is all that can be meant by the term “intrinsically valuable”<sup>6</sup>. For Korsgaard this amounts to a “reduction of the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction to the means/end distinction”. The result of the reductionism is to render the conception of intrinsic value subjective in the sense of “relative to the person” and of “varying among individuals”. The intuition here is that those things that are intrinsically valuable are those things that are valued for their own sakes (the equating of intrinsic value with ends that are valued for their own sakes obviously requires that the term

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<sup>6</sup> This view is found, in part, in the work of Callicott, J.B. See J.B. Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, State University of New York Press (1989), “On the Intrinsic Value of Non-Human Species,” in *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, State University of New York Press (1989), “Intrinsic Value in Nature: A Meta-ethical Analysis,” in *The Electronic Journal of Analytic Philosophy* (1995) and “Non-Anthropocentric Valued Theory and Environmental Ethics,” in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 21, (1984).

“intrinsic” no longer holds its original and traditional meaning)<sup>7</sup>. However, different things are valued for their own sakes by different people. Second, claims Korsgaard, the other way we might equate final good and intrinsic good is by contending “that those things that have intrinsic value are or ought to be treated as ends”. In other words, we have “a significant...metaphysical claim” that is our actions and behavior “ought to be a response to an attribute that we perceive in things—the attribute of intrinsic goodness”. As a result, according to Korsgaard, the equating of the two distinctions in goodness, by its very nature creates a framework where there are two distinct theories about final goods (1) intrinsic value is subjective or (2) “good things are the possessors of some particular attribute” that is objectivity is conceived as amounting to “the possession of an attribute” (the attribute being intrinsic goodness). At this point Korsgaard contends that “many people” believe that the framework described above exhausts the possibilities regarding theories about final goods. However, it is the contention of Korsgaard that if the two distinctions can be kept separate rather than equated, then an alternative theory is available.

I will move to the alternative theory in due course. However, before I make such a move it will be useful to consider the second part of the equivalence theory.

The second equating of values is the equating of extrinsic value with instrumental value. We are told by Korsgaard that the “consequences of this equation are serious”. If we go back to the notion of intrinsic goodness described in the two distinctions,

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<sup>7</sup> We see this account of intrinsic value in the work of the biocentrist Paul Taylor. He writes, “An entity is intrinsically valued in the sense only in its relation to its being valued in a certain way by some human valuer. The entity may be a person, animal, or plant, a physical object, a place, or even a social practice. Any such entity is intrinsically valued insofar as some person cherishes it, holds it dear or precious, loves, admires, or appreciates it for what it is in itself, and so places intrinsic value on its existence.” See Paul Taylor, “Are Humans Superior to Animals and Plants?” *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 6, Summer, (1984), P150.

intrinsically good things are thought to have their value in themselves, that is they have their value in any and all circumstances. However, if you find that a thing is not good in any or all circumstances, that sometimes it is good and sometimes it is not good, then we are forced to conclude that its goodness is extrinsic. In other words, the goodness of the thing is dependent on and derived from the prevailing circumstances. Thus, if extrinsic value is equated with instrumental value, then we have no choice, the extrinsic goodness of a thing must be cashed out in terms of means. No alternative is available.

It is this way of thinking, maintains Korsgaard, that is behind the inclination to conclude that the final good must be happiness or pleasure or some sort of experience. Take an activity that we would say is good for its own sake, in this instance, looking at a beautiful sunset. We are now faced with a question: do you think that this activity is a good one even if the person looking at the sunset does not enjoy it? If the answer is in the negative, then, it is claimed, you have admitted that the goodness of the activity is not intrinsic to the activity. That is, the goodness of the activity depends on the experience of pleasantness. But, claims Korsgaard, if all extrinsic value is instrumental value, then the only option in the situation described above is to claim that the activity is a means to pleasantness. So the big point. If the two distinctions are not equated with one another, then there is room for other accounts of extrinsic value. We may not be forced to accept the conclusion made about the activity mentioned above. Korsgaard writes:

“Separating the two distinctions.....opens up another possibility: that of something which is extrinsically good yet valued as an end. An example of this would be something that was good as an end because of

the interest that someone took in it, or the desire that someone had for it, for its own sake.”<sup>8</sup>

The possibility that Korsgaard refers to opens up, in the context of environmental ethics, the further possibility of an anthropocentric non-instrumental account of the value of nature. Let me explain.

If the two distinctions described above are equated with one another, then an anthropocentric account of the value of nature is forced to conclude that nature is merely instrumentally valuable. Why? As I indicated in the introduction the anthropocentrist maintains that only human beings have intrinsic goodness and any value that non-human nature has *derives* from human beings. If the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction is equated with and/or reduced to the ends/means distinction, then the only option available to the anthropocentrist regarding the value of nature is that of instrumentality. This may help explain the concerns of Regan and Rolston cited at the beginning of the chapter. However, if the two distinctions are kept apart and not equated with one another, then we have the possibility of an anthropocentric ethic where human beings that are intrinsically valuable ought to value natural objects, processes and environments not merely in terms of use, but non-instrumentally as well.

In her paper “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” Korsgaard claims that the two distinctions described in this chapter can be found in the ethics of G.E. Moore and Immanuel Kant. I will look at both accounts in detail. As I intimated at the beginning of the chapter, I will reject Moore as a theoretical basis for anthropocentrism, but

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<sup>8</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness”, *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No. 2, (1983), p172.

argue that Korsgaard's Neo-Kantian outlook can underpin and offer an anthropocentric non-instrumental account of the value of nature<sup>9</sup>.

### Moore and the Two Distinctions

The best way to explain the two distinctions in the context of Moore's ethics is to start with the concept that is central to his account of value. I am referring to the concept of intrinsic value. So far, with the aid of Korsgaard, I have claimed that the words "intrinsic value" mean "has goodness in itself". But, what does it mean to say that a thing has goodness in itself?

In his article, "The Conception of Intrinsic Value",<sup>10</sup> Moore informs us that certain people are quite mistaken about their own motivation when they object to the idea that goodness is subjective. Instead, for these individuals, an ulterior concern is at work, that is the idea that goodness is non-intrinsic (extrinsic). He writes:

"In the case of goodness and beauty, what such people are really anxious to maintain is by no means merely that these conceptions are "objective," but that, besides being "objective," they are also, in a sense which I shall try to explain, "intrinsic" kinds of value. It is this conviction—the conviction that goodness and beauty are intrinsic kinds of value, which is, I think, the strongest ground of their objection to any subjective view."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> It may be thought at this point that a Neo-Kantian approach to an anthropocentric account of the value of nature is a strange choice because the Kantian position is strictly speaking ratiocentric rather than anthropocentric. I think there are two replies to this objection. First, the problem can be met by stipulation. The Korsgaardian Neo-Kantian outlook will apply to rational human beings alone. Second, it is not clear that the objection is wholly accurate. In the *Metaphysics of Morals* and in his *Lectures on Ethics* Kant introduces *human* contingencies into his moral theory.

<sup>10</sup> Moore, G.E. "The Conception of Intrinsic Value", *Philosophical Studies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., (1922).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* pp 254-255.

The claim by Moore is a simple one we should not equate objective goodness with intrinsic goodness because there is an obvious asymmetry about the relation between the two sorts of goodness. He comments:

“The truth is, I believe, that though, from the proposition that a particular value is “intrinsic” it does follow that it must be “objective,” the converse implication by no means holds, but on the contrary it is perfectly easy to conceive of “goodness”, according to which goodness, would, in the strictest sense, be “objective,” and yet would not be “intrinsic.”<sup>12</sup>

We see then that Moore is making an important distinction between two sorts of goodness, objective goodness and intrinsic goodness.

Is he justified in making this distinction? He writes “Let us suppose....what is meant by saying that one type of human being A is “better” than another type B, is merely the course of evolution tends to increase the numbers of type A and to decrease those of type B”<sup>13</sup>. At this point Moore asks what do we mean by the term “better” in the context described above? He concludes that “better” means “better fitted to survive”. He argues that this sense of “better” is in no way subjective because it is an objective fact that human beings of type A are “better fitted to survive” in our present world than type B. In other words, “goodness” on this account is objective (objective in the sense of being true). However, claims Moore, those who object to the subjectivity of goodness, and insist upon the objectivity of goodness, would in turn object to the evolutionary account of ethics given above despite the fact that such an

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<sup>12</sup> Moore, G.E. “The Conception of Intrinsic Value”, *Philosophical Studies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., (1922), P255.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p255.

account of goodness is objective. Their real objection, whether or not they know it, revolves around the notion of intrinsic value. Why? The conception of intrinsic value described in the two distinctions of goodness is “incompatible” with the objectivist account of evolutionary ethics described above. Why? If by the claim that type A is “better” than type B you mean that A is better fitted to survive, that is “more favored in the struggle for existence”, then it is apparent that being “better” is a property that does not depend merely on the intrinsic nature of A and B respectively. In other words, although type A due to its intrinsic nature is better equipped to survive *here and now* in this world than type B it is quite possible that in another world “with different natural laws” type B due to its intrinsic nature would be better suited to survive than type A. The outcome of this finding should be apparent: type A is “better” than type B relative to certain circumstances XYZ and type B is “better” than type A relative to circumstances DEF. This means that A’s value is dependent on another party other than itself (XYZ); type A is not valuable in itself despite the fact that we have an objective account of goodness (extrinsic good). There is then a clear distinction between objective goodness and intrinsic goodness. We should not equate the two<sup>14</sup>.

Before I continue it is important to note the worth of this distinction between objective and intrinsic goodness. If goodness can be both objective and extrinsic, then there exists the theoretical possibility that we can provide an account of the non-

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<sup>14</sup> In an article called “The Varieties of Intrinsic Value,” John O’Neill tells us that there are three different senses of the concept of “intrinsic value”. First, there is intrinsic value in the sense of non-instrumental value. Second, there is intrinsic value in the sense of non-relational value. Finally, there is intrinsic value in the sense of objective value. It is certainly true that intrinsic value can be cashed out in the ways described by O’Neill. However, he fails to mention that objective value does not *equate* with intrinsic value and that non-instrumental value does not *equate* with intrinsic value. See John O’Neill, “The Varieties of Intrinsic Value,” *The Monist*, (1992).

instrumental goodness of nature where the aforesaid non-instrumental goodness is both objective and extrinsic. This means that there is a possibility of setting up a distinction between what people happen to value non-instrumentally and what is objectively non-instrumentally valuable. In other words, this distinction in goodness may offer a solution to the problem I described in the latter half of chapter three. The problem being that a human being can take an interest in something for its own sake even though that something is not *good* for the human being<sup>15</sup>. I will return to this strand of thought in the last quarter of the chapter.

In the meantime the distinction that Moore makes between objective goodness and intrinsic goodness tells us a great deal about his account of intrinsic value. In fact it informs us to the exact meaning of the term “intrinsic”. In Moore’s example of goodness in the context of evolutionary theory he founds his concept of the “intrinsic” on the basis of an important distinction between relational and non-relational properties. What do I mean by relational and non-relational properties? First, I will deal with the non-relational. For example, scientific knowledge informs us that glass has a disposition to shatter because of its molecular structure. The molecular structure of glass is a non-relational property of glass because if we were to transfer glass to other possible worlds the molecular structure of the object remains the same. In other words, the intrinsic nature (properties intrinsic to the object) of the object does not depend on any party other than the object (the glass) itself. On the other hand, regarding relational properties, scientific knowledge informs us that there is a distinction to be made between the way the world is in itself and the way the world appears. We are told that the color of an object *depends* in part on the make up and

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<sup>15</sup> See chapter three, page 119, for a full articulation of the problem.

structure of the perceptual systems of perceiving organisms. So the claim here is that despite the fact that the surface properties of the object are the same, and despite the fact that the frequency of light waves/particles remains constant (for both me and the Martian), I as a human being (in virtue of the nature of my perceptual system) may see (experience) object X as being colored red, while the Martian (in virtue of the nature of his perceptual system) sees (experiences) X as being colored green. The point here is that the color of X depends upon circumstances (biological constitution of perceptual systems) other than itself. The color of X is a relational property.

We can see how Moore uses the distinction between relational and non-relational in his example taken from evolutionary ethics. Type A is “better” than type B because the “betterness” of type A depends on other circumstances as well as A itself. This is true because in another possible world type B is “better” than type A. In other words, the “betterness” of type A is a relational property despite the fact that the “betterness” of A is objective.

In opposition to relational objective goodness, and in order to substantiate his distinction between objective goodness and intrinsic goodness, Moore must draw on a particular conception of the “intrinsic”. He presupposes that the notion of “intrinsic” utilized when discussing the intrinsic nature of objects ought to be the same notion when applied to value. In his book *Ethics* he writes, “By saying a thing is intrinsically good, it means...that the existence of the thing in question would be a good, even if it existed quite alone, without any accompaniments or effects whatever.”<sup>16</sup> That is, intrinsic value is non-relational, it does not depend on the desires and interests of human beings, it does not depend on effects and it does not depend on the likes and

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<sup>16</sup> Moore G.E. *Ethics*, Sixth Edition, Thornton Butterworth: London, (1930) p 69.

dislikes of people<sup>17</sup>. In other words, if an object's goodness is intrinsic<sup>18</sup>, then the goodness of the object is non-relational<sup>19</sup>.

We see then from Moore's example of evolutionary ethics that his concept of intrinsic value has a particular meaning. Nevertheless, given this account of intrinsic goodness Moore is keen to emphasize that intrinsic goodness should not be equated with something that is desired for its own sake. He writes about his concept of intrinsic goodness:

“...to judge that a thing is intrinsically good is not the same thing as to judge that some man is pleased with it or desires it for its own sake.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>It should be noted that Moore is a realist when it comes to intrinsic value. The claim that X's goodness is intrinsic is in effect a realist claim because the goodness of X does not depend upon the desires, attitudes and interests of a valuing consciousness. Value is seen as an attribute, not a relation to another.

<sup>18</sup> Moore describes goodness as a “non-natural property”. However, we must be careful here, he does not want to say that intrinsic goodness is an element in the intrinsic nature of an object like atoms; that would be to commit the naturalistic fallacy. The elements in the intrinsic nature of an object are natural properties and ought not to be identified with intrinsic goodness. Nevertheless, intrinsic goodness is dependent on the intrinsic nature of an object and is just as permanent as long as the object in question remains the same. In other words, as long as the natural properties of the object remain the same, so in turn the intrinsic goodness of the object remains constant. For Moore (intrinsic) goodness is not reducible to natural properties, but depends (supervenience) on natural properties.

<sup>19</sup> Moore's account of non-relational intrinsic goodness is further substantiated by the methodology he employs to “discover” whether or not an object's goodness is intrinsic or extrinsic: the method of absolute isolation. In *Principia Ethica*, Moore describes the method that should be employed to determine which things have intrinsic value. He writes, “In order to arrive at the correct decision....it is necessary to consider what things are such that, if they existed by themselves, in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good.” Moore gives an example of how this test should be applied. He asks us to imagine two possible worlds. The first possible world is “exceedingly beautiful”. We are asked by Moore to fill this world with the most exquisite natural objects each object in harmony with the other, each object only adding to the beauty of the whole, not subtracting. Then we are asked by Moore to imagine another possible world one that is ugly in the extreme. Moore claims that we are “entitled to compare” such a pair of possible worlds. However, “the only thing that we are not entitled to imagine is that any human being ever has or ever, by any possibility, can, live in either, can ever see and enjoy the beauty of the one or hate the foulness of the other”. Given this account of the two possible worlds Moore claims that the beautiful world is better than the ugly world. If this claim is accepted that the beautiful world in itself is better than the ugly, then it follows, despite the fact that there are no human beings to enjoy the beauty, that the mere existence of beauty “adds something to the goodness” of the world. We see then according to Moore that the goodness of beauty is intrinsic. Its goodness does not depend on the interests, desires, likes or dislikes of human beings. In other words, the goodness of beauty is non-relational. See Moore, G.E. *Principia Ethica*, (1903), p187.

<sup>20</sup> Moore, G.E. *Ethics*, Oxford, (1912), p69.

For Moore, it is apparent that we should not equate non-instrumental *valuing* with intrinsic value. In Moore's terms, something that is desired for its own sake need not necessarily be something that would be good if it existed in *isolation*. For example, a man could desire the suffering of others for its own sake. Given this desire, the unnecessary suffering of others is a bad thing or to use the words of Korsgaard "worse than nothing, for it to exist quite alone". As a result, it is apparent that Moore is aware of the two distinctions. He does not equate non-instrumental value with intrinsic goodness, which means he cannot equate instrumental value with extrinsic goodness<sup>21</sup>.

This recognition of the two distinctions comes to the fore in Moore's "Theory of Organic Unities". I will explain. There are two principles central to the theory of organic unities (1) on Moore's account intrinsic value generally, but not always belongs to "organic" complexes, not to simple things and (2) the value of a complex whole generally, but not always, is *not* the sum of the value of the parts of the whole. With great confidence Moore asserts that a "single instance" will be sufficient to demonstrate the kind of relation he has in mind. He asserts that "it seems to be true

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<sup>21</sup> I am a little concerned about the accuracy of Korsgaard's interpretation of Moore's view on the difference between that that is valued for its own sake and intrinsic goodness. In his book *Ethics*, he does make the distinction. He writes referring to the aforementioned distinction, "...these expressions are not commonly carefully defined; and it is worth noticing that, if our theory does assert these propositions, the expressions "ultimately good" or "good for its own sake" must be understood in a different sense from that which has been assigned above to the expression "intrinsically good". We must not take "ultimately good" or "good for its own sake" to be synonyms for "intrinsically good". So far so good. However, in the following passage, he comments, "[The] distinction between the conception expressed by "ultimately good" or "good for its own sake," on the one hand, and that expressed by "intrinsically good," on the other, is not commonly made; and yet obviously we must make it..." He continues, "The two conceptions....have one important point in common, namely, that both of them will only apply to those things whose existence would be good, even if they existed quite alone. Whether we assert that a thing is "ultimately good" or "good for its own sake" or "intrinsically good," we are always asserting that it would be good, even if it existed quite alone." This passage seems to indicate that the idea of non-relational goodness applies to all of the aforementioned conceptions of goodness, not just to intrinsic goodness as intimated earlier. I will not labor this point because, ultimately, I will reject Moore's account. I mention it only as a passing concern. See G.E. Moore, *Ethics*, sixth edition, Thornton Butterworth: London, (1930), pp73-75.

that to be conscious of a beautiful object is a thing of great intrinsic value”<sup>22</sup>. In the example cited the organic whole breaks down into two parts (1) the beautiful object and (2) being conscious (where we understand the phrase “being conscious” to mean “being aware of”). Moore claims that the first part of the organic whole (the beautiful object) “if no one be conscious of it, has certainly comparatively little value, and is commonly held to have none at<sup>23</sup> all.”<sup>24</sup> Regarding the second component of the organic whole Moore is clear that consciousness usually appears as part of a whole (when conscious we are conscious of something). It is apparent when consciousness appears as part of another whole that these other wholes can have little value or negative value. For example, being conscious of a dustbin has little or no value, being conscious of the death of a loved one has great negative value. However, we cannot “always attribute the slightness of their (the organic whole) value to any positive demerit in the object”<sup>25</sup> because the object in question may approach “as near as possible to absolute neutrality”<sup>26</sup>. In other words, if we take the example of being conscious of a dustbin, the (little) value of the organic whole cannot be explained by reference to the object (dustbin) alone because the object has no positive or negative value. So we see in this example that the addition of consciousness to the whole (dustbin + consciousness) does not result in, does not confer a significant amount of value on the whole. As a result, “mere consciousness does not always confer great value upon the whole of which it forms a part”<sup>27</sup>. From this Moore reasons that the

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<sup>22</sup> G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press, (1903), p28.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p28.

<sup>24</sup> It is apparent that, for Moore, a beautiful object must have some intrinsic value because a beautiful object will pass the test of the method of isolation. But, it is here where we encounter the idea of intrinsic value by degree. In claiming that the beautiful object has “comparatively little value” Moore is making the point that the beautiful object has a small amount of intrinsic value.

<sup>25</sup> G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press, (1903), p28.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p28.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p28.

“great superiority” (greater intrinsic value) of the consciousness of a beautiful object over the beautiful object by itself cannot be accounted for by the addition of being conscious because as we know in other instances the addition of being conscious adds little or no value. We see then, according to Moore, that the sum of the value of the parts does not equate with the value of the whole. In the case cited by Moore, both the beautiful object and being conscious, individually, have little or no value, but in conjunction with one another the whole that they make has “great intrinsic value”. We have an “instance of a whole possessing a different amount of (intrinsic) value from the sum of that of its parts”<sup>28</sup>.

Given the description of Moore’s Theory of Organic Unities mentioned above Korsgaard writes:

“I hope it is evident....that the principle of organic unities....allows us to say of certain things that they are valuable only under certain circumstances....without forcing us to say that these kinds of things must be valuable merely as instruments.”<sup>29</sup>

But, what does Korsgaard mean by this claim? Let us start with the first part of Korsgaard’s formulation—it enables us to say of certain things that they are valuable only under certain circumstances. So we might say that a beautiful object and being conscious by themselves have very little or no value at all. However, given a certain *circumstance*, that the above mentioned parts come together to form an organic whole, then we can say of the respective parts that they have value. But, what kind of value is it? It is not that the value of each part of the whole increases. Moore is clear on this

<sup>28</sup> G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press, (1903), p29.

<sup>29</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness”, *The Philosophical Review* XCII, No. 2, (1983), p192

point he writes, “The part of a valuable whole retains exactly the same value when it is, as when it is not, a part of that whole.”<sup>30</sup> What alternatives are we left with? It is apparent that each part *contributes* to the value of the whole. Moore comments, “It is plain that the existence of any such part is a necessary condition for the existence of that good which is constituted by the whole.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, we can say that each part of the organic whole *contributes* to the good of the whole, therefore, each part of the whole has *contributive value*. In this instance, the parts (1) being conscious and (2) a beautiful object contribute to the value of the whole. It is the contributive value of the parts that is *dependent on other circumstances* other than the parts themselves. In other words, their contributive value is extrinsic because the contributive value of the parts is *dependent on* the forming of an organic whole.

So, the big question: why does the above-mentioned situation not force us to say that “these kinds of things must be valuable merely as instruments”? After all, it seems in the example cited by Moore that the parts are a *means* to the intrinsic value of the whole. Moore has an answer to this question. He writes:

“It is plain that the existence of any such part is a necessary condition for the existence of that good which is constituted by the whole. And exactly the same language will also express the relation between a means and a good thing which is its effect. But yet there is a most important difference between the two cases, constituted by the fact that the part is, whereas the means is not, a part of the good thing for the existence of which its existence is a necessary condition.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Moore, G.E. *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press, (1903), Section (19) p30.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p29.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* p29.

Here Moore is making a simple point. He is drawing a distinction between what constitutes the good and what is a means to the good. If a good thing Y is to exist, then the means X to that good thing Y need to exist (causal necessity). However, it is apparent that if the laws of nature were different the very same good thing Y might exist in isolation from the thing X that is the necessary condition of Y's existence *now*. So, we see how the destruction of X would not affect the (intrinsic) goodness of Y. Or, to put it another way, the (intrinsic) goodness of Y remains unchanged regardless of whatever means are employed to achieve the effect of Y. For example, one may claim that painting is a means to the production of beauty. Nevertheless, if the means of production were destroyed or changed the intrinsic goodness of beauty would remain "entirely unchanged". However, when it comes to the case of a part of an organic whole we are faced with a very different situation. In this situation the good of the organic whole cannot exist unless the part or parts exist. For Moore, it is apparent that "the necessity which connects the two is quite independent of natural law"<sup>33</sup>. As we are aware, it is the whole that has (intrinsic) goodness. But, the existence of the whole depends on the existence and conjunction of the parts. If one part is removed we no longer have the whole to which goodness is intrinsic; intrinsic goodness of the whole is destroyed by removal of the part or parts. We already know that if a means is removed from its effect (beauty) "what remains is just what was asserted to have intrinsic value"<sup>34</sup>. Thus, the parts of an organic whole cannot be valued as means because their destruction results in the destruction of that which is deemed to be intrinsically good.

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<sup>33</sup> Moore, G.E. *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press, (1903), Section (19) p29.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p29.

We see then that Moore's theory of organic unities provides an example of something (a part of an organic whole) that is non-instrumentally good, in the sense of having contributive value, but which is at the same time extrinsically good because its contributive value depends on *circumstances* other than itself. It is also correct to claim that it is an objective account of non-instrumental value. It is a *fact* (it is true) that each part of the organic whole *contributes* to the intrinsic goodness of the whole. We have then an instance of something (a part of an organic whole) that is extrinsically non-instrumentally objectively good.

How does this account of the two distinctions developed so far relate to the general project of this chapter? If we concentrate, in the first place, on Moore's theory of organic unities, then there is a rather straightforward application. If we agree with Moore that intrinsic value usually belongs to organic complexes, and we conceive of the organic complex as the entirety of the natural world (the biosphere), and each natural object, process and environment are parts that contribute to the intrinsic goodness of the organic whole, then it is clear that each organism, natural cycle, micro and macro ecosystem alike will be extrinsically non-instrumentally objectively good. Of course, it may be claimed that the biosphere would not pass the isolation test for intrinsic goodness. Thus, rendering the particular application redundant. However, it is not clear that the biosphere would fail such a test. It seems reasonable to claim that a universe with the planet Earth in it<sup>35</sup> is a better place than a universe without the aforesaid planet.

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<sup>35</sup> I am using an extended version of Moore's isolation test. We are to imagine two possible universes, free from human beings, one that contains the planet Earth and another that does not contain the planet Earth. The claim is that the universe that contains the planet Earth is better than the universe that does not. If we accept the claim that the universe that contains the planet Earth is better than the one that does not, then it follows that the mere existence of the planet Earth makes a contribution to the goodness of the universe. In other words, goodness is intrinsic to the planet Earth.

It may seem to the naked eye that we now have a non-instrumental account of the value of nature fulfilling one of the central requirements of an adequate ethic of the natural environment. But, given the subject matter of this thesis the claim is simply misplaced. If we were to accept the claim that the organic complex called the biosphere is intrinsically good, then we would have not provided an anthropocentric account of the value of nature, but an ecocentric one. There are two reasons for this. First, it is the claim of the ecocentrist, not the anthropocentrist, that the biosphere is intrinsically good. Second, it is the claim of the anthropocentrist, not the ecocentrist, that intrinsic goodness is restricted to human beings *alone*. The point is that Moore's theory of organic complexes seems better suited to the requirements of ecocentrism.

However, it is not even clear that Moore's theory of organic wholes can make complete sense of the ecocentric position. As we are aware, according to Moore, the goodness of an organic complex is *destroyed* if a part of the complex is removed. If we apply this line of thought to the (intrinsic) goodness of the biosphere, then we would have to admit that, for example, the removal of one ant *destroys* the goodness of the aforementioned organic whole. But, this cannot be correct. It would be more convincing to claim that the value of the biosphere remains, if only *slightly* diminished, rather than to claim that such value is *totally* destroyed. The point is that the all or nothing approach to value inherent in Moore's theory of organic wholes is incompatible with common intuitions about the value of the planet.

In this part of the chapter I have examined and rejected Moore's position on the structure of value on grounds that relate directly to the issue central to this thesis. I have claimed that his theory of organic wholes is unconvincing when applied to the

value of the biosphere. However, even if we were to push this concern to one side for the moment, the theory of organic wholes is better suited to meet the needs of ecocentrism rather than the demands of anthropocentrism<sup>36</sup>.

Can Kant fare any better regarding an anthropocentric non-instrumental account of the value of nature? There is reason to think that Kant can and there is reason to think that Kant cannot. The former and supporting reason is that Kant can be considered as an anthropocentrist. The latter and detracting reason is that Kant promotes a form of anthropocentrism that values nature merely in terms of instrumentality. In his book, *The Critique of Judgement*, Kant writes:

“Looking to the vegetable kingdom we might at first be induced by the boundless fertility with which it spreads itself abroad upon almost every soil to think that it should be regarded as a mere product of the mechanism which nature displays in its formations in the mineral kingdom. But a more intimate knowledge of its indescribably wise organization precludes us from entertaining this view, and drives us to ask: For what purpose do these forms of life exist? Suppose we reply: For the animal kingdom, which is thus provided with the means of sustenance, so that it has been enabled to spread over the face of the earth in such a manifold variety of genera. The question again arises: For what purpose then do these herbivora exist? The answer would be something like this: For the carnivora, which are only able to live on

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<sup>36</sup> I could have wheeled out the usual suspects. I could reject Moore's theory of value on the basis of claims about metaphysical queerness and the requirement of the possession of special moral perceptual faculties on behalf of the moral spectator. However, I have sought to provide independent grounds for such a rejection. I suggest then that Moore's two distinctions in goodness be set aside. See J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Penguin Books, (1977), pp38-42.

what itself has animal life. At last we get down to the question: What is the end and purpose of these and all the preceding natural kingdoms? For man, we say, and the multifarious uses to which his intelligence teaches him to put all these forms of life. He is the ultimate end of creation here upon earth because he is the one and only being upon it that is able to form a conception of ends, and from an aggregate of things purposively fashioned to construct by the aid of his reason a system of ends.”<sup>37</sup>

We see then that nature is, according to Kant, a *means* to an ultimate end—that end being man (rational nature). However, despite the claims about the value of nature inherent in Kant’s *original* account there is reason to think that a Korsgaardian reading of Kant can overcome the latter obstacle to produce what may be termed a Neo-Kantian anthropocentric non-instrumental account of the value of the natural environment.

### **Kant and the Two Distinctions**

It is Korsgaard’s contention that the two distinctions in goodness found in the value theory of Moore is also present in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant. However, claims Korsgaard, despite the fact that both philosophers make and substantiate the same distinctions in goodness, the result is quite different for each respective philosophical outlook. While Moore assigns intrinsic goodness to a range of items, for example, beauty and friendship, Kant assigns intrinsic goodness to one entity alone, the good will.

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<sup>37</sup> J.C. Meredith, *Kant’s Critique of Teleological Judgement*, Oxford Clarendon Press, (1928), p88 or 426 to 427.

In the opening page of the first chapter of the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant writes:

“It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a goodwill. Intelligence, wit, judgement, and any other talents of the mind that we care to name...are without doubt good and desirable in many respects; but they can also be extremely bad and hurtful when the will is not good which has to make use of the goods of nature...Some qualities are even helpful to this good will itself and makes its task very much easier. They have none the less no inner unconditioned worth, but rather presuppose a good will which sets a limit to the esteem in which they are rightly held and does not permit us to regard them as absolutely good.”<sup>38</sup>

We see then that Kant in the opening page of his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* makes a clear distinction between unconditioned goodness and conditioned goodness. We are told by Kant that the good will *alone* is good without qualification (unconditionally good), it is good in this or any other possible world in which there is a goodwill. On the other hand, the goodness of intelligence, wit and judgement are conditional where we understand the condition of the goodness of the aforementioned items as the good will itself.

The opening passage in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* is very revealing. Kant’s concept of the “unconditioned” equates with the notion of the “non-relational” discussed earlier in this chapter; the good will is good “without

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<sup>38</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated and analyzed by H.J. Paton, Routledge, (1991), p59.

qualification” (good in any and all circumstances). Of course, on the other side of the equation the “conditioned” equates with the notion of the “relational”; intelligence and wit “are without doubt good...but they can also be extremely bad when the will is not good”<sup>39</sup>. In other words, it is conceivable that intelligence and wit are not good in any and all circumstances.

Nevertheless, if we were in any doubt about the status of the good will in the context of his theory of value, in a section entitled “The goodwill and its results”, Kant continues to expand on his claim that the goodwill is absolutely good. We are told that “A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes—because of its fitness for attaining some proposed end: it is good through its willing alone”<sup>40</sup>. Kant claims, given the worst possible scenario, that is if the good will were to lose all its power to “carry out its intentions...even then it would still shine like a jewel for its own sake as something which has its full value in itself”<sup>41</sup>. We see here an explicit statement by Kant that the goodness of the good will does not depend on the consequences of the actions of the good will.

In addition, Kant is keen to emphasize the solitary nature of the unconditional goodness of the good will. He rejects traditional accounts of unconditioned goods. For example, even happiness traditionally theorized as an unconditioned good (intrinsic good), on Kant’s account is a conditioned good (where the condition of the good of happiness is the goodwill). He writes:

“a rational and impartial spectator can never feel approval in contemplating the uninterrupted prosperity of a being graced by no

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<sup>39</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated and analyzed by H.J. Paton, Routledge, (1991), p59.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p60.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p60.

touch of a pure and good will, and that consequently a good will seems to constitute the indispensable condition of our very worthiness to be happy”<sup>42</sup>

Kant continues:

“Such a will need not on this account be the sole and complete good, but it must be the highest good and the condition of all the rest, even for all our demands for happiness.”<sup>43</sup>

The passages quoted above are telling in the context of Kant’s theory of value. We are informed that the good will, despite the fact that it is the only absolute good, need not be the only good, but is nevertheless the condition of all other goods including happiness. This is not to deny that happiness cannot be valued as an end (valued for its own sake), it is only to deny that happiness can have value as an unconditioned end. As a result, in the context of Kantian value theory, there remains the possibility that a thing can be valued as a final end (valued for its own sake), while at the same time the thing’s goodness is extrinsic.

According to Korsgaard, the fact that happiness, which can be valued as an end, is identified as a conditioned good means that the unconditioned/conditioned distinction is not reducible to the ends/means distinction. That is, they are not to be equated with one another. This claim is supported by a further distinction relating to the nature of the respective types of goodness in question. Korsgaard points out that for Kant the ends/means distinction “can be said to be a distinction in the way we value things”<sup>44</sup>. In other words, we can value things for the sake of something else or we can value

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p59.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p59.

<sup>44</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No.2. (1983), p178.

things for the sake of themselves (as a final good). On the other hand, the unconditioned/conditioned distinction does not relate to the way in which we value things, but instead relates to the circumstances in which things are good.

So we see that the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction found in the value theory of Moore is to be found in Kant but under a different set of labels, the unconditioned/conditioned distinction. As a result, Kant like Moore makes two distinctions in goodness (1) he contrasts intrinsic goodness with extrinsic goodness and (2) he contrasts final goods with instrumental goods.

If we are, in the context of Kantian value theory, to maintain the two distinctions in goodness described above, then there are several issues that must be addressed. First, how are we to understand Kant's concept of the "good will"? Second, why is the good will unconditionally good? In other words, what method does Kant use to substantiate his claim that the good will is good in any and all circumstances? And finally, what implications does Kant's theory of value have for the conferring of value on objects (valuing objects non-instrumentally)?

### **The Unconditioned Good**

How are we to understand Kant's notion of the "good will"? In other words, how are we to understand his conception of the unconditionally good? What is the unconditionally good? Kant makes the following comment about unconditioned and moral worth. He writes:

"That the purposes we may have in our actions, and also their effects considered as ends and motives of the will, can give to actions no unconditioned and moral worth is clear from what has gone before.

Where then can this worth be found if we are not to find it in the will's

relation to the effect hoped for from the action? It can be found nowhere *but in the principle of the will.*<sup>45</sup>

But what is this principle of the will? Kant claims, “nothing but the idea of the law in itself, which admittedly is present only in a rational being...is the ground determining the will”<sup>46</sup>. But, if the will is to be unconditionally good, then what kind of law must it be that determines the will? In answer to this question Kant writes:

“Since I have robbed the will of every inducement that might arise for it as a consequence of obeying any particular law, nothing is left but the conformity of actions to universal law as such, and this alone must serve the will as its principle. That is to say, I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law. Here bare conformity to the universal law as such is what serves the will as its principle.”<sup>47</sup>

Here we have the first formulation of the determining principle of the will; that is the categorical imperative. It is the categorical imperative as a determining principle of the will that establishes the unconditioned good of the good will. How does the categorical imperative establish an unconditioned end (the goodwill)? Unlike Moore, Kant does not employ a method of isolation, but instead relies on what has to be the case. Given that there is a categorical imperative (given to us by common morality), then there must be necessary ends. Why? If there is a categorical imperative, then there must be morally necessary actions. Every action has an end. Therefore, there must be a morally necessary end (unconditioned). We spell out the idea of the morally

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<sup>45</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, translated and analyzed by H.J. Paton, Routledge, (1991) p65.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p66.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p67.

necessary end in terms of the good will. As a result, in the first instance, Kant utilizes the *method of regression*, not the method of isolation, to establish the unconditioned (non-relational account of intrinsic value) end.

But, what is the unconditioned end? In her article, “Kant’s Formula of Humanity”, Korsgaard argues that the second formulation of the categorical imperative demonstrates that the unconditioned end is “humanity”<sup>48</sup>. However, before I move to the second formulation of the categorical imperative we had better consider what Kant means by the term “humanity”. As Korsgaard correctly points out, Kant in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* uses the terms “humanity” and “rational nature” interchangeably. This is our first clue. In addition, in “The Doctrine of Virtue”, Kant gives a clear statement of his conception of humanity. He writes about humanity:

“The power to set an end—any end whatsoever—is the characteristic of humanity (as distinguished from animality). Hence there is also bound up with the end of humanity in our own person the rational will, and so the duty, to make ourselves worthy of humanity by culture in general, by procuring or promoting the power to realize all possible ends, so far as this power is to be found in himself.”<sup>49</sup>

In the passage above Kant asserts that the characteristic feature of humanity is the ability to set an end (ends are set by practical reason). In claiming that “the ability to set an end” is the characteristic feature of humanity he is making an important distinction between human beings and non-human animals. Humanity is set apart from

<sup>48</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Kant’s Formula of Humanity,” *Kant-Studien* Vol. 77, (1986).

<sup>49</sup> Immanuel Kant, “The Doctrine of Virtue” in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Translated by Mary Gregor, Cambridge University Press, (1991), p195. Reprinted in Christine Korsgaard’s “Kant’s Formula of Humanity” *Kant-Studien* Vol.77, (1986), P187.

animality. For human beings practical reason is the determinant of action. However, for animals, unlike human beings, in terms of acting instinct alone is the deciding factor. So, according to Kant, the distinction between human and animal is cashed out in terms of rationality. Humanity is rational nature.

What is the status of humanity or rational nature? Kant writes:

*“Rational nature exists as an end in itself. This is the way in which a man necessarily conceives his own existence: it is therefore so far a subjective principle of human actions. But it is also the way in which every other rational being conceives his existence on the same rational ground which is valid also for me; hence at the same time an objective principle, from which, as a supreme practical ground, it must be possible to derive all laws for the will. The practical imperative will therefore be as follows: Act in such a way that you always treat humanity whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.”*<sup>50</sup>

The opening line of the passage above states that rational nature (humanity) is an end in itself; that is an unconditional end. How are we to square this claim with the earlier claim that the good will is the only unconditioned good? Both humanity and the good will are cashed out in terms of practical reason, as Kant informs us “the will is nothing but practical reason”.

So far I have identified what the unconditioned good consists in and the method used to establish the unconditioned good. However, a very important issue remains.

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<sup>50</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated and analysed by H.J. Paton, Routledge, (1991), p91.

How does Kant's account of two distinctions in goodness relate to the conferring of value on objects?

### **Kant and the Conferral of Value**

In the section entitled "Kant and the Two Distinctions" it was established that the unconditioned good equates with intrinsic value while the conditioned good equates with extrinsic value. The claim that something is conditionally valuable is the claim that "it is good only when certain conditions are met."<sup>51</sup> To quote Korsgaard on this matter, "Power, riches and health are good or not depending upon what use is made of them"<sup>52</sup>. The point is a simple one; power and wealth can be used for good or for evil. It is not the case that goodness is intrinsic to the aforementioned items. The goodness of power and wealth depends on conditions other than themselves. So, for example, if the government were to reduce poverty by government sanctioned investment in deprived areas, then it could be claimed that the power and riches of the government are good where the condition of the goodness of the respective items is the actual reduction of poverty. In this instance, it is a *fact* that the power and riches of the government are good. This means, according to Korsgaard, that "we can say that a thing is good objectively either if it is unconditionally good or if it is a thing of conditional value and the conditions of its goodness are met."<sup>53</sup> It is important to remember that this account of objective goodness relies on a distinction in goodness discussed earlier in the chapter—the distinction between intrinsic goodness and objective goodness. It follows from the fact that something is intrinsically valuable that it is objectively valuable, but it does *not* follow from the fact that something is

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<sup>51</sup> Christine Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No.2. (1983), p179.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p179.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p179.

objectively valuable that it is intrinsically valuable. I should make it clear that this distinction is not the third distinction in goodness alluded to in the title of the chapter. The distinction between intrinsic goodness and objective goodness falls under, is contained within, the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction. I will come to the third distinction shortly.

In the meantime, the two distinctions in goodness inherent in Kant's theory of value open up the possibility of a situation where an object is objectively extrinsically good. However, as we are aware, there are two forms of extrinsic goodness—the instrumental and the non-instrumental (valued for its own sake). I will begin with the idea of instrumental goodness. If X is valuable only as a means to Y, then X's value (goodness) is conditional or extrinsic. This means that the goodness of the end Y to which X is a means is a condition of the goodness of X. It follows that that which is valuable only as a means (instrumentally valuable) to an end can only be conditionally valuable (extrinsically). However, this is not the end of the story. As Korsgaard informs us, "if the conditions of their goodness can be met...[then] they can be good objectively."<sup>54</sup> For example, it is apparent that a knife is a means to cutting paper. A good knife will cut paper well. If in fact the knife does cut paper well, then the goodness of the knife is objective.

The case of objective non-instrumental extrinsic goodness is a little more complicated. Of course, it is crucial to the project of this chapter and the thesis as a whole. There are *ends* that are objectively extrinsically good. If we take the example of happiness, used by Kant and quoted by Korsgaard, we find that happiness is "only conditionally good". Kant writes:

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<sup>54</sup> Christine Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No.2., (1983), p180.

“a rational and impartial spectator can never feel approval in contemplating the uninterrupted prosperity of a being graced by no touch of a pure and good will, and that consequently a good will seems to constitute the indispensable condition of our very worthiness to be happy.”<sup>55</sup>

The point to make here is that the goodness of happiness is conditional. However, if the conditions of the goodness of happiness are met, then the goodness of happiness is objective. In other words, the goodness of happiness is objective and extrinsic despite the fact that happiness is valued as an end (for its own sake).

Of course, we cannot leave the issue of objective non-instrumental extrinsic goodness as it stands. There is an obvious question that comes forth from the discussion of the previous paragraph. What condition or conditions have to be met so that the goodness of happiness is objective? The answer to this question relies on, as we are advised by Korsgaard, Kant’s “other uses of the unconditioned/conditioned distinction”<sup>56</sup>. The example of happiness mentioned above tells us a great deal about the way in which Kant justifies the ascription of objective goodness to an object or action. He uses a method of *regression*. As Korsgaard informs us, “If anything is conditioned in any way, reason seeks its condition”<sup>57</sup>. What does this mean? Take the example of causal explanation: if we explain X in terms of its cause Y, then we go on to explain Y in terms of its cause Z and so on until we reach a causal explanation,

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<sup>55</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated and analyzed by H.J. Paton, Routledge, (1991).

<sup>56</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No.2., (1983), p180.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p180.

transparent to reason, of an “evident first cause”. How are we to apply this methodology to Kant’s moral philosophy? Korsgaard writes:

“To apply it here, it is only necessary to point out that just to explain a thing fully we would have to find its unconditioned first cause, so to *justify* a thing fully (where justify is “show” that it is objectively good) we would have to show that all the conditions of its goodness were met, regressing on the conditions until we came to what is unconditioned. Since the good will is the only unconditionally good thing, this means that it must be the source and condition of all the goodness in the world; goodness as it were, flows into the world from the goodwill, and there would be none without it.”<sup>58</sup>

If a person has a goodwill, then the happiness of that person will be *objectively* good because the goodwill that is intrinsically good is the condition of the goodness of that person’s happiness. If a person does not have goodwill, then the happiness of that person will not be good because the conditions of the happiness of that person will not have been met.

We have then a distinction between an end that is objectively good in virtue of being intrinsically good and an end (something valued for its own sake) that is objectively good if the conditions of its goodness are met. This is the original distinction made at the beginning of section between an unconditioned end and a conditioned end. According to Korsgaard, it is this conception of the good that appears in the second formulation of the categorical imperative—the Formula of Humanity as an End in Itself; “It is this argument that establishes the role of the goodwill in

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<sup>58</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No.2., (1983), p181.

conferring value upon the ends of the person who has it.”<sup>59</sup> I will not repeat the quote containing the Formula of Humanity as an End in Itself here<sup>60</sup>. In that quote, Kant tells us that rational nature exists as an end in itself. And, in addition, that every rational human being necessarily conceives of his own existence in this way. However, for a rational being to think in this way about his or her existence is, according to Kant, a “subjective principle of human action”. What does this mean? Korsgaard argues that this means that we “must regard ourselves as capable of conferring value upon the objects of our choice...because we must regard our ends as good.”<sup>61</sup> However, since other rational beings conceive of their existence “by the same rational ground which holds also for myself” it becomes apparent that other rational beings are capable of conferring value and are ends in themselves<sup>62</sup>. We see then that to treat another rational being as an end in itself involves taking on, adopting and making that rational person’s ends one’s own as far as possible. Why does this result in objective goodness? The answer: “The ends that are chosen by any rational being, possessed of the humanity or rational nature that is fully realized in a good will, take on the status of objective goods...objectively [good] in the sense that every rational being has a reason to promote or realize them”. In other words, the ends of rational beings are universalized because such ends are the ends for all rational beings. If something is to be objectively good, then that thing must pass the test of rational universalization. In

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p181.

<sup>60</sup> I refer the reader to page 151.

<sup>61</sup> The reason why rational beings must regard their actions as good is because one will be acting on a maxim that one believes has passed the test of the categorical imperative.

<sup>62</sup> There is an obvious problem here. It need not be the case that that which confers value is valuable itself. This is referred to as the chancellor fallacy. The chancellor does not need to possess a degree in order to confer degrees on graduates. This is a worry for the anthropocentrist, not for my thesis directly. Or, to put it another way, the anthropocentrist on this occasion is getting the benefit of the doubt.

the final analysis, for Kant (objective) goodness is conferred upon objects and actions through rational deliberation and choice (the good will).

In looking at the issue of objectivity I have also answered the problem relating to the notion of value conferral. For Kant, value is conferred on objects by rational deliberation and rational choice. As Korsgaard informs us, for Kant “goodness” is a rational concept in the sense that goodness is determined by reason. What is the advantage of Kant’s account? Unlike Moore, Kant does not encounter any objections relating to metaphysical queerness and special moral perceptual faculties. The point is that reasons are not metaphysically queer. It is apparent that the goodness of everything, apart from the good will, is relational because the good will is the condition of the goodness of all other things. But, this is a strength of Kant’s theory, not a weakness. Goodness is conferred upon objects through rational choice. However, as Korsgaard is aware a “natural objection” to this position is, it may be claimed, that the goodness of an object is what makes the choice rational, not the rational choice that makes the object good. I will pick this point up shortly. The important point here is that Kant’s account frees us from the necessity of assessing the rationality of a choice by reference to the goodness of the object chosen (goodness in the sense of non-natural property). Instead, “it is the reasoning that goes into the choice itself...that determines the rationality of the choice and so certifies the goodness of the object”<sup>63</sup>. We see then that the goodness of an object (for example, the rationally chosen end of happiness) stems from the demands of practical reason rather than the demands of ontology.

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<sup>63</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No.2., (1983), p183.

Returning to the “natural objection” cited above. The claim so far about final goods (that which is valued for its own sake), with the exception of the goodwill, and instrumental goods (that which is valued as a means to end) is that their goodness is relational and extrinsic. That is, their goodness depends on circumstances and parties other than themselves; they are not the conditions of their own value. However, it seems that we are faced with a paradox because we seem forced to accept the claim “that things are good because we desire...them, rather than to say we desire...them because they are good.”<sup>64</sup> In this context Korsgaard cites Ross who thought that when we call something good we think of the object as having the attribute of goodness. Ross thinks of our interest in and our desire for the object as resulting from the “perception” of the object’s goodness. It is this sort of view that leads to the further conclusion that goodness must be non-relational, free from the interests of another party; that is goodness is not relative to, and derived from interests.

However, if we consider an example of Korsgaard’s it will become apparent that goodness (final goods and instrumental goods) is relational and relative to interests (with the exception of the unconditioned good). Take the example of eating. Is eating of instrumental value? Clearly, eating is good because it is a means to living and survival. But, it is apparent that people do not eat just to survive. People do not go out to expensive restaurants in order to stay alive. People eat because of the pleasure of eating; the pleasure of eating may be valued for its own sake. What can we say about this case when it comes to the status of goodness? Does the practice of eating have to have the “property” of goodness in order for us to desire the practice of eating? Can we only assess the rationality of our choice to eat in terms of the goodness of eating

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p187.

(goodness as a non-relational property)? In other words, do we take an interest in the practice of eating because we “perceive” that the practice of eating has the property of goodness? The answer to this question is a resounding no. Rather, it is correct to say that eating is good under the *conditions* that you are hungry and that you require nutrients for the biological and physiological processes of your body. In other words, the goodness of the practice of eating is dependent on the interests of the eater; that is the goodness of the practice of eating is relational. We can tell a similar story when it comes to the pleasure we derive from eating. Due to the psychological conditions of a human being (for example, an interest in French cuisine) a great deal of pleasure can be experienced through the eating of food. However, the goodness of eating is *dependent* on the condition of the psychological state of the human being in question.

We see then that we do not desire a meal or desire to eat because we perceive food to have the property of goodness. The conditions of our lives mean that certain things are good for us, are of value to us. It is the condition of our lives that make things good. As a result, the goodness of eating, the goodness of food is conditional on the conditions of human beings. So, according to Korsgaard:

“...it is sometimes artificial to worry about whether we value those things as means or as ends. It is the conditions themselves that make the things good, that provide the various reasons for their goodness. The question is not whether the thing possesses a special attribute, but whether these reasons are sufficient to establish the goodness of the thing?”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Christine Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No.2., (1983), p189.

The point about sufficiency is an important one. The purpose of Korsgaard's project, in part, has been to demonstrate that a thing can be objectively good because we have an interest in that thing. However, it is apparent that an interest *alone* is not a sufficient condition for the objective goodness of an object. This relates to the problem that I brought up in the latter half of chapter three. It is clear that we can have interests that we would be better off without. For example, I can take an interest in something for its own sake that is in direct opposition to my health (an interest in consuming large quantities of alcohol); these sorts of interest far from being objectively good are straightforwardly bad. This shows that an interest by itself is a necessary condition for goodness, but not a sufficient condition. It must be the case that further conditions are met before objective goodness is achieved. As we are aware, the further condition on Kant's account is that reasons be universalizable. The test of rational universalization will "limit the capacity of [interests] to serve as reasons and so to confer value."<sup>66</sup> This is another way of saying that the goodwill must be the unconditioned condition of the conditionally good if the goodness of the conditionally good is to be objective.

The test of rational universalization enables the anthropocentrist to make an important distinction in goodness. This is the third distinction alluded to in the title of the chapter—the distinction between *subjective* and *objective* goodness. There may be many things that human beings *happen* to value non-instrumentally. What human beings *happen* to value non-instrumentally is the subjective element. I may value the activity of inflicting pain on others for its own sake. However, as we are aware, it does not follow from the fact that something is valued non-instrumentally that it is in fact non-instrumentally valuable. It is only those interests (taking an interest in X for its

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p190.

own sake) that pass the test of rational universalization that are objectively good. What we have then is a distinction between what happens to be valued non-instrumentally and what is non-instrumentally valuable.

Before I continue I should say that I do have some concerns about the test of rational universalization. It is not altogether clear that the test of rational universalization limits the capacity of interests to confer value in an appropriate way. My concerns revolve around the limits of the categorical imperative. However, I will return to this subject in more detail later in chapter seven.

Presently, we see then that a broadly Kantian account of goodness has a dual structure. First, an end is objectively good if it is unconditionally good. Second, an end is objectively good if it is conditionally good and the conditions of the goodness of the end (condition being good will/humanity) have been met. In the context of Korsgaard's interpretation of a Kantian theory of value we have the resources to contrast intrinsic value with extrinsic value and to contrast final goods with instrumental goods. In other words, we have, in the final analysis three distinctions in goodness for anthropocentric environmentalism.

I have given a fairly detailed account of Korsgaard's interpretation of Kant's moral theory. However, how does this interpretation fit into the general project of the chapter?

### **Anthropocentric Ethics and the Three Distinctions**

In chapter three I claimed that interests in the sense of taking an interest in something for its own sake would, within the framework of the sophisticated view, underwrite an account of the non-instrumental value of nature. It is this set of *evaluative* interests that will account for the non-instrumental value of nature. If, for

example, a rational human being takes an interest in a great wilderness area of the world for its own sake, and that interest passes the test of rational universalization, then that great wilderness areas of the world will be objectively non-instrumentally extrinsically valuable. It seems then that we have the tools to accommodate the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable fulfilling an important intuition about the value of the environment.

Before I continue I think it is important to distinguish the account developed so far from what may be taken to be a similar account of anthropocentrism. In his paper, "Weak Anthropocentric Intrinsic Value," Eugene Hargrove<sup>67</sup> argues that Callicott's form of ecocentrism could easily be interpreted as a form of anthropocentrism. Let me explain. The central claim of Callicott is that all value is subjective. He writes:

"I concede that, from the point of view of scientific naturalism, the *source* of all value is human consciousness, but it by no means follows that the *locus* of all value is consciousness itself or a mode of consciousness like reason, pleasure or knowledge. In other words, something may be valuable only because someone values it, but it may also be valued for itself, not for the sake of any subjective experience....it may afford the valuers. Value may be subjective and affective, but it is intentional, not self-referential. For example, a newborn infant is of value to its parents for its own sake as well as for the joy...it may afford them. In and of itself it is as value neutral as a stone or a hydrogen atom, considered in strict accordance with the subject-object/fact value dichotomy of modern science. Yet we may

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<sup>67</sup> Eugene Hargrove, "Weak Anthropocentric Intrinsic Value," *The Monist*, (1992), p194-195.

still wish to say that a newborn infant is “intrinsically valuable”.....In order to distinguish the *noninstrumental* value it has for its parents, relatives, and the human community generally from its actual or potential instrumental value.... In doing so, however, “intrinsic value” retains only half its traditional meaning. An intrinsically valuable thing on this reading is valuable *for* its own sake, *for* itself, but it is not valuable in itself, that is completely independently of any consciousness, since no value can, in principle, from the point of view of classical normal science, be altogether independent of a valuing consciousness.”<sup>68</sup>

The position of Callicott regarding the value<sup>69</sup> of the environment<sup>70</sup> is that a natural object, process or environment is intrinsically valuable (non-traditional account of intrinsic goodness) if that object, process or environment is valued *for its own sake* by a human valuer. We could very well claim, given Callicott’s assertion that human beings are the source of all value, that his account of the value of nature is anthropocentric. It is just a matter of terminology.

There are, however, some important differences between Callicott’s account of “anthropocentrism” and the neo-Kantian account developed in this chapter despite the fact that both accounts may be taken to be representative of the anthropocentric

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<sup>68</sup> J.B. Callicott, “On the Intrinsic Value of Non-Human Species,” in *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, State University of New York Press, (1989), p133.

<sup>69</sup> It should be noted that science itself says nothing concerning the issue of value. In addition, the claims of Callicott can only have merit if science can give a complete account of reality. It is just not obvious that science can.

<sup>70</sup> There is an obvious problem with the position outlined by Callicott. It is just not the case that all value depends on human consciousness. There are many examples of things that are objectively instrumentally good independent of the consciousness and interests of human beings. For example, it is a fact that water is good for plants; good in the sense that water is a means to sustenance and reproduction.

outlook. First, if a valuer must be the *condition* of the goodness of any or all objects, then strictly speaking all value on Callicott's account is extrinsic. Obviously, this is not the case with the neo-Kantian account where intrinsic (traditional meaning) value is limited to the goodwill alone. Second, Callicott's view is radically subjective while the neo-Kantian account is objective. If something is intrinsically valuable in virtue of the fact that it is valued for its own sake by a valuer, then anything that is valued for its own sake by a valuer will be, on this account, intrinsically (non-traditional meaning) valuable. This will apply to those things that are not even good for us. Or, to put it another way, Callicott's outlook has no device to limit the capacity of interests to confer value. The same cannot be said of the neo-Kantian account. The test of rational universalization provides such a limit. I will not pursue this point any longer. What we have is a very new and detailed version of the anthropocentric outlook regarding the value of nature.

Returning to the main thrust of the chapter the three distinctions in anthropocentric goodness have two very important implications that may be considered crucial in any environmental ethic. First, as I discussed earlier, and as I intimated a moment ago, it allows us to set up an important distinction between what *happens* to be valued for its own sake and what *ought* to be valued for its own sake. It is not the case that just anything that is valued for its own sake by a valuer can be non-instrumentally valuable; only what passes the rational universalization test is in fact non-instrumentally valuable. This means that we have the tools to deal with difficult cases. For example, those natural organisms that pose a lethal threat to human beings, for instance, the deadly TB bacterium, on this account will not be valued non-instrumentally because an interest in the bacterium will be one that cannot pass the test

of rational universalization. The point is that this form of anthropocentrism can take a view on the value and protection of natural organisms that is more in tune with intuition; that is we are not committed to the protection of each and every natural organism no matter how dangerous they may be<sup>71</sup>.

The second point refers directly to environmental matters. The value of certain natural objects, processes and environments is straightforwardly extrinsic, not intrinsic. Consider the following example cited by Karen Green in her article "Two Distinctions in Environmental Goodness"<sup>72</sup>. She writes:

"Take for instance the environmental value of a particular stand of tall trees in Tasmania, or the value of a particular breeding pair of Cape Barren geese, or the value of the Daintree rain-forest. In none of these cases does it seem plausible that the question whether the thing has the value of being worth preserving, or the question of the degree of its preservation value, depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question."<sup>73</sup>

The point is an obvious one. For example, in the 1970's Cape Barren geese were in danger of extinction<sup>74</sup>. As a result, the preservation value of the geese became extremely high. However, in the 1990's, due to protectionist policies the population of the Cape Barren geese rose to a point where they were no longer endangered. In fact, so prevalent had the species become that they were considered a nuisance. As a consequence, the preservation value of the Cape Barren geese became very low if not

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<sup>71</sup> The simple point to be made here is that that is valued non-instrumentally need not necessarily be good. It is only that that passes the test of rational universalization that is good on this account.

<sup>72</sup> Karen Green, "Two Distinctions in Environmental Goodness," *Environmental Values*, 5, (1996).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p34.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* p34.

non-existent. This example demonstrates that the preservation value of the members of the aforementioned species depends on circumstances that do not relate to the intrinsic nature of the members themselves. The preservation value relates to the number of existing members of the species. This means that the value property of being endangered is relational, not intrinsic. If the preservation value of a member of a species is based on endangerment, then the preservation value of that member must be extrinsic (relational), not intrinsic. This finding ties in very neatly with the anthropocentric account of non-instrumental value described earlier in the chapter. Why? If a human being or human beings were to value the members of an endangered species non-instrumentally (take an interest in the endangered species for its own sake), and this interest in the members of the endangered species were to pass the rational universalization test, then this would be to claim that the members of the endangered species were objectively non-instrumentally *extrinsically* good. This is in accord with the relational nature of endangerment<sup>75</sup>.

So far I have mentioned the strengths of this anthropocentric non-instrumental account of the value of nature. However, there is an important weakness to be considered. If there were no rational human beings, then there would be no value, whatsoever, in the natural world. This seems to fall short of the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable. Of course, this is not a problem that directly concerns the thesis because it is ultimately a problem for the anthropocentrist. However, I want to suggest two possible solutions to the problem. First, we could think of the value of human free nature counterfactually. Let us consider the era in the history of the natural

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<sup>75</sup> The same sort of story can be told when it comes to rare wilderness areas, etc.

world that did not contain human beings. I am thinking here of the period of time prior to the emergence of the species *Homo sapiens*. We could say, given the fact that *present* day human beings value (human free) past nature non-instrumentally, that if there had been human beings existent at that period of time in the history of the natural world, then nature at that point in time would have been non-instrumentally valuable. The idea is, despite the fact that human beings were not around millions of years ago to value (human free) nature non-instrumentally, the non-instrumental valuing of past nature *now* entails that nature had non-instrumental value *then*. The second solution is less satisfactory, but is, nevertheless, a possible way out for the anthropocentrist. Given the present state of environmental malpractice (described in the introduction of the thesis) it is clear that environmentalism is predominantly focused on the issue of protection. If we concentrate on the issue of the protection of nature, then this issue can only become an issue if there are rational beings existent in the first place. This is to say that the protection of nature can only become a concern if there are rational agents acting on the world in a particular manner. If there are no rational human beings, then there are no agents going about making the world to a degree artificial. If there are no agents going about the world making it to a degree artificial, then the question of the non-instrumental value of nature is redundant. The anthropocentrist can have the best of both worlds. If there are no human beings in the world, then the question of nature's value is pointless. If there are human beings in the world, then there are valuers about to provide an account of the non-instrumental value of nature. The idea is that the value of nature (given the context—the protection of nature) can only be of importance when there are rational (human) beings acting on the world.

The final point I want to make is purely one related to clarification. It is still the case, despite the fact that nature may be non-instrumentally valuable on the above-described account, that the moral club (those to whom duties are owed) is still limited to human beings alone. There are two good reasons for this position. First, if non-human organisms were organisms to whom duties were owed by moral agents, then we would have moved from anthropocentrism to non-anthropocentrism. The point being that direct moral standing would have extended beyond the domain of the human. Second, we do not want to be committed to the view that, in virtue of the fact that rational human beings value a rock scene non-instrumentally, moral agents owe duties to rocks. This is simply to state that we do not want to equate direct moral standing with non-instrumentality.

I claimed in the introduction that an adequate ethic of nature would have to accommodate the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable. The Korsgaardian Neo-Kantian account of goodness provides a theoretical account to support the aforementioned intuition in the context of an anthropocentric ethic. This means that one of the central components of sophisticated anthropocentrism is now in place. However, the final element of the sophisticated view is yet to be decided. Should the sophisticated outlook adopt the conservative or radical position on the extent and scope of the moral club? This is the subject of the next chapter.

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## Chapter Five

### Discrimination, Speciesism and Species Concepts

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In chapter three I described and set up a choice between two competing accounts of anthropocentrism—the conservative and the radical. I explained that the difference between the two accounts revolved around the extent and scope of the moral club. The conservative view limits the moral club to rational human persons *alone* while the radical outlook limits the moral club to *all* members of the species *Homo sapiens alone*. The choice then between the two respective conceptions of the anthropocentric view is, ultimately, a decision about the extent and scope of the moral club. Should the sophisticated view limit the moral club to rational human persons alone or limit the moral club to all members of the species *Homo sapiens* alone?

In order to get to the heart of this question it is important to take one step back by asking another more basic question. What is the anthropocentrist *in general* committed to when he limits the moral club to human beings alone? The anthropocentrist, in limiting the moral club to human beings alone, is claiming that human beings ought to be treated, in moral terms, *differently* from non-human organisms. In other words, moral *discrimination* is at the very heart of the anthropocentric project. Human beings are organisms to whom duties are *owed* by moral agents while non-human animals are not. However, for the anthropocentrist, the basis on which discrimination is founded will depend a great deal on which concept of “human being” is at the center of his account of anthropocentrism. The conservative anthropocentrist will discriminate on

the basis of rational human personhood while the radical anthropocentrist will discriminate on the basis of species membership.

The phenomenon of discrimination that is at the heart of anthropocentrism reveals the true nature of the choice that exists between conservative and radical anthropocentrism. Should the sophisticated view discriminate on the basis of rational human personhood or discriminate on the basis of species membership? But, even this question needs to be explained and clarified in more detail by asking a further question. What can we say about the idea of discrimination?

### **Justified and Unjustified Discrimination**

In the modern era the whole notion of “discrimination” has been set against a very negative background. In most circumstances the concept of “discrimination” is connected with racist and sexist issues. Or, to be more precise, in society today discrimination and the unfair treatment of individuals (to distinguish unfairly against or in favor of a person) on the basis of sex or race is taken to be one and the same. Against this background discrimination, whether it is in the context of an institution or set in the attitude of an individual, is seen as an *arbitrary* bias for or against an individual (or group of people) on the basis of the respective individual’s (or the respective groups’) race or sex. In other words, in a societal context, the notion of “discrimination” is taken to be synonymous with the idea of an “arbitrary bias”. On this view the concept of “discrimination” *merely* refers to the differential treatment of individuals for no good reason.

However, regarding the notion of discrimination, we must progress with great care. We should not think of discrimination purely in negative terms. There may be good reasons for discriminating between two individuals. For example, it may be claimed

by an employer that Smith ought to be given a job vacancy in computing while Jones should not be employed in the same position. If asked to justify this claim the employer replies that Smith, in virtue of his degree in computing, is qualified and suitable for the job, while Jones is not appropriate for the vacancy in virtue of the fact that he has no qualifications whatsoever. In this instance, the discriminatory treatment of Smith and Jones is justified on the basis that Smith has the requisite abilities for the job while Jones does not. So there are, in certain situations, very good reasons for treating individuals *differently*. Or, to put it another way, there can be very good reason for discrimination. What I want to suggest then is that there are two distinct positions regarding the notion of discrimination (1) justified discrimination and (2) unjustified discrimination.

We see then that the question posed at the top of the previous page breaks down into two separate questions. First, is discrimination based on rational human personhood justifiable or unjustifiable? Second, is discrimination on the basis of species membership justifiable or unjustifiable? The reasoning from here on in is fairly straightforward. If discrimination based on rational human personhood is justifiable and discrimination on the basis of species is unjustifiable, then the sophisticated view ought to adopt the conservative outlook. If discrimination based on rational personhood is unjustifiable and discrimination on the basis of species membership is justifiable, then the sophisticated view ought to adopt the radical outlook. Of course, there are two other important options. If both accounts of discrimination are justifiable, then, given that we are trying to produce the best possible defense of anthropocentrism, the sophisticated view ought to adopt the most

justifiable account. On the other hand, if both accounts of discrimination are not justifiable, then the project of the anthropocentrist ends here and now.

What is my specific approach to these questions and the project of the chapter? I should state at the outset that, in the course of this chapter, I will only attempt to answer the second question. I will argue that discrimination on the basis of species membership is unjustifiable. I will return to the former question in chapter seven. This means, with the radical conception of anthropocentrism knocked out, that the sophisticated view must adopt the conservative outlook regarding the scope of the moral club. The reason for this particular tactic is fairly straightforward. I do not want to preempt the arguments of chapter seven, but there are serious concerns about limiting the moral club on the basis of human rational personhood. So serious are these concerns that if they were to be addressed in this chapter along side the concerns I have about discrimination on the basis of species the defeat of anthropocentrism would be near at hand. In other words, the final option described in the last sentence of the last paragraph is a likely outcome. However, as we are aware, I am, in part one of this thesis attempting to produce the best possible defense of anthropocentrism. As a result, a version of the sophisticated view must be forthcoming; that version will adopt the conservative outlook.

Is discrimination on the basis of species membership justifiable? Before I spell out my approach to this question it will be helpful to explain in a little more detail what is meant by discrimination on the basis of species membership. The first point to make is that discrimination on the basis of species membership is referred to, in the literature, as “speciesism”. The second point to make is that there are three clear ways in which

to conceive of the notion of speciesism<sup>1</sup>. First, there is, in the terminology of James Rachels, the idea of unqualified speciesism<sup>2</sup>. The claim of the unqualified speciesist is that mere species membership by *itself* is morally important. In the words of Rachels, “the bare fact that an individual is a member of a certain species, unsupplemented by any other consideration, is enough to make a difference in how that individual”<sup>3</sup> ought to be treated<sup>4</sup>. Second, there is, again in the terminology of Rachels, the position of qualified speciesism. The qualified speciesist claims that mere species membership by *itself* is not morally important. But, “species membership....correlated with other” morally relevant capacities is morally significant. In the case of human beings (*Homo sapiens*) the claim of the qualified speciesist would be that human beings are not simply morally significant in virtue of being human, but are morally significant in virtue of the fact that human beings possess certain morally relevant capacities that non-human animals do not possess. Finally, there is the claim that species membership

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<sup>1</sup> The term “speciesism”, though not new, was made famous in the writings of Peter Singer. See Peter Singer, *Animal liberation*, second edition, Harper Collins, (1990) and *Practical Ethics*, second edition, Cambridge University Press, (1993). Peter Singer defines speciesism as “a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species.”

<sup>2</sup> I should point out that James Rachels is not a speciesist. I am simply employing his terminology.

<sup>3</sup> James Rachels, “Morality without the Idea that Humans are Special,” *Environmental Ethics*, eds. S.J. Armstrong & R.G. Botzler, McGraw-Hill, Inc., (1993), p337.

<sup>4</sup> One of the best examples of this type of speciesism is provided by the argument from bonds/loyalty. In his article, “Speciesism and Loyalty” Mark Berstein provides the following description of such an argument. He writes, “The idea is that simply in virtue of being a human being, there is created a loyalty relationship between such an individual and the remainder of humankind. Such a relationship is independent of beauty, strength, intelligence, or even moral capability. Or, perhaps better, it transcends such properties, in that regardless of degree to which they are manifested in a human being, the human nonetheless deserves, from his fellow humans, particular special moral dispensation.” It is important to notice that a clear distinction is made between the species of the organism and the capacities of that organism. In other words, we are left in no doubt about which part of the equation is doing the moral work. Moral discrimination is justified on the basis of species alone. In the case above discrimination is justified solely on the basis of being a member of the species *Homo sapiens*. For more information on the argument from bonds/loyalty see Mark Berstein, “Speciesism and Loyalty”, *Behavior and Philosophy*, Spring/Summer Vol. 19, (1991), J.A. Gray, “In Defense of Speciesism,” *Animal Experimentation: The Moral Issues*, Eds. R.M. Baird & S.E. Rosenbaum, (1991) and M. Midgley, “The Significance of Species,” in *Animals and Why They Matter*, Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, England, (1983).

is but one of several morally relevant and important attributes. There is no claim here that species membership by itself is enough to justify differential treatment, nor is there any claim made regarding correlation with other moral capacities.

The distinction between unqualified and qualified speciesism may be thought to offer us the possibility of a distinction within the radical anthropocentric outlook; that is a distinction between unqualified and qualified radical anthropocentrism. However, this possibility is tempered by concerns about the whole idea of qualified speciesism. It is not possible to correlate morally significant capacities and attributes with particular species. The reason for this is simple and straightforward. Evolutionary theory emphasizes continuities between species. This means that there is a structural reason for the phenomenon of shared capacities and attributes between species. We need only look around the natural world for confirmation of this phenomenon. For example, as I intimated earlier, man and several other primate species share the morally significant feature of self-consciousness. The morally significant criterion of sentience applies to a whole range of human and non-human life. It is simply a fact about this world that humans and non-humans of very different species groups have interests. Of course, on the other side of the coin, there are morally significant capacities that are not possessed by every member of the species *Homo sapiens*. For instance, the criterion of rational autonomy cannot be correlated with the species *Homo sapiens* because there are many members of the species *Homo Sapiens* that do not possess the aforementioned capacity—the irrational, retarded and brain dead. Even if a morally significant capacity could be correlated with a particular species *in this world*, for example, rational autonomy with the species *Homo sapiens*, it still would not be a conceptual truth that the aforementioned attribute is restricted to human

beings *alone*. It takes little effort to conceive of an extraterrestrial species that possesses the very same morally significant property.

There is an additional worry about the doctrine of qualified speciesism. Why does mere correlation of species with morally significant capacities make species membership morally important? If it were possible to correlate a certain hair color with particular moral capacities, we certainly would not want to claim that a particular hair color is morally important. The point is that correlation *by itself* need not confer moral significance.

I am suggesting that qualified speciesism is an unworkable and incoherent theory. The central claim of such a position—it is possible to correlate morally significant capacities with particular species—is false. As a result, the position of the qualified speciesist ought to be discarded<sup>5</sup>. This means that the arguments of this chapter will be aimed at the remaining accounts of speciesism described above.

My aim at the outset of this chapter then is to reject the thesis of the speciesist. I will argue that differential moral treatment of organisms cannot be justified on the grounds of species. It is important to realize that I am not arguing against or rejecting the principle of discrimination in absolute terms. As I intimated earlier discrimination in certain circumstances can be justified. I am, however, arguing against a particular basis on which discrimination is founded, not discrimination itself. My approach to this issue is particular in its manner. I am not going to consider those speciesist arguments and positions that utilize and presuppose the present methods of species

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<sup>5</sup> It should not be thought that conservative anthropocentrism is a version of qualified speciesism. The reason for this ought to be apparent. The criterion of rational personhood excludes many members of the species *Homo sapiens*. This means that the conservative view to be precise is a non species version of anthropocentrism in the sense that it is not based on present day species classifications.

classification *directly*<sup>6</sup>. Instead, I am going to examine and question the methods of species classification on which such speciesist positions are based. In other words, I am going to examine the *foundations* on which the speciesist position is built. I will argue that the present methods of species classification are at worst simply arbitrary or at best deeply problematic. As a result, any system of morality that is based on such a system of classification, including the radical view of anthropocentrism, must inherit the respective properties which, as a consequence, render speciesist morality unacceptable; the point being that speciesism cannot be considered a justifiable form of discrimination.

### **The Classification of Species**

The strength and thrust of my argument will revolve around the concept of “species”. This much is obvious. But, how are we to understand the aforementioned concept? It is important to realize that the concept of “species” is set in a particular context. The claim that organism X is a member of species Y or the claim that organism A is a member of species B is, in the first instance, a categorization of the respective organisms in question into groups. In other words, the concept of “species” is set against the background of taxonomy—the classification and categorization of organisms. But, how are organisms classified and categorized into species groups? The practice of taxonomy may be split up into two distinct areas. First, there is evolutionary taxonomy where taxonomists presuppose the truth of evolutionary theory

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<sup>6</sup> For arguments that utilize and presuppose the present methods of species classification see Tim Chappell, “In Defense of Speciesism”, in *Human Lives* Eds. D.S. Oderberg & J.A. Laing, Macmillan Press Ltd. London, (1997), Mark Berstein, “Speciesism and Loyalty”, *Behavior and Philosophy* Spring/Summer Vol. 19, number 19, (1991), J.A. Gray, “In Defense of Speciesism”, in *Animal Experimentation: The Moral Issues* Eds. R.M. Baird & S.E. Rosenbaum, (1991), Mary Midgley, “The Significance of Species”, in *Animals and Why They Matter*, Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, England, (1983) and Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Fontana Press, (1993).

when classifying organisms. Second, there is non-evolutionary taxonomy where taxonomists do not presuppose the truth of evolution in the practice of classification<sup>7</sup>. Of course, there are different schools of taxonomy within the respective taxonomic practices described above. The practice of evolutionary taxonomy splits into at least three distinctive camps—the cladists, traditional evolutionary taxonomy and biological taxonomy. The school of non-evolutionary taxonomy splits into at least two different areas—phenetic taxonomy and transformed cladism<sup>8</sup>. There can be no doubt that there are several schools<sup>9</sup> of thought regarding the classification of organisms into species groups<sup>10</sup>. I cannot consider all of them in the limited space of this chapter. However, I will consider three prominent views on the classification of organisms into species—the morphological concept, the biological concept and the phylogenetic concept of species. The latter two methods of classification are well chosen as they are seen to have the strongest claims to objectivity. The former method of classification is chosen because of its widespread use in taxonomy. It will become apparent in the course of

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<sup>7</sup> The non-evolutionary taxonomist studies “patterns of resemblances in their own right.” There is no presupposition about what has caused such resemblances, for example, close cousinship. This means that species groups are constructed on the basis of physical resemblance *alone*.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on these different schools of taxonomy see R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, (1987), pp276-284.

<sup>9</sup> For a brief history of taxonomy see E. Mayr, “Species Concepts and Definitions,” *American Association of Advanced Science*, 50, (1957).

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that in the recent past there has been a debate about the ontological status of species. The proposal that has gained most support is the view that rather than thinking of species as classes it would be better to think of species as spatiotemporally localized individuals. To quote A.L. Caplan on this matter, “By individual proponents of this ontological shift mean “spatiotemporally localized, cohesive and continuous entities”. On this view organisms would not be members of the classes of species to which they belong. Instead, they would have the relationship of a part to a whole in the way that cells, tissues, and organs are parts of and not members of individual human beings.” I will not enter into this debate simply because it is inconclusive at the present time. But, for more information on this issue see D.L. Hull, “The Ontological Status of Species and Evolutionary Units,” in *Philosophy of Biology*, edited by M. Ruse, Prometheus Books, (1998), A.L. Caplan, “Have Species Become Declasse?” in *Philosophy of Biology*, edited by M. Ruse, Prometheus Books, (1998) and J. Dupre, *The Disorder of Things: Metaphysical Foundations of the Disunity of Science*, Harvard University Press, (1995), pp38-44.

this chapter and in the examination and analysis of these methods of classification that such methods cannot legitimately provide a basis for (justified) moral discrimination.

### **The Morphological Concept of Species**

In the Pre-Darwinian and Post-Darwinian periods the classification of organisms into species groups has been based, in part or in whole, on morphological characteristics. Or, to put it another way, there is a system of classification that classifies organisms into groups on the basis of their visible physical characteristics. In such a system the more structural traits shared by different organisms (the number and placement of limbs, the shapes of leaves, flowers, internal organs, etc.) the closer the taxonomic relationship. In a taxonomic system of this sort a “species” is “a group of organisms recognizable as a distinct and unique type because of the morphological differences from all other life forms”<sup>11</sup>. As a result, the criterion for membership of a species may be morphological identity—close correspondence in physical traits. This form of species classification is often referred to as the phenetic concept of species<sup>12</sup>.

There are a number of problems with this position, but I will start with one that is cited in the literature. The most serious objection to the morphological or phenetic concept of species is that such a method of classification is arbitrary. I will begin with a non-species example of phenetic based classification to demonstrate the point. In his book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, Richard Dawkins writes:

“Let us use the library as an example of nonbiological taxonomy. There is no single, unique, correct solution to the problem of how the books

<sup>11</sup> Wessells, N.K. & Hopson, J.L. *Biology*, Random House Inc., New York, (1988), p1052.

<sup>12</sup> This form of classification is practiced at the present time but in a very sophisticated manner. For more information on the phenetic concept of species see M. Ridley, “Principles of Classification,” in *Philosophy of Biology*, edited by M. Ruse, Prometheus Books, (1998), pp171-174 and R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, (1987), pp279-280.

in a library...should be classified. One librarian might divide his collection up into the following major categories: science, history, literature, other arts, foreign works, etc. Each of these major departments of the library would be subdivided. The science wing of the library might have subdivisions into biology, geology, chemistry, physics, and so on. The books in the biology section of the science wing might be subdivided into shelves devoted to physiology, anatomy, biochemistry, entomology, and so on. Finally, within each shelf, the books might be housed in alphabetical order. Other major wings of the library, the history wing, the literature wing, the foreign language wing, and so on, would be subdivided in similar ways. The library is, therefore, divided in a way that makes it possible for a reader to home in on the book that he wants. But there is no unique hierarchy by which the books in a library must be arranged. A different librarian might choose to organize the same collection of books in a different, but still hierarchical, way. He might not, for instance, have a separate foreign language wing, but might prefer to house books, regardless of language, in their appropriate subject areas: german biology books in the biology section....and so on.”<sup>13</sup>

He continues:

“So, there is no correct solution to the problem of how to classify books. Librarians can have sensible disagreements with one another about classification policy, but the criteria by which arguments are won

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<sup>13</sup> R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, (1987), P256.

or lost will not include the truth or correctness of one classification system relative to another. Rather, the criteria that are bandied about in argument will be “convenience for library users”, “speed of finding books”, and so on. In this sense the taxonomy of books in a library can be said to be arbitrary. This does not imply that it is unimportant to devise a good classification system...what it does mean is that there is no single classification system which, in a world of perfect information, would be universally agreed as the only correct classification. The taxonomy of living creatures on the other hand...does have this strong property that the taxonomy of books lacks; at least it does if we take up an evolutionary standpoint.”<sup>14</sup>

The last sentence of this quote is very telling. In effect Dawkins is claiming that all other methods of species classification, apart from those methods that presuppose evolutionary theory, are arbitrary in the sense described above<sup>15</sup>. I think that Dawkins confidence in those classificatory methods that presuppose evolutionary theory is overly optimistic. However, I will return to pick up this point later in the chapter. In the meantime I need to spell out in a little more detail how the non-biological example of classification connects with the morphological/phenetic approach to the classification of organisms.

As we are aware, the criterion for the classification of books is, for example, “convenience for library users” and the criterion for the classification of organisms on the morphological approach is physical similarity. The problem is that the criterion of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p257.

<sup>15</sup> The non-biological approach to classification appears in an article by Donald Graft. He makes a different though related point about the moral implications of such a classificatory scheme. See Graft, D., “Against Strong Speciesism,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol.14. No.2, (1997), P109.

physical similarity can be interpreted in many different ways by the taxonomist. For instance, a taxonomist may group a set of organisms, for example, butterflies, into a number of species on the basis of the physical markings on their wings. However, another taxonomist may group the same set of organisms into species on the basis of body form. The respective taxonomists will categorize the same set of organisms differently relative to the physical characteristic or characteristics *chosen*. The point is that on this account it is perfectly possible for the same organism to be a member of two different species relative to the classificatory systems employed in the same way that a German biology book can be classified under either the biology section or the foreign literature section. Of course, this is not to say that there cannot be “good” classificatory systems. It is simply to claim that such morphological/phenetic biological and non-biological approaches to classification are, ultimately, arbitrary<sup>16</sup> in the sense explained by Dawkins.

If we presuppose the truth of evolutionary theory regarding morphological taxonomy, then the arbitrariness of the morphological concept of species really comes to the fore. This connects partly with a point I made in chapter two about the intrinsic nature of nature—nature is in a state of gradual<sup>17</sup> change. How are we to group organisms into species groups on the basis of physical characteristics alone when the

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<sup>16</sup> It may be thought that the manner in which Dawkins uses the word “arbitrary” is different from the sense in which I used the same word in the introduction of this chapter. However, this is incorrect. His point, in part, is that there can be equally good reason to choose each of two systems. This means, given that we have equally good reasons for choosing one system over the other system of classification and vice versa that the *choice* itself is arbitrary. There is no and can be no appeal, to what is correct.

<sup>17</sup> It is no accident that I use the word “gradual” rather than “constant”. It is important to realize that there is a crucial distinction to be made between “constant change” and “gradual change” in the context of evolutionary theory. The claim of Darwin is that simple life forms can develop into complex life forms through gradual changes. For example, the eye of an organism may develop from a hole in the skin of the animal in the course of thousands of gradual changes. However, it need not be the case that the mutations take place on a constant basis—one every five years. There may be periods where few mutations take place and there may be periods of time where many mutations take place. The point is that the hole in the membrane will evolve into an eye through many gradual changes even though those changes did not take place at a uniform and constant speed.

physical characteristics of organisms are *gradually* changing (mutating) through evolution and adaptation over time? Let me explain the nature of the problem. I will use Richard Dawkins example of the temporal succession of organisms on the basis of reproduction to demonstrate. He writes:

“You stand on the shore of the Indian Ocean in Southern Somalia, facing North, and in your left hand you hold the right hand of your mother. In turn she holds the hand of her mother... Your grandmother holds her mother’s hand, and so on. The chain wends its way up the beach, into the arid scrubland and westwards on towards the Kenya border.”<sup>18</sup>

He continues:

“How far do we have to go until we reach our common ancestor with the chimpanzees? It is a surprisingly short way. Allowing one yard per person, we arrive at the ancestor we share with the chimpanzee in under 300 miles...the ancestor is standing well to the east of Mount Kenya, and holding in her hand an entire chain of her lineal descendents, culminating in you standing on the Somali beach. The daughter that she is holding in her right hand is the one from whom we are descended. Now the arch-ancestress turns eastward to face the coast, and with her left hand grasps her other daughter, the one from whom the chimpanzees are descended (or son, of course, but let’s stick to females for convenience). The two sisters are facing one another and each holding their mother by the hand. Now the second daughter, the

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<sup>18</sup> R. Dawkins, “Gaps in the Mind,” in P. Cavalieri & P. Singer (ed.) *The Great Ape Project*, St Martin’s Press, New York, (1993), P84.

chimpanzees ancestress, holds her daughter's hand, and a new chain is formed, proceeding back towards the coast. First cousin faces first cousin, second cousin faces second cousin, and so on. By the time the folded-back chain has reached the coast again, it consists of modern chimpanzees. You are face to face with your chimpanzee cousin, and are joined to her by an unbroken chain of mother holding hands with daughters. If you walked up the line like an inspecting general—past *Homo erectus*, *Homo Habilis*...and down the other side...you would nowhere find any sharp discontinuity. Daughters would resemble mothers just as much...as they always do.”<sup>19</sup>

If, for the moment, we concentrate on the line of organisms that moves from our ancestress to present day human beings, then it is apparent that we are faced with an uninterrupted continuum of organisms; each organism physically resembles the next in line. The problem is, given the continuum, where does one species end another begin? On the morphological account the grouping of organisms into species must be arbitrary because the “end member” of one species will be physically similar to the “front member” of the preceding species group. Why pick a particular point on the line rather than some other point? There seems to be no good reason for the demarcation of species groups on this account of species classification.

There are two possible replies at this point, one that may be offered by the taxonomist and the other by the speciesist. I will begin with the reply of the taxonomist.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P84.

It may be thought that the views of the punctuationalist offer an answer to the problem cited above. Let me explain. The punctuationalist<sup>20</sup> argues that there are great periods of stasis in the evolution of organisms followed by rapid spurts of physical mutation and adaptation or vice versa. The periods of stasis can be explained in a fairly straightforward way; a line of organisms will, in evolutionary terms, stand still if no pressure is put on them by natural selection. In other words, a whole lineage of organisms will have no need to evolve if they have found a successful way of life and the environment that supports that successful way of life does not change. Of course, if the environment changes so that natural selection pressures kick in, then we will see rapid spurts of mutation and adaptation (or extinction).

Given this description of punctuationalism it may be argued that the periods of stasis and rapid adaptation can be used to demarcate species groups. It is at these respective points on the line that there is real physical divergence. The rapid spurts of adaptation and mutation, it may be thought, allow the punctuationalist to see a particular species coming into existence at a particular time. The period of stasis is the duration of the “life” of the species while the next rapid spurt of mutation and adaptation is a definite and recognizable end of the particular species in question. It is at the beginning and end of the periods of stasis that we have good reason to classify organisms into species groups. It is not, claims the punctuationalist, simply an arbitrary matter.

However, the language of the punctuationalist should not fool us. The “rapid” periods of mutation and adaptation are only “rapid” in terms of geological time. We are still talking about physical adaptation and mutation over tens of thousands of years. In

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<sup>20</sup> See Gould, S.J. & Eldridge, N. “Punctuated equilibria: the tempo and mode of evolution reconsidered,” in *Paleobiology*, Vol. 3., (1977) and Eldredge, N. & Gould, S.J., Editor Schopf, T.J.M. “Punctuated Equilibria: an alternative to phyletic gradualism,” *Models in Paleobiology*, Freeman, Cooper and Co, San Francisco, California, (1972).

other words, we are still talking about the smallest of physical changes from generation to generation. The point is that punctuationism still adheres to the central tenet of evolutionary theory—*gradual change*<sup>21</sup>. It is not a departure from the original theory spelt out by Darwin. This means that the continuum that I described earlier remains essentially unaffected. The classification of organisms on the basis of physical resemblance remains arbitrary.

Can the speciesist fare any better? It seems that the speciesist can make two replies. First, he may claim that vagueness is not a counter to speciesist morality because vagueness can be, in general, an acceptable feature of morality. It may be the case that many moral items are simply vague. For example, take the case of dishonesty. It may be claimed that an action is to a degree dishonest and that degrees of dishonesty diminish on a continuum that is rather similar to the line of organisms described in Dawkins example. So, the question comes back, in what way does the idea of vagueness count against speciesism? Second, the speciesist may point out that though there is vagueness at the “boundaries” of species groups we clearly have *Homo habilis* at one end of the spectrum and *Homo sapiens* at the other. I will deal with the replies in the order that they are presented.

The problem for speciesist morality is that it depends on clearly defined groups. This is the whole point of speciesism. The radical anthropocentrist limits direct moral standing to all members of the species *Homo sapiens* alone. This being the case what can we say about those organisms that fall in the vague zone—in moral no mans land. Do they have direct moral standing or not? Do they have a *degree* of moral standing or not? It is certainly difficult to see how we can talk of *degrees* of direct moral standing.

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<sup>21</sup> I am, of course, referring to gradual change in the sense of change by gradations.

How are we to cash out the idea of duties towards organisms in terms of degrees?

Either an organism is an organism to whom duties are owed by moral agents or not.

The speciesist may claim at this point that I have been a little unfair. The speciesist could cash out duties by degree in terms of strengths of duties. The moral agent has *more* of a duty toward an organism that clearly is a member of the species *Homo sapiens* than he has toward an organism that falls in the vague zone of the continuum. For example, if an organism that clearly is a member of the species *Homo sapiens* and a “Vague” organism were found to be drowning in the sea, then a moral agent has a *stronger* duty toward the non-vague *Homo sapien* to save the life of the non-vague *Homo sapien* than he has toward the vague *Homo sapien*. It is still the case, claims the speciesist, that a moral agent does have a duty toward the vague *Homo sapien* to save the life of the vague *Homo sapien*. However, this duty toward the vague *Homo sapien* is, for the moral agent, though the same in content when compared to the duty toward the non-vague *Homo sapien*, *weaker*.

There is an obvious counter to the proposal described above. If we accept the speciesist claim that duties *towards* organisms decrease in strength the further we move along the continuum from present day *Homo sapiens*, to what I have termed, vague *Homo sapiens*, then following the logic of the argument, the speciesist must accept that duties *towards* organisms extend along the full length of the continuum becoming ever weaker. This means that moral agents will have duties *towards all* of the organisms on the continuum whether they are weak or strong. As a result, even the arch-ancestress of *Homo sapiens* will be an organism to whom duties are *owed* even though those duties are very weak. My point is that this move of the speciesist is in direct opposition to a central tenet of anthropocentrism. The doctrine of

anthropocentrism claims that duties are *owed* to human beings *alone*. Moral agents only have duties *regarding* non-human nature. I suggest then that this solution of the speciesist, if it is a solution at all, moves in the opposite direction of anthropocentrism. It cannot support a speciesist anthropocentric morality.

However, the crux of the matter comes when we consider the second reply of the speciesist. The speciesist in claiming that we *clearly* have *Homo habilis* at one end of the spectrum and *Homo sapiens* at the other end of the continuum presupposes the very species groups that we are trying to establish. It presupposes the authority of the method of classification under analysis rather than establishing the authority of such a classificatory system. The speciesist can hardly presuppose the very thing he is trying to establish. This is an easy mistake to make because we so readily think in terms of species groups. But, it is important to remember that the raw material of the taxonomist is not species groups, but numbers of organisms yet to be classified. Where is it *clear* on the continuum that we have the species *Homo sapiens*?

I will not dwell on the morphological concept of species any longer. Whether or not the morphological approach presupposes the truth of evolutionary theory it is straightforwardly arbitrary (in a manner that is morally unacceptable). However, this should not be too much of a surprise. Darwin himself wrote about the concept of species, "I look at the term species, as one arbitrarily given for the sake of convenience to a set of individuals closely resembling each other."<sup>22</sup> I will now move to consider those concepts of species that are taken to have a strong claim to objectivity. I am referring to those concepts of species that claim to map, in some way, the evolution of organisms. In other words, I will focus on those concepts of species

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<sup>22</sup> C. Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, first printed (1859) reprinted in Penguin Books, (1985).

that presuppose the truth of evolutionary theory. I will examine two evolutionary concepts of species—the biological concept and the phylogenetic concept. It is here where we meet the heavy weights of taxonomy.

### **The Biological Concept of Species**

According to John Dupre, the most widely discussed conception of species is “the so-called biological species concept.”<sup>23</sup> But, what is this much discussed concept? The biological concept of species defines species as:

“Groups of actually or potentially interbreeding populations that are reproductively isolated from other such groups. The “actually” refers to organisms that are members of a population in which breeding is, in fact, taking place. And “potentially” means that individuals could exchange genes if given the opportunity even though they might never actually do so.”<sup>24</sup>

We see then that the notion of reproductive isolation<sup>25</sup> central to the biological definition of “species” can be spelt out in two distinct forms. Reproductive isolation can be cashed out in terms of “actual” or “potential” interbreeding. For example, in a human context, a Swede and a Norwegian have the *potential* to interbreed even though they may *actually* never do so. This demonstrates that, despite the superficial variations, both parties described above are members of the same species. What I want

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<sup>23</sup> J. Dupre, *The Disorder of Things: Metaphysical Foundations of the Disunity of Science*, Harvard University Press, (1995), pp45-56.

<sup>24</sup> N.K. Wessells & J.L. Hopson, *Biology*, House, INC, New York, (1988), P1052.

<sup>25</sup> It is important to realize, in the words of John Dupre, that this conception of species “is...centrally motivated by the thought that reproductive isolation is a necessary condition for two groups to evolve independently...it is intimately connected with the broader conception of evolution that conceives of speciation as beginning with geographical separation and ending with the establishment of mechanisms of reproductive isolation sufficient to survive the breakdown of geographic barriers.” Ibid. p46.

to argue, given the description above, is that the seemingly harmless criterion of reproductive isolation<sup>26</sup> utilized for species classification is deeply problematic.

However, before I move to consider the main concerns about such a method of classification it is important to mention an obvious problem that such a method must encounter. It is a problem that revolves around the *limited applicability* of the biological concept of species. The criterion of reproductive isolation can only apply to those living organisms that actually reproduce sexually. The criterion of reproductive isolation itself presupposes and assumes the activity of sexual reproduction. However, as biology informs us, there are many groups of organisms that reproduce asexually. For example, certain microorganisms, fungi, plants, insects and some animals reproduce through asexual means. As a result, the notion of reproductive isolation involving sexual reproduction does not apply to certain groups of organisms. We might say that a taxonomic system that employs the criterion of reproductive isolation as a means of classifying organisms into species simply has a blind spot regarding certain asexually reproducing organisms.

This problem by itself provides a considerable concern about the appropriateness of the criterion of reproductive isolation as a criterion for the classification of organisms into species. If such a criterion is meant to map what is going on in evolutionary terms, then such a criterion should have something to say about each and every organism regarding its species group. I will not push this objection any further as it is

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<sup>26</sup> This conception of species classification is promoted by, for example, Ernst Mayr; see E. Mayr, "Species Concepts and Their Application," in *Philosophy of Biology*, edited by M. Ruse, Prometheus Books, (1998), *The Growth of Biological Thought*, Harvard University Press, (1982), pp270-294 and *Animal Species and Evolution*, Harvard University Press, (1963). For an endorsement of this view by a philosopher see Holmes Rolston III, "Duties to Endangered Species," in *Philosophy Gone Wild*, Prometheus Books, (1986), pp206-218.

already well documented<sup>27</sup>. I will now consider further alarming consequences of the biological concept of species.

### **Actual and Potential Interbreeding**

What sort of problem would trouble the biological concept of species? If there were groups of organisms that cannot interbreed with one another, but which are reckoned to be members of the same species, then this would amount to a serious failing in the biological concept. The problem is that there are such groups of organisms. In his article, "Against Strong Speciesism," Donald Graft cites two examples<sup>28</sup>. First, there is the instance of the owl monkey *Aotus trivergatus* that contains a number of groups that cannot potentially or actually interbreed with one another. Second, there is the example of the soldier termite that cannot interbreed with other members of its species. I will not dwell on these examples. However, I will make the case more powerful and graphic by concentrating on the species *Homo sapiens*. There are groups of human beings that cannot potentially or actually interbreed with other members of the aforementioned species. I am thinking primarily of those human beings that are infertile. Their reproductive organs may be damaged from birth or damaged in later life due to disease and infection. If we use the criterion of reproductive isolation as a *strict guide* to the classification of organisms into species, then the taxonomist must be committed to the view that the above-mentioned group of human beings belong to another species. In fact, the conclusion may be more serious. If these human beings cannot reproduce in any manner, then the biological concept of species may have

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<sup>27</sup> This point is made by Paul Dupre in his book *The Disorder of Things: Metaphysical Foundations of the Disunity of Science*, Harvard University Press, (1995), p46 and Michael Ruse in his article "Definitions of Species in Biology," *British Journal of Philosophy of Science*, 20, (1969), p103.

<sup>28</sup> Donald Graft, "Against Strong Speciesism" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol.14. No.2, (1997), P111.

nothing to say at all on the aforesaid group of human beings; they simply fall outside the criterial net. The point can be forced home if we consider the hypothetical case of a young woman who has her reproductive organs surgically removed. This woman, before surgery, will be a member of the species *Homo sapiens* in virtue of the fact that she can actually and potentially interbreed with other members of the species (in this example I am presupposing that the woman has not actually interbred before the operation). However, after the operation, the same woman will now be a member of a different species in virtue of the fact that she can no longer interbreed with members of the species *Homo sapiens*. My suggestion is that the criterion of reproductive isolation regarding the classification of species leads us into absurdity.

What other sort of problem would pose a challenge to the biological concept? If there were organisms of different species that could interbreed with one another, then the idea of reproductive isolation on which the biological concept is based would be seriously challenged. The problem is that there are such organisms. For example, the English oak, *Quercus robur*, occurs in those areas of Europe that have a mild climate. It is very similar in its physical characteristics to the valley oak, *Quercus lobata*, of California, and quite dissimilar in its physical characteristics from the scrub oak, *Quercus dumosa*, also of California. Nevertheless, despite the biological categorizations, it is a scientific fact that all of the aforementioned *types* of organisms can interbreed with one another to produce viable (viable in the sense that the hybrid is fertile and is itself capable of breeding) hybrids<sup>29</sup>. However, the English oak does not *hybridize* with the valley oak *in nature* due to the fact that its geographical position and range does not overlap with the other above described species. The point is that

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<sup>29</sup> For supporting material on this matter see P.H. Raven & G.B. Johnson, *Biology*, Times Mirror/Mosby College Publishing, (1986), P409.

the respective organisms are reproductively isolated from one another because they are geographically isolated from one another. If we are to talk of different species in this circumstance, then the English oak and the valley oak are classified into different species on the basis of geographical accident.

I want to push the point home by considering another example of breeding between species. There are two species of wild lettuce that grow in the southeastern United States of America, the *Lactuca graminifolia* and the *Lactuca canadensis*. These two different species can interbreed to produce completely fertile hybrids. However, *in nature* this rarely happens because the blooming periods of the respective species rarely coincide. The *Lactuca graminifolia* flowers in early spring and the *Lactuca canadensis* flowers in summer. Like the point made about geographical isolation there is a similar point to be made here in respect to time. In the final analysis, the respective organisms are reproductively isolated from one another because they are temporally isolated from one another. If, again, we are to talk about different species here, then the two sets of wild lettuce are classified into different species on the basis of temporal accident<sup>30</sup>.

There is a point to be picked up here. The proponents of the biological concept of species advocate the claim that there are different ways in which speciation may take place. The point being that geographical and temporal isolation, they claim, are genuine isolating mechanisms when it comes to the creation of *new* species<sup>31</sup>. There can be no doubt that when two populations of the same species become, for example, separated by a geographical barrier and one or both populations adapt to their

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<sup>30</sup> It should not be thought that these are the only examples of geographical and seasonal accident. There are many examples of different species groups that can interbreed with one another.

<sup>31</sup> See Peter Skelton, (ed.) "Species, Speciation and Extinction," in *Evolution*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, (1993), pp372-374.

respective environments that, in theory, the separated populations can eventually become reproductively isolated. I am not denying that speciation may take place in the manner specified. However, in the examples described above, reproductive isolation has not in actuality taken place. It may be the case that geographical and temporal isolation are a *means* to reproductive isolation. But, this certainly does not mean that geographical and temporal isolation equates with reproductive isolation. As a result, the objection stands.

It may be thought that the biological concept of species may be saved from the above-described objections if we simply concentrate on the idea of *actual* interbreeding alone regarding reproductive isolation rather than including the idea of *potential* interbreeding<sup>32</sup>. However, we had better be aware of the cost of this position. Again I will make the case more graphic by considering it from a human point of view. For the sake of brevity I will only consider the idea of geographical isolation. It is perfectly possible, especially in thought, to conceive of a situation where groups of human beings are geographically isolated from one another. For example, a native tribe deep in the heart of the Amazon rain forest is geographically isolated from Hebridean islanders. It just *happens* to be the case that these two groups of human being will never come in contact with one another. They are geographically isolated in the same way that the English oak and the valley oak are isolated. The discerning observer should now be aware of the implication of this situation. If we concentrate only on the idea of *actual* interbreeding as the criterion for reproductive isolation, then the aforementioned groups of human beings would be classified into two different

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<sup>32</sup> It may be thought that I am not justified in making a move to reduce the criterion of reproductive isolation to the criterion of actual interbreeding alone. However, there is evidence in the literature to suggest that certain writers on the subject make such a reduction. See Donald Graft, "Against Strong Speciesism," *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 14, No.2, (1997), p112.

species because, despite the fact that the two groups of organisms can *potentially* interbreed with one another, they in *actuality* only interbreed with their respective geographic group. We are, I suggest, again, led into absurdity.

There are two further points I wish to make about the biological concept of species. First, if we return to Dawkins continuum described earlier in the chapter, then it becomes apparent that the criterion of reproductive isolation fails to provide non-arbitrary species groups. Let me explain. It is true of *every* organism on the continuum that it can interbreed with its respective neighbors. The truth of this is plain to see given that each organism on the continuum physically resembles its respective neighbors in every important detail. This makes, on the biological account of species classification, non-arbitrary species classification impossible because the last member of a proposed species group *will always* be able to interbreed with the first member of the proposed following species group<sup>33</sup>; both respective members will be neighbors. Why pick one point on the continuum rather than another in the demarcation of a species group? The criterion of reproductive isolation does not supply a satisfactory answer.

Second, there has been a suggestion by H.E.H. Paterson that some of the problems encountered by the biological concept of species can be avoided by looking at the idea of reproductive isolation in a different manner. In this respect, Paterson defines a

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<sup>33</sup> Dawkins makes a similar point, but with a different example. He uses an example of a geographical continuum rather than the temporal continuum described in this chapter. See Richard Dawkins, "Gaps in the Mind," in *The Great Ape Project*, Eds. Cavalieri, P & Singer, P., Fourth Estate Limited: London, (1993), p82.

species as "...that most inclusive population of individual biparental organisms which share a common fertilization system."<sup>34</sup> What is meant by a fertilization system?

"The fertilization system consists of all the components, such as courtship behaviour, genital structure, or attractiveness of the ovum to the sperm or pollen, that contribute to the ultimate function of bringing about fertilization with another individual having the same fertilization system."<sup>35</sup>

The aim, it is argued, of Paterson's approach to the classification of species is to focus on an element that keeps a species together—mating and reproduction—rather than those elements that keep species apart<sup>36</sup>. This is the Recognition Concept of Species classification.

I will not go into the recognition concept of species in any detail because there are a couple of obvious points to be made about it. First, like the original biological concept of species, the recognition concept presupposes sexual reproduction. The point being that the recognition concept of species is open to the very same objection I raised against the biological concept of species. There are many sets of organisms (non-sexually reproducing organisms) that simply fall outside the criterial net. Second, the emphasis on the idea of the commonality of a fertilization system means that the

<sup>34</sup> Paterson, H.E.H., "The Recognition of Species," in Vrba, E.S., ed., *Species and Speciation*, Transvaal Museum Monograph, No. 4. Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, (1985) p25.

<sup>35</sup> Skelton, P., *Evolution: A Biological and Palaeontological Approach*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, (1993), p375.

<sup>36</sup> It may be thought that there is not a real difference between the biological concept of species and the recognition concept of species. It may be claimed that the recognition concept of species is the flip side of the biological conception of species. This contention is rejected in the literature. According to the biological conception "species are determined by the functioning of the isolating mechanisms; that is, species are defined relationally in terms of Reproductive Isolation....The Recognition Concept, on the other hand, species are determined by the functioning of fertilization mechanisms; species are not defined relationally but independently, since, of necessity, all sexual organisms must possess an effective fertilization system." See Paterson, H.E.H., "The Recognition of Species," in Vrba, E.S., ed., *Species and Speciation*, Transvaal Museum Monograph, No. 4. Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, (1985), p26.

objection I raised against the biological concept regarding the woman that had her fertilization system removed applies equally to the recognition concept of species classification. According to the criteria of the recognition concept the woman who has her reproductive organs removed will belong to another species or simply fall outside species classification altogether. The bottom line is that the recognition concept of species is also at best theoretically problematic or at worst leads us back into absurdity.

I take it that the point is now made. The biological concept of species has several important faults. First, it has a blind spot regarding those organisms that do not reproduce sexually (asexual) and those that cannot reproduce through sexual means (the infertile). Second, the classificatory scheme that it produces is, in part, based on accident. Finally, such a method of classification is, ultimately, arbitrary.

However, the speciesist and the taxonomist are not done. There remains, what is considered to be by some, Richard Dawkins in particular, the only correct and true method of species classification—the phylogenetic concept of species.

### **The Phylogenetic Concept of Species Classification**

A phylogenetic system of classification attempts to group organisms according to recency of common ancestry. This system of classification is supposed to reflect patterns of evolutionary descent. Paul Dupre writes, “Phylogenetic taxonomy aims at a more direct connection with the historical component of evolutionary theory, by starting from the principle that taxonomy should accurately reflect genealogy.”<sup>37</sup> The point is that organisms are classified into species on the basis of their evolutionary

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<sup>37</sup> J. Dupre, *The Disorder of Things: Metaphysical Foundations of the Disunity of Science*, Harvard University Press, (1995), P47.

past. In order to explain this in more detail I will enlist the help of Dawkins one more time. He writes about a particular branch of phylogenetic<sup>38</sup> taxonomy—cladistic taxonomy:

“But of all the systems of classification that could be dreamed up, there is one unique system, unique in the sense that words like “correct” and “incorrect”....can be applied to it with perfect agreement given perfect information. That unique system is based on evolutionary relationships....In cladistic taxonomy, the ultimate criterion for grouping organisms together is closeness of cousinship or, in other words, relative recency of common ancestry. Birds, for instance, are distinguished from non-birds by the fact that they are all descended from a common ancestor, which is not an ancestor of any non-bird. Mammals are all descended from a common ancestor, which is not an ancestor of any non-mammal....Within mammals, rats and mice share a recent common ancestor with each other; leopards and lions share a recent common ancestor with each other; so do chimpanzees and humans with each other. Closely related animals are animals that share a recent common ancestor. More distantly related animals share an earlier common ancestor. Very distantly related animals, like people and slugs, share a very early common ancestor. Organisms can never be totally unrelated to one another, since it is all but certain that life as we know it originated only once on earth.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For a classic statement on the practice of phylogenetic taxonomy see W. Hennig, *Phylogenetic Systematics*, University of Illinois Press, (1966).

<sup>39</sup> R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, (1987), P258.

We can see then on this account that a set of organisms will be grouped into a species if they share a *very* recent common ancestor that is not shared by other organisms. In this system of classification the *genealogical history* of the organism is the criterion for species classification<sup>40</sup>.

It may be thought that the taxonomist is on strong ground here as the aforementioned system of taxonomy maps the evolutionary history of the natural world. In other words, such a system of classification has a strong claim to objectivity; it moves in the opposite direction of the arbitrary and the subjective. This I think is essentially correct. However, I want to tease out certain implications that follow from the use of the phylogenetic method of species classification. These implications, despite the claims to objectivity, will render phylogenetic classification unsuitable as a foundation for a moral system<sup>41</sup>. I will develop these implications by considering the idea of evolutionary convergence.

### **Evolutionary Convergence**

In the first instance I want to fill out the idea of evolutionary convergence by means of a thought experiment. I want the reader to consider the idea of a galaxy that contains two life-supporting planets—our present planet Earth and a hypothetical planet called Zog. On both planets life has arisen and come about through evolutionary processes; on both planets each and every organism has a genealogical

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<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that the phylogenetic taxonomist does, in part, use physical resemblance methods to determine closeness of cousinship.

<sup>41</sup> In his paper, "Against Strong Speciesism," (*Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 14, No.2, 1997) Donald Graft looks at the typist and biological concept of species classification. He argues, in a less developed manner than myself, that the typist and biological concept of species are theoretically problematic. He does not, however, look at the phylogenetic concept of species. This is surprising because, if we accept the claim of Dawkins, such a conception of species has the strongest claim to objectivity. Graft's paper simply ignores the most plausible approach to species classification. The following section is an attempt to address a very notable omission.

history. This is to say that the phylogenetic system of classification can be employed on both planets. However, it turns out that a particular group of organisms on Zog are exactly the same in every characteristic, physical or otherwise, as the group known as *Homo sapiens* on Earth. This can be explained in terms of the similarity of the respective environments on each planet; human beings and, as I will call them, Zogites, are physically indistinguishable. If a human being and Zogite were to stand side by side it would not be possible to tell them apart. We may say in this respect that these geographically and historically isolated organisms have *converged* on a single physical form through evolutionary processes. There is a problem here that should concern the advocate of the phylogenetic concept of species. The human being and Zogite do not share the same genealogical history in virtue of the fact that they do not share the same planetary history. Or, to put it another way, they do not share a common ancestor in virtue of the fact that their evolutionary history is quite separate. This means, despite the fact that there is no basic physiological, biological or physical difference between the two organisms the respective parties must be classified into separate species groups.

There are two replies to the conceptual problem raised here. First, the taxonomist could make the claim that despite the fact that there is a small theoretical chance of evolutionary convergence, in *actuality*, it simply does not happen; therefore, there is nothing to worry about. Second, the taxonomist could simply bite the bullet and classify two physically indistinguishable organisms into different species groups. I will argue that the second option is the correct course to follow, but that the respective option offers little support for the case of the speciesist.

The problem for the taxonomist is that evolutionary convergence does take place on the planet Earth. It is a scientific fact that certain animals have been found to resemble certain other unrelated<sup>42</sup> “animals in other parts of the world because they share similar ways of life.”<sup>43</sup> For example, the New World army ant resembles the Old World driver ant, the electric fish of Africa resembles the electric fish of South America and the true wolves resemble the marsupial wolf of Tasmania. Regarding the resemblance between litopterns and horses Dawkins writes:

“The group called the litopterns are almost unbelievably similar to horses in their legs, yet they were utterly unrelated to horses. The superficial resemblance fooled a nineteenth century Argentinian expert who thought...that they were the ancestors of all horses in the rest of the world. In fact their resemblance to horses was superficial and convergent. Grassland life is much the same the world over, horses and litopterns independently evolved the same qualities to cope with the problems of grassland life. In particular, the litopterns, like the horses, lost all of their toes except the middle one on each leg and developed a hoof. The leg of a litoptern is all but indistinguishable from the leg of a horse, yet the two animals are only distantly related.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> I mean “unrelated” in the sense of not sharing a very recent ancestor. Given that it is almost certain that the genesis of life occurred only once on the planet Earth then there is a sense in which all life is related though very distantly.

<sup>43</sup> R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, (1987), p269.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* pp103-104.

This means that evolutionary convergence is not just a theoretical possibility, but an empirical reality<sup>45</sup>. Isolated organisms can converge upon a single physical form through evolutionary process.

The last sentence of the quote above tells us a great deal about the taxonomist's approach to organisms that are physically similar. The claim is, despite physical similarity, that the litoptern and horse are *distantly related*. This means on the phylogenetic system of classification that the two organisms will be classified into two different species groups. The simple fact of the matter is that the phylogenetic taxonomist is quite happy to classify physically similar organisms into different species groups. I will not go into the scientific details, but the DNA of organisms allows the taxonomist to work out "varying degrees of cousinship" between all organisms. In other words, DNA is a means to the genealogical history of organisms<sup>46</sup>. This means that physically similar organisms with significant differences in their respective DNA can be quite comfortably classified into different species groups. The phylogenetic taxonomist would simply bite the bullet in the case of the Homo sapien and Zogite by classifying the respective organisms into different species groups on the basis of their DNA.

It may be a bullet that the taxonomist can bite, but it is certainly not a bullet that the speciesist can bite. The speciesist, on the phylogenetic account of classification, would be committed to the view that moral agents ought to discriminate between two physically indistinguishable organisms—the Homo sapien and the Zogite. This amounts to treating physically similar cases in dissimilar ways. It breaches a

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<sup>45</sup> For more information of evolutionary convergence see R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, (1987).

<sup>46</sup> For more information on this point see R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, (1987), pp269-272.

fundamental formal law of morality—the formal principle of justice—“the principle that justice is the similar, and injustice the dissimilar, treatment of similar individuals.”<sup>47</sup>

It may be argued at this point that I have simply begged the question here. The speciesist argues that there is an important *difference* between the *Homo sapiens* and Zogites. The reason why the *Homo sapiens* and Zogites ought to be treated differently is exactly because they have a different genealogical history. If the speciesist is to stick to this line of thought, then there is a need to demonstrate that the genealogical history of an organism is morally irrelevant. This is my next move. I will show that the genealogical history of organisms is simply irrelevant when it comes to moral discrimination. I want to consider another thought experiment. It is the case of, what I will call, “the displaced Zogite child.”

The Zogites and the *Homo sapiens* share a very similar way of life. This is, as I have explained, what makes evolutionary convergence possible in the first place. The Zogite society is essentially the same as present day *Homo sapiens* society. In both civilizations, Zogite people and *Homo sapiens* alike go to work, go on holiday, rest, play and bring up children. The Zogites pursue education and research in much the same manner that human beings do. The Zogites speak many different languages and pursue the arts. In other words, the planet Zog is basically a second planet Earth. However, the Zogites are a little more technologically sophisticated than human beings. They decide to take part in a social experiment. The Zogite scientists want to determine what effect interaction in a human society will have on the formative years

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<sup>47</sup> Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Routledge: London and New York, (1984), p128.

of a Zogite. In this respect they decide to replace a human baby, unbeknown to its parents and all other human beings, with a physically indistinguishable Zogite baby. The Zogite baby is beamed down from space into the cot of an unsuspecting family. The human baby is beamed back to Zog.

The human parents, unaware of the switch, love and care for “their” child. They celebrate every birthday as the years pass by. The child develops many friendships at school and at university. The young adult (Zogite) forms many different relationships with many different human beings. In other words, the displaced Zogite has a life much like the life that you or I have had and continue to have. The important question is, given the description of the displaced Zogite, are the moral reactions of the parents and friends towards the baby/young adult false and inappropriate? The speciesist will have to answer in the positive. But, clearly, the answer ought to be in the negative. Of course, the parents would be angered and shocked if they were to discover the swap. But, this does not mean that they were wrong to respect and love the child. It does not mean that they were wrong to protect and promote the welfare of the infant. The point is that genealogy is not relevant when it comes to moral discrimination. It is not an appropriate foundation for the differential treatment of organisms.

I can drive this point home by making a connection with racism. The thought experiment provided an example of inter-planetary evolutionary convergence. Two very similar forms of life developed in an unconnected way on two different planets. But, the thought experiment can be modified in a telling manner. What about a case in which two very similar forms of life develop in an unconnected way on the same planet, but on different continents? The idea here is that the Zogites and *Homo sapiens* both live on the planet Earth. However, for the sake of argument, both groups of

organisms have *always* been geographically isolated from one another. According to the phylogenetic concept of species the Zogite and human being would be classified into different species groups in virtue of the fact that the genealogical history of the respective organisms is different and unconnected. This means, if we follow the line of the speciesist, that moral agents ought to discriminate between human beings and Zogites. The human being ought to be treated differently from the Zogite in virtue of their different genealogical histories. But, this state of affairs is now very like racism. We are being asked to discriminate between two essentially physically indistinguishable organisms from different areas of the world. It is only a small leap from here to replace the terms “human being” and “Zogite” with the terms “caucasoid” and “oriental”.

I have endeavored in the course of this chapter to demonstrate why species groups provide an unacceptable and inappropriate foundation for a moral system. The morphological concept of species was found to be straightforwardly arbitrary. The biological concept suffered from a similar problem. But, this was only the tip of the iceberg. The biological concept had serious deficiencies regarding those organisms that do not and cannot reproduce sexually. The phylogenetic concept, though it does offer “the one true tree of life”, does not support the case of speciesism in the way that the speciesist would like. We are forced to discriminate in an unjustifiable manner. The simple fact of the matter is that any form of morality based on any of these species concepts must inherit the problems and complications inherent in such concepts. This means that moral discrimination on the basis of species is unjustifiable.

I said at the beginning of the chapter that we were faced with a choice between conservative anthropocentrism and radical anthropocentrism. I claimed that this choice

could be represented in a particular question. Should the sophisticated view discriminate on the basis of rational personhood or discriminate on the basis of species membership? I have argued that we cannot justifiably discriminate on the basis of species. This means that the choice is now made. The sophisticated view will adopt the conservative outlook regarding the extent and scope of the moral club.

Before I move on to look at particular examples of the sophisticated view I think it is time to take stock of what has been achieved so far. In other words, it will be prudent to give a short summary of the main elements of the sophisticated view developed in part one of the thesis. This is the business of the interim conclusion.

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## Interim Conclusion

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The structure of the best possible defense of anthropocentrism, or as I prefer to call it, the sophisticated anthropocentric view is made up of several important elements. The first element is the *developed* idea of naturalness by degree. Such a conception of nature, unlike the totality, exclusion and product ideas of the natural environment, is simply more sensitive to the complicated mix of the natural and artificial that is symptomatic of the fabric of our world today. The second element relates to a particular conception of protection—protection in the sense of non-interference. It is important to remember that the second element of the sophisticated view is born out of a particularly important fact about the *nature* of nature—it is in a constant state of change. It is, as I have intimated, a notion of protection that avoids some of the worst excesses of the anthropocentric outlook, but affords nature a certain amount of respect.

The third element of the sophisticated anthropocentric view is provided by the three distinctions in goodness. The structure of value provided by the three distinctions allows a particular conception of interests (taking an interest in something for its own sake) to be incorporated within the anthropocentric framework. The outcome is bipartite in structure. The first part of the Korsgaardian/Kantian interpretation of the three distinctions in goodness informs us that human beings are intrinsically valuable. The second part of the account of value helps the anthropocentrist accommodate an intuition that is at the very heart and center of the discipline of environmental ethics—the intuition that nature is not merely instrumentally valuable, but non-instrumentally valuable as well. The three distinctions in goodness demonstrate that non-instrumental

accounts of nature's value need not necessarily be restricted to non-anthropocentric environmental ethics.

The fourth element of the best possible defense relates to the extent and scope of the moral club. The choice of moral club set up at the beginning of chapter three and the subsequent findings of chapter five mean that sophisticated anthropocentrism must restrict direct moral standing to rational human persons excluding members of the species *Homo sapiens* that do not possess the requisite capacities for rational personhood. In other words, the sophisticated view can only have a certain sort of conception of "human being" at its center.

Before I move to the second part of the thesis it is worth considering how the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook relates to previous accounts of anthropocentrism and the weak anthropocentric position.

The obvious point to make is that the sophisticated anthropocentric view goes beyond those anthropocentric positions that advocate a *purely* instrumentalist approach to nature's value. The non-instrumentalism of the sophisticated position goes beyond the non-enlightened instrumentalism of strong anthropocentrism<sup>1</sup> and the enlightened instrumentalism of weak anthropocentrism<sup>2</sup>. This means, if we are to conceive of weak anthropocentrism, broadly, in terms of enlightened instrumentalism, then, strictly speaking the sophisticated view of anthropocentrism developed in part one of the thesis does not fall under the label of weak anthropocentrism. It may be thought that the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook could be thought of as an *ultra*

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of strong anthropocentrism see the original accounts of the following philosophers: Aristotle, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, W.J. McGee and R. D. Guthrie.

<sup>2</sup> For examples of weak anthropocentrism see the original accounts of the following philosophers: Fraser Darling and Bryan Norton. For information on the philosophical works of both the strong and weak anthropocentrists see the references on pages 15-16 of the introduction.

weak version of anthropocentrism. However, I am a little uncomfortable with this suggestion because of the purely instrumentalist connotations of the weak anthropocentric position. It is simply better to understand the sophisticated anthropocentric view as a third<sup>3</sup> possibility for the anthropocentric outlook.

I have endeavored then in part one of this thesis to demonstrate and describe what sort of structure the anthropocentric view must adopt if such a position is to avoid some substantial theoretical objections and meet certain crucial intuitions regarding the environment. The sophisticated anthropocentric outlook is the result of this endeavor. It is now time to move to the second part of the thesis. In part two I propose to look at and analyze *specific* examples of the sophisticated outlook. These examples of the best possible defense will be examples that fit the *structure* given above or that can be modified in some way to fit the described *structure*. As I pointed out in the introduction I will examine two versions of the best possible defense. The first version will be a different version of the sophisticated anthropocentric ethical view. It will be a version that concentrates on the aesthetic (SAAP). The second version will concentrate, in a more straightforward manner, on the moral. I now move to consider the idea of Sophisticated Anthropocentric Aesthetic Protectionism.

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<sup>3</sup> The first option is the unenlightened instrumentalism of the strong anthropocentrist. The second option is the enlightened instrumentalism of the weak anthropocentrist. The third option is the non-instrumentalism of the sophisticated anthropocentrist.

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## Chapter Six

### Sophisticated Anthropocentric Aesthetic Protectionism

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Human beings have always been seduced by the aesthetic features of nature. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant writes “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”<sup>1</sup> Of course, in this context, I am referring to the former rather than the latter object of Kant’s admiration; Kant is struck by the beauty, enormity and magnificence of the celestial environment. In his Essay, “My First Summer in the Sierra” John Muir comments about the Yosemite National Park, “No words will ever describe the exquisite beauty and charm of this mountain park—Nature’s landscape garden at once tenderly beautiful and sublime.”<sup>2</sup> In the modern era the attitude of aesthetic admiration has turned to an outlook of aesthetic concern. In his paper, “On Preserving Nature’s Aesthetic Features,” L.D. Willard writes “The irreparable loss of natural beauty in the landscape is sorely troubling to many who believe that the aesthetic experience of nature is quite an important value to human beings.”<sup>3</sup> The point is a simple one. The aesthetic of nature matters to human beings. The claim of the anthropocentric environmentalist is a

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Reason*, translated by L.W. Beck, Bobbs-Merrill Publishing, (1956), P166.

<sup>2</sup> John Muir, “My First Summer in the Sierra,” in *The Wilderness Journeys*, Cannongate Books Limited, (1996), P120.

<sup>3</sup> L.D. Willard, “On Preserving Nature’s Aesthetic Features”, *Journal of Environmental Ethics* Vol. 2, Winter, (1980), P293.

common one. We ought to protect the aesthetic features of the natural environment because such features are valuable to human beings.

However, the importance of the aesthetic features of nature to human beings and to nature itself has long been under emphasized. I have, in the previous paragraph, like many environmental aestheticists before, wheeled out a list of the usual suspects. The quotes above demonstrate a straightforward human interest in the positive aspects (beauty, harmony, etc.) of the aesthetic of the natural environment. But, this uncomplicated aesthetic interest hides a more significant and fundamental relation between human beings and the positive aspects of the aesthetic of nature. The point I want to make, though I suggest this tentatively, is that the positive aesthetic aspects of nature play a role in the lives of human beings that goes beyond *mere* aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment. The following thought experiment will demonstrate the point I want to make. In the future the planet Earth becomes so polluted that it actually starts to affect and change the natural colors of the environment. In this world, due to excess carbon monoxide production, the sky has changed from a pale blue to a rich pink. The clouds are no longer white, but a deep black; the continued widespread burning of fossil fuel means that carbon deposits even impregnate the wispy masses of condensed water vapor. The grass that was once green is now a royal blue and the white water rapids of a quickly flowing river, due to the chemical discharge of big business, have changed to blood red. In this future the planet Earth is turning into some sort of psychedelic nightmare. In addition, it is important to remember that the psychedelic colors of the inanimate environment would soon have a profound influence on members of animate nature. The change of color involved in the move from our present inanimate environment to the described psychedelic environment would soon

initiate new natural selection pressures. If the snowscapes of the arctic were to turn black the white coat of the arctic fox would be a hindrance to survival, not an advantage. The arctic fox must adapt to such an environment or become extinct. What I want to suggest is that this psychedelic world, due to its mix of color, is grotesque and ugly to such an extent that it would cause distress and perhaps even psychological harm to human beings. It is a world that would be literally nauseating to live in. It may be thought that I am over stating the case. But, living in a psychedelic nightmare twenty-four hours a day for the rest of your life, at the very least, has potentially harmful consequences. In our present society we can escape the ugly by simply walking out of the gallery or moving to a more picturesque part of the countryside. In the future planet Earth that I have described escape is not possible; exposure is constant.

There are a couple of points I want to make about the thought experiment above. First, there is an important connection between the positive aesthetic features of nature and the moral. If human beings are not to be harmed (psychologically), then rational moral agents ought to protect the aesthetically positive elements of nature. The contention being that the aesthetics of nature has moral import for human beings in a *fundamental* manner. The second point to make, given the first point, is that concern for the aesthetic features of nature is not *trivial*. It is not just about aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment; a significant *artificial* change in the positive aspects of the aesthetic of the natural environment has deep implications for *all* life (if the aesthetic of nature changes in a significant manner, then different natural selection pressures will kick in) on this planet, especially human beings due to their psychological sensitivities.

I want then, given the importance of the aesthetic features of nature to human beings, to develop a version of the sophisticated view that incorporates the aesthetic in its structure. As I indicated in the introduction, in the final analysis, this version of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook will be a different version of the sophisticated anthropocentric ethical position; it is a position that derives moral conclusions from aesthetic premises. But, how are the positive aesthetic aspects of the natural environment to be incorporated into the structure of the best possible defense to form Sophisticated Anthropocentric Aesthetic Protectionism? This task by itself is not too complicated. However, I cannot perform such an undertaking until other more fundamental matters are clarified. In this respect I will first fill out in detail the nature of the concept of value central to the sophisticated aesthetic anthropocentric position—the *aesthetically valuable*. Second, I will provide a more detailed account of the human concern for the protection of the aesthetic features of nature. Once these elements are in place I will provide a description of the sophisticated view on the aesthetic features of nature. I now turn to the issue of the aesthetically valuable.

### **Aesthetic Evaluation and the Aesthetically Valuable**

It is important to realize that there is a fundamental distinction between “X having an aesthetic value” and “X being aesthetically valuable”. This distinction can be fleshed out by reference to positive and negative aesthetic features. In his paper “Nature and Positive Aesthetics”, Allen Carlson provides a list of positive and negative aesthetic evaluations<sup>4</sup>. For example, the aesthetic qualities of gracefulness, delicacy, unity and intensity are described as positive aesthetic qualities where the

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<sup>4</sup> Allen Carlson, “Nature and Positive Aesthetics,” *Journal of Environmental Ethics* Vol.6. Spring, (1984), P5.

notion of “positive aesthetic quality” is taken to be a feature that is value adding (valuable). On the other hand, the aesthetic qualities of ugliness, incoherence, blandness and dullness are taken to be negative aesthetic qualities<sup>5</sup> where the notion of “negative aesthetic quality” refers to a feature that is value subtracting or just valueless<sup>6</sup>. What are the implications of this position? If an object is described as ugly

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<sup>5</sup> It may be argued at this point that my characterization of “ugliness” as a negative aesthetic quality is simply mistaken. The claim may go that in art there are clear cases where “ugliness” is a positive aesthetic quality. For example, *The Crucifixion* by Matthias Grunewald gives a particularly horrific and ugly depiction of the crucifixion of Christ. In this instance, Christ’s body is shown to be thin from emaciation, punctured at every conceivable point, sharp thorns protruding from every bodily area and blood running downward from his head. In this case, we may want to say that the horror and ugliness of the aforementioned painting, far from detracting from the aesthetic value of the work, adds to the aesthetic value of the work. The work with the aesthetic qualities of horror and ugliness gives an extra dimension of power and tragedy to the depiction of the crucifixion of Christ. How could this claim be justified? We may say that “ugliness” and “horror” in art may be aesthetically valuable because the depiction of ugliness and horror allows the observer some sort of insight into the very phenomena of ugliness and horror. Or, to put it another way, the observer, one step removed from reality by art has the chance to observe and study the phenomena of ugliness and horror without having to experience the above-mentioned phenomena directly. It seems, in art, that there is a good case to be made for the claim that aesthetic concepts like “ugliness” and the “grotesque” can and may be positive aesthetic qualities.

However, the same cannot be said when it comes to the aesthetic appreciation of nature. The concepts of “ugliness” and the “grotesque”, traditionally seen as negative aesthetic qualities, must remain, in the context of the aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment as negative aesthetic qualities. The reason for this is simple and straightforward. In the appreciation of nature the observer is not one step removed from phenomena that are ugly, horrific and grotesque; the spectator has a direct and immediate experience of the aforementioned phenomena. The spectator is directly confronted with the ugliness and grotesqueness of, for example, a rotting and maggot infested body of a sheep. If we return to the example of the crucifixion of Christ, then it will become apparent what the importance of being one step removed from reality actually amounts to. In the case of the painting we as spectators have the opportunity to gain an aesthetic insight into the nature of ugliness and horror by studying a representation of the mutilated body and bloodied face of Christ. We might say that the spectator observes the subject matter from a comfortable “distance”. If, however, a spectator was actually confronted with a mutilated and bloodied body, then I suggest that the observer would be totally repulsed by the situation. In fact, for the observer, I suggest, aesthetic considerations would cease to be at issue. This is one way of saying that the aesthetic qualities of ugliness and grotesqueness, experienced at first hand, only detract (aesthetically) from a scene, they do not add (aesthetically) in any way. Or, to phrase it differently, in a real situation the aesthetic qualities of ugliness and grotesqueness are negative (value subtracting).

It does not require a huge leap of imagination to realize that the example of the rotting carcass described above presents a case that is similar to the example of a dead and mutilated human body. In other words, I contend that the aesthetic qualities of ugliness and grotesqueness in nature are negative aesthetic qualities. This means, in part, regarding nature that I conceive of aesthetic qualities, positive and negative, along very traditional lines. I do not deny for a moment that the traditional lines to which I subscribe break down when we consider positive and negative aesthetic qualities in art, but this admission only highlights that certain aesthetic qualities have different values in artificial and non-artificial situations.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that not all philosophers accept that there is such a thing as negative aesthetic value. For example, in his book, *Aesthetics*, Munroe C. Beardsley voices some doubts about the legitimacy of such a notion. For more information on this point see M.C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis: Cambridge, (1980), pp500-501.

where the concept “ugly” refers to the only aesthetic quality possessed by the object, then the object in question has a negative aesthetic value. On the other hand, if an object is described as beautiful where the concept of “beauty” refers to the only aesthetic quality possessed by the object, then the respective object has a positive aesthetic value. The point is that in both cases both objects have *an aesthetic value*. However, it is not true that both objects are aesthetically *valu-able*. Only the object that is beautiful is aesthetically valuable because that object only has a valuable (value adding) aesthetic quality. The object that is ugly is not aesthetically valuable because such an object only has a valueless or value subtracting aesthetic feature. The first big point is that an object can have an *aesthetic value* without being *aesthetically valuable*.

It is apparent that there are more complex examples regarding negative and positive aesthetic qualities. It is conceivable that an aesthetic object may possess simultaneously both negative and positive aesthetic features. For example, in art a piece of music may possess the positive aesthetic qualities of vibrancy, power and energy while at the same time possessing the negative aesthetic quality of incoherence. In such a situation we may say, once the positive and negative features have been weighed against one another, that the piece of music is aesthetically *valuable* in virtue of the fact that the piece of music has *on balance* a *net* positive aesthetic value. The second point then is that an aesthetic object may possess a negative aesthetic quality but still be aesthetically valuable. Of course, it is possible that an object’s negative aesthetic qualities may outweigh its positive aesthetic qualities thereby resulting in the object having a *net* negative aesthetic value. So, the third point, an object may not be

aesthetically valuable even though the respective object has a positive aesthetic quality.

This completes a list of those distinctions that relate to the idea of the aesthetically valuable. I now turn to consider the nature of an anthropocentric based concern for the protection of nature's aesthetic features.

### **Anthropocentric Aesthetic Protectionism**

In his book, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*<sup>7</sup>, Eugene Hargrove makes the point that concern for the aesthetically valuable in nature feeds off a more fundamental attitude toward the aesthetic. He writes:

“The duty to promote and preserve artistic beauty is, I believe, widely accepted and completely uncontroversial. There is general consensus among nearly all humans that art objects ought to be promoted and preserved. The world is considered a better world because of the existence of works of art.....This duty to promote and preserve artistic beauty lends support to the duty to promote and preserve natural beauty, which is also widely accepted but is more controversial.”<sup>8</sup>

There are a couple of points to make about the quote above. First, it is the duty to promote and protect artistic beauty that is prior to the duty to promote and protect natural beauty. The former duty supports the latter duty. In other words, the criterion of *human* artistic beauty and the protective attitudes that follow as a consequence, act as a condition on which the protection of natural beauty is to be supported. I will return to this point later in the chapter. Second, it is important to remember that the

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<sup>7</sup> Hargrove, E. *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., (1989).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p192.

duties to protect artistic<sup>9</sup> and natural beauty must, in the framework of anthropocentrism, be duties *regarding* the aesthetic of nature. It is only rational human beings to whom duties are *owed*. This means we have a particular structure. If moral agents are going to fulfil their duties towards rational human beings, then there is a way in which moral agents *ought* to act toward the positive aesthetic features of the natural environment. I have already emphasized how the destruction of nature's positive aesthetic features will have a significant detrimental effect on the interests of human beings. But, it is here where we can introduce the sophisticated outlook. The non-instrumental valuing of nature's aesthetic features, and the non-instrumental attitudes that follow, will not only enable the anthropocentrist to attribute non-instrumental value to nature, but enable moral agents to fulfil the duties they owe to rational human beings. The non-instrumental valuing of nature's positive aesthetic features will help promote and protect natural beauty thereby respecting the

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<sup>9</sup> I should say at the outset that we as human beings do not protect art objects on the basis of aesthetic value alone. There are many other reasons that motivate human beings to protect art objects. First, an art object may be protected because, in part, the respective object has cognitive value. For instance, it may be claimed about a certain art object that "it is profound...it has something important to say....it conveys a significant view of life....it gives insight into a universal human problem". This is to say that an art object can make and may make an important contribution to human knowledge. Second, an art object may be protected because it has moral value. For example, it may be said about an art object that "it is morally uplifting and inspiring....it is effective social criticism....it is morally edifying....it promotes desirable social and political ends." Of course, this is not to say that the object has moral value in the way that a human being has moral value. In this instance the art object "has" moral value in the sense that the art work depicts or represents some sort of moral statement/message. Third, we may protect an art object because it has historical value. There are a number of ways to cash out the notion of the historical value of an art object. For example, we may protect certain art objects because they provide a historical record of certain important events. Fourth, we as human beings may choose to protect certain art objects because they have cultural value. For example, in the culture of religion certain art objects have cultural value because such objects contribute to and instantiate ideas central to the specific culture. For instance, in Christianity, certain paintings that represent the crucifixion of Jesus Christ have cultural value in virtue of the fact that the crucifixion of Christ is an important and pivotal event in Christian theology. Finally, we may protect art objects because of their economic value. For example, a Picasso original may be protected because of its extreme monetary worth.

I do not deny that in certain circumstances the above-mentioned values may have some effect on the aesthetic value of an art object. However, it is important to realize that the above-mentioned values can and may be distinct from the notion of aesthetic value. I make this point because, in the present context, it is important to avoid confusions surrounding other values that may be used to justify the protection of art objects and the value that we are focusing on in particular—the notion of aesthetic value.

unconditioned goodness of rational human persons. It is here where more detail is required.

### **Sophisticated Anthropocentric Aesthetic Protectionism**

I am suggesting that rational human beings that are intrinsically valuable, according to the sophisticated view, value natural objects, processes and environments non-instrumentally in virtue of the fact that the respective elements of nature are aesthetically valuable. It is important to be clear about the process at work here. If, for example, a rational human being takes an interest in the beauty of the Grand Canyon for its own sake, and that interest passes the test of rational universalization, then the beauty of the Grand Canyon is objectively non-instrumentally valuable. As I pointed out in chapter four the test of rational universalization limits the capacity of interests to confer value. This means that an interest in the aesthetic, though necessary for value conferral, is not sufficient. It is only those aesthetic objects that *all* rational human beings can take an interest in for their own sake that are in fact objectively non-instrumentally valuable. This is the nature and structure of SAAP.

Can SAAP meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature? It is important to remember, as I indicated in the introduction, that an adequate ethic of nature does not require the protection of *all* natural objects. This would be a commitment to a suicidal outlook. This means that a fatal objection to SAAP must at least take one of two particular forms. First, if certain objects, processes and environments *fundamental* to the proper functioning and existence of nature are aesthetically disvaluable, then SAAP fails to provide an adequate ethic of nature because it *must* fail to meet the intuition that certain important parts of nature are non-instrumentally valuable. If there are such cases, then we would have to say that SAAP simply has a blind spot

regarding important areas of nature. Second, if particular objects and processes fundamental to the functioning of nature are aesthetically valuable, but such processes are in direct opposition to respect for rational human beings, then SAAP must fail to provide an adequate ethic of the environment because the respective objects and processes cannot be non-instrumentally valuable<sup>10</sup> (according to the sophisticated outlook). My aim is to explore both of these possibilities concluding that SAAP cannot provide an adequate ethic of nature.

There are a couple of points I want to make about the formulation of the above-described objections to SAAP. First, if I accept that certain parts of nature cannot be protected, then why should the anthropocentrist accept the *intuition* that certain elements fundamental to the existence of nature are non-instrumentally valuable? Is it not possible that certain processes central to the functioning of nature are legitimate objects of exploitation (by human beings)? If the intuition is incorrect, then, claims the anthropocentrist, the first form of objection and the second form of objection to SAAP no longer stand because there is no need to accommodate the (mistaken) intuition that certain elements fundamental to the existence of nature are non-instrumentally valuable.

There is an obvious reply to this concern about the formulation of the objections to SAAP. It is no mistake that my focus in this chapter will be on processes that are *fundamental* to the proper *functioning* and *continued existence* of nature. If we are

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<sup>10</sup> It may be thought that the second form of the objection to SAAP is misconceived. I have already, at the beginning of the chapter, emphasized the fundamental importance of the aesthetically valuable to human beings. How then can the aesthetically valuable possibly be in opposition to the interests of human beings? It is important to remember that human beings are not only observers of nature, but parts of certain processes (evolution and natural selection) central to the proper functioning of nature. If such processes are taken to be aesthetically valuable, then, for the anthropocentrist, the positive aesthetic features of such processes may be inimical to respect for rational human beings. I will fill out this issue in detail in the final part of the chapter.

serious about the protection of nature, then those very elements that nature consists in must be candidates for non-instrumental value. The claim that an adequate ethic of nature does not require the protection of *all* natural objects does not mean that we can *pick* and *choose* which natural objects to protect. It simply acknowledges that an appropriate amount of exploitation must take place for life to continue and progress. It does not sanction a non-protective attitude toward the most foundational features of the natural environment.

The second point I want to make is about my tactical approach to the subject matter of the chapter. I am, in the first formulation of the objection to SAAP, considering the straightforward view that certain parts fundamental to the functioning of nature are aesthetically disvaluable and which, as a result, do not have non-instrumental value (according to SAAP). The second formulation, in effect, presupposes that such fundamental processes are in fact aesthetically valuable, but seeks to demonstrate that, within the framework of SAAP, non-instrumental value still cannot be attributed to such fundamental processes of nature. The sophisticated anthropocentrist is in a no win situation; whether or not processes fundamental to the proper functioning of nature are aesthetically valuable, SAAP, it will be argued, cannot meet the intuition that such processes are non-instrumentally valuable.

Before I move to consider the first formulation of the objection to SAAP a related point is worthy of mention. The anthropocentrist may claim at this juncture in the chapter that I am the victim of a misunderstanding. He or she may claim that the aesthetic, *by itself*, is in no way meant to provide an adequate ethic of nature. Instead, the anthropocentrist settles for a lesser claim that the aesthetic provides *a reason* for protecting natural environments, but not an *indefeasible* reason. However, the

anthropocentrist by weakening his claim will not save his position. The arguments of this chapter will demonstrate that there are severe difficulties with both positions. The anthropocentrist will find no refuge by a dilution of his claims.

This said, it is apparent that for some parts of nature the aesthetic is the strongest foundation on which to base non-instrumentalism. I am thinking primarily about celestial bodies such as the Moon and Mars and the cosmological environment where no life exists, there is only *terrain*, not *habitat*. We cannot justify the protection of the Moon on the basis of other life forms because no other life forms exist on this particular planetary satellite. But, the protection of the Moon could be justified on the ground that it is aesthetically valuable. The Moon is a very beautiful object viewed in its entirety or observed partially eclipsed. It would be an aesthetic tragedy if one were to look up at the Moon and see the Coca-Cola<sup>11</sup> emblem built into the surface. I say that the aesthetic offers the strongest foundation for protection because other alternatives are less than convincing. I am thinking here about those positions that justify the protection of natural objects, like the moon, on the basis of the autonomy<sup>12</sup> that such objects are supposed to possess. The point I want to make is a simple one. Relative to a particular environment the aesthetic may be the only viable base for the protection of natural objects and processes.

I will now turn to the first area of concern regarding the structure of SAAP. I am referring to those parts of nature that are not aesthetically valuable or, as they may be termed, the aesthetically disvaluable.

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<sup>11</sup> The Coca-Cola emblem example is taken from the work of Simon Blackburn.

<sup>12</sup> This sort of position can be found in the work of Keekok Lee. See Keekok Lee, "Awe and Humility: Intrinsic Value in Nature. Beyond an Earthbound Environmental Ethics," in *Philosophy and the Natural Environment*, Ed. Attfield, R. & Belsey, A., University Press: Cambridge, (1994).

## The Aesthetically Disvaluable in Nature

If a natural object, process or environment is aesthetically disvaluable<sup>13</sup>, then that natural object, process or environment, according to SAAP will not be a candidate for the attribution of non-instrumental value. The problem is that certain processes *fundamental* and *central* to the *continued existence* of animate nature are straightforwardly *ugly* and *deeply* disturbing. For example, the food chain in its entirety is a scene of extreme pain, suffering and mutilation. There is nothing aesthetically pleasing about the life and death struggle between the fleeing gazelle and a hungry pride of lions. The spectacle of limb being ripped from limb while the

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<sup>13</sup> There is a more direct route of objection to the structure of SAAP. It could be claimed that nature does not have any aesthetic qualities, negative or positive, because the natural environment is not the sort of object open to aesthetic evaluation. This position is discussed in the literature. In his paper, "Faking Nature" Robert Elliot argues that nature does not have aesthetic qualities because our appreciation of nature is not aesthetic. He claims about aesthetic judgement that an "integral part of aesthetic evaluation depends on viewing the aesthetic object as an intentional object, as an artifact, as something shaped by the purposes and designs of its author." He continues "Evaluating works of art involves, explaining them, judging them, in terms of their author's intentions; it involves placing them within the author's corpus of work; it involves locating them in some tradition and in some special milieu." However, since nature has none of those features that are integral to the notion of aesthetic evaluation it seems that an evaluation of nature cannot be aesthetic. See Robert Elliot, "Faking Nature," *Inquiry*, 25, (1982). The problem with this argument is that it goes against the common sense position that at least some parts of nature are open to aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic judgement. We need only consider the account of aesthetic appreciation promoted by Malcolm Budd. He writes, "An attractive conception of the aesthetic....represents a response as being aesthetic insofar as the response is directed at the experienced properties of an item, the nature and arrangement of the elements or the interrelationship among its parts or aspects, and which involves a felt positive or negative reaction to the item." There is nothing in this account of aesthetic evaluation that stops an observer aesthetically evaluating the natural environment. It is straightforwardly possible to appreciate and evaluate a natural object on the basis of the arrangement of its elements or on the basis of the interrelationship among its parts. See Malcolm Budd, "The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," in the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 36, No.3, July, (1996). The same sort of claim can be made about the idea of the aesthetic attitude. On this account one aesthetically appreciates an object when one disinterestedly contemplates the object of appreciation for its own sake. There seems to be no reason why one cannot disinterestedly contemplate a natural object for its own sake. I will not press this point any further because of the problematic nature of the aesthetic attitude. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (1790), Edward Bullough, "Psychical Distance" in the *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol.5 (1912), (1995) Sheila Dawson, "'Distancing' as an Aesthetic Principle," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 39 (1961) and Jerome Stolnitz, "The Aesthetic Attitude" in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art Criticism*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company (1960).

gazelle is still conscious is a sober reminder of the harsh realities of survival in the natural world. It is simply a grotesque scene. It is nature red in tooth and claw. It is the survival of the fittest. The disabled in this world perish quickly, deeply distressed, and usually at the mouth of a scavenger. There is no sympathy for the elephant calf that becomes separated from the herd because of its deformed leg. The vultures will be happy to wait to pick the flesh from the stomach of the dying, defenseless infant elephant. Of course, the aesthetically disvaluable is present in the food chain in less dramatic ways. For instance, the feces or decaying bodies of dead animals are consumed piece by piece by colonies of ants and white maggots. The once fierce and proud tiger is reduced to bare bone by swarming armies of parasites. Finally, there is the stench of death ably supplied by a rotting carcass in the heat of the midday sun.

The example of the food chain described above is a real problem for the anthropocentrist because SAAP has nothing constructive to say about the value of a fundamental element of the natural environment. The aesthetically disvaluable slips through the protective net. However, if sophisticated anthropocentrism is to meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature, then it must be able to meet the intuition that elements like the food chain are non-instrumentally valuable. It seems, in this instance, that sophisticated anthropocentrism is impotent. But, is there any counter open to the anthropocentrist? The anthropocentrist could simply claim that my description of processes like the food chain is mistaken on two grounds. First, the anthropocentrist could claim that I have failed to draw a distinction between the moral features of the food chain and the aesthetic features of the food chain. It is the moral features of the food chain that are disturbing and ugly, not the aesthetic features. I will return to this point shortly. Second, the anthropocentrist could contend that the food chain, and

processes like it, are once we go beyond mere superficial appearance aesthetically valuable. I will explore an argument that promotes this very view. However, I will contend that (1) the argument does not work on its own terms and (2) even it did work on its own terms the implications of such a position must, ultimately, be unacceptable to the anthropocentrist.

The distinction that the anthropocentrist may try to make between the moral features of an object and the aesthetic features of an object sets up a particular situation. The claim of the anthropocentrist must be, regarding the food chain, that an observer though recognizing the natural process to be morally repugnant and ugly can, nevertheless, find aesthetic positives in the degenerative and regenerative aspects of such a natural item. This immediately requires the possibility that the moral features of the natural object can be separated from the aesthetic features of the object.

Is it possible to separate the moral features of a natural object from the aesthetic features of a natural object? In order to answer this question I will take one step back and consider an example from the world of art. In his painting, *The Crucifixion*, Matthias Grunewald provides a depiction of the death of Christ. The body of Christ is emaciated and punctured at every available area on his body. The open wound provided by the lance of the centurion seeps a constant stream of blood while his head set at a right angle to his body makes his final moments look tortured and painful. What I want to suggest here is that Grunewald's painting may offer the anthropocentrist an example of an aesthetic object where an observer can achieve a separation between the moral features and aesthetic features of the work. It is clear that the crucifixion of Christ has moral import at different levels. At the highest level the crucifixion of Christ is a sin against God. At a lower level the suffering and

mutilation of his body is morally repugnant. Nevertheless, despite the morally repugnant features of such a work, it is possible to find aesthetic positives. The black background against which the body of Christ is set gives an intensity and power to the painting as a whole. It emphasizes, in an emotive manner, Christ's isolation at that moment.

I do not want to suggest that every example in the appreciation of art is as straightforward as the example described above. There are more problematic cases. There is the case of an artwork that is made out of human skin and bone. The idea here is that the moral import of the materials of which the artwork consists informs the observer's aesthetic evaluation of the artwork. The point being that the morally repugnant nature of the materials is designed to produce a negative aesthetic response on behalf of the observer. Of course, in this instance, this interrelationship between the moral and aesthetic does not help the case of the anthropocentrist. If we accept that negative aesthetic evaluations in *certain* art objects are connected to, and informed by, the morally repugnant, then an item like the food chain, given its morally repugnant nature, could be construed in a straightforward manner as aesthetically disvaluable. It is important then, especially for the anthropocentrist, that I consider a case where, *on the face of it*, a *separation* between the moral features and aesthetic features of an artwork can be achieved. However, my focus is particular. I want to examine, in the case of artworks, the *basis* on which a separation may be made possible.

In art the observer is one step removed from reality. In most cases the observer is confronted with a representation of a subject, not the subject itself. This allows the observer a chance to study the phenomena of, for example, bloodied emaciated human bodies without having to experience the phenomena directly. The observer through

*indirect* study has the chance to gain an *aesthetic* insight into the more morally repugnant aspects of the world. In other words, the representation contained in the artwork creates a *distance* between the observer and the subject represented that allows the observer to set aside moral considerations for aesthetic ones. It is this “distance” that allows the observer to separate the aesthetic features of the work from the moral features of the object.

However, this idea of “distance” is not available to the observer when it comes to the appreciation of nature. The observer in observing nature is not one step removed from reality because nature is reality. The spectator is directly confronted with, given the subject matter of this section, the mutilation and destruction of animal by animal. The space available, in the appreciation of art, to set aside moral features for *positive* aesthetic features is not available when it comes to the appreciation of a natural process. The observer is directly confronted with a scene that is morally disturbing and, as a result, aesthetically ugly. This point can be forced home by reconsidering the example of the crucifixion. If an observer were directly faced with the crucifixion of a human being, then I suggest the observer would be totally morally repulsed by the situation. There would be no aesthetic considerations here at all, except those that refer to negative aesthetic features *alone*. It certainly would be morally perverse if the observer were to see some positive aesthetics features in such a circumstance.

It may be argued by the anthropocentrist that I have just shot myself in the foot. If the comparison between the actual crucifixion of a human being and the food chain is correct, then it is the moral features of the food chain, rather than the aesthetic features that are ugly and repugnant. In other words, in the original example of the food chain I have failed to recognize a distinction between the two sets of features. My criticism

relies more on the moral rather than the aesthetic. There are two replies to this objection. First, if we were to take the view that the food chain is morally repugnant and ugly, and that consideration of aesthetic features is simply out of place regarding such a natural process, then SAAP would immediately fail to provide an adequate ethic of nature because a fundamental part of nature could not be considered aesthetically valuable. The point being if the objection applies to me it applies in a more devastating manner to the anthropocentrist himself. Second, I am not committed to the position cited in the objection of the anthropocentrist. My claim is not that the aesthetic is totally out of place when we look at the food chain and actual crucifixions. My contention is the commonsense position that *positive* aesthetic concepts are out of place regarding such items; only *negative* aesthetic concepts are appropriate.

So far, I have suggested that it is appropriate to describe fundamental natural processes like the food chain in terms of negative aesthetic concepts. However, it may be objected that my description of natural processes like the food chain is superficial. It may be claimed that my approach to items like the mutilation of the gazelle is parochial. I have not probed beyond the individual incident to the context in which the incident is set. Thus, claims the anthropocentrist, the thin veneer of ugliness and grotesqueness of those incidents that make up the food chain can be “wiped” away to “reveal” positive aesthetic features when those individual incidents are set in their correct context.

### **Ugliness Transformed**

In the world of art it would be folly to judge a particular segment of a painting ugly without looking at the particular segment set in the *context* of the whole picture. When seen in the context of the whole the ugliness of the particular segment may be

transformed into some positive aesthetic feature. In the same manner, regarding natural objects and processes, the anthropocentrist may claim that the ugliness of, for example, the dismemberment of the gazelle, can be transformed into some positive aesthetic quality when that act of dismemberment is seen in a wider context. In other words, once we go beyond the superficial appearance of the act of dismemberment itself the positive aesthetic features of nature come to the fore. In the words of E.J. Coleman, "...it would be imprudent to judge a natural object apart from the larger setting in which it is rooted, i.e., the locus of various relations in which it participates."<sup>14</sup> Although Holmes Rolston III is not an anthropocentrist he does offer a *contextualist* argument of the sort described above. He writes:

"If hikers come upon the rotting carcass of an elk, full of maggots, they find it revolting.....An eagle chick plagued with ticks is not a pretty thing. Sometimes there are disfigured, even monstrous animals. So why is this not ugliness in the landscape? It is!.....[However] If we enlarge our scope in retrospect and prospect (as ecology greatly helps us to do) we get further categories for interpretation. The rotting elk returns to the humus, its nutrients recycled; the maggots become flies, which become food for the birds; natural selection results in better adapted elk for the next generation. The monstrous mutants, unless by luck better fitted for some new niche, are edited out of the system, and the system continues to track new environments by casting forth further mutants. Every item must be seen not in framed isolation but framed by its environment, and this frame in turns becomes part of the bigger picture

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<sup>14</sup> E.J. Coleman, "Is Nature Ever Unaesthetic?" *Between the Species*, Summer, (1989), p139.

we have to appreciate—not a “frame” but a dramatic play. The momentary ugliness is only a still shot in an ongoing motion picture.....With a more sophisticated critical sense the aesthete comes to judge that the clash of values, pulled into symbiosis, is not an ugly but a beautiful thing. The world is not a jolly place.....but one of struggling, somber beauty....”<sup>15</sup>

The “momentary” ugliness of a natural object is transformed<sup>16</sup> into a positive aesthetic quality when the respective object is set in its correct evolutionary and ecosystemic context<sup>17</sup>. But, this is appreciation of a certain sort. He writes:

“The ugliness is contained, overcome, and integrates into positive, complex beauty. Yet this is not so much *viewed* as *experienced* after one reaches ecologically tutored understanding. It is not so much a matter of *sight* as of *insight* into the drama of life. In many of life’s richest aesthetic experiences there is nothing to put on canvas, nothing to take snapshots of.”<sup>18</sup>

The point is that ugliness is transformed into beauty more on the basis of the conceptual element of appreciation rather than the perceptual. It is the conceptual that allows the observer to set the respective natural object in its correct evolutionary and

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<sup>15</sup> Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* Temple University Press, Philadelphia, (1988), p239.

<sup>16</sup> It may be thought that there is nothing in the description of Rolston’s position in the quote that commits him to the idea of “transformation”. I should point out that the use of the idea of “transformation” is entirely appropriate because the section from which the quote is taken is titled “Ugliness Transformed in Ecosystemic Perspective”. See Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* Temple University Press, Philadelphia, (1988), p239.

<sup>17</sup> This contextualist position regarding aesthetic features can also be found in the work of Ronald Hepburn. See Hepburn, R., “Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” *Aesthetics in the Modern World*, Ed. H. Osborne, New York: Weybright and Talley Inc, (1986).

<sup>18</sup> Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* Temple University Press, Philadelphia, (1988), p241.

ecosystemic background. It is the conceptual that has the power to transform ugliness into positive aesthetic features. It is the conceptual that takes the observer beyond the superficial appearance of the scene.

Before I move to my objection it is only correct that I mention, though briefly, previously documented problems with the position above. First, there are issues surrounding the object of appreciation. It is certainly not clear what the object of aesthetic appreciation is meant to be. Is it the individual object (for example, the dismemberment of the gazelle)? Is it the ecosystem? If it is the ecosystem, then is it the environment immediate to the object or the biospheric environment? In other words, there are many different choices of context that extend on a continuum until we reach the largest context of all—the universe<sup>19</sup>. It seems, according to Rolston's own criteria, that the appropriate object of appreciation must be the ecosystem. To quote Saito on the matter:

“If this seemingly ugly part is “only a still shot in an ongoing motion picture,” a piece of a jigsaw puzzle, or a player in the drama of “a dynamic evolutionary ecosystem,” is not the aesthetic object the *entire* motion picture, the jigsaw puzzle, or the ecosystem, but *not* the carcass and maggots.”<sup>20</sup>

If the appropriate object of appreciation is the ecosystem, then Rolston's contextualist position encounters an important difficulty. The local ecosystem is only a part of the “motion picture”. It is not the entire movie. The “entire motion picture” is the ecosystem called the universe. If this contention is correct, then the only *appropriate*

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<sup>19</sup> There is a similar point made by Yuriko Saito. See Yuriko Saito, “The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56:2, (1999), p104.

<sup>20</sup> Yuriko Saito, “The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56:2, (1999), p104.

object of appreciation regarding nature is the universe in its entirety. In Rolston's own words, natural items "must be seen not in framed isolation"<sup>21</sup>. It seems that he is committed to the view that there is something *inappropriate* about aesthetically appreciating a natural landscape by itself. But, this position is simply absurd.

Second, the concentration on the conceptual element minimizes the importance of the element that is essential to aesthetic appreciation—the perceptual. It seems that the aesthetic value of a particular aesthetic object is predetermined. I need only understand the workings of ecosystems and evolution to know that a particular natural object (dismemberment of the gazelle) is aesthetically positive<sup>22</sup>. I do not need to go and experience the object at first hand to determine the beauty or ugliness of the object. But, this cannot be correct. I do not deny that an observer's appreciation of nature may be informed by knowledge. However, to deny the importance of the perceptual element of the aesthetic appreciation of nature is to exclude the very element that is central to aesthetic appreciation. In this respect Coleman writes, "To know the confluence of facts, laws, or principles that govern say, the flight of the bald eagle is not to aesthetically behold the majestic movement of this bird."<sup>23</sup> Of course, Kant made a similar point about the essentially perceptual nature of aesthetic appreciation. You cannot judge a thing beautiful or ugly *merely* on the basis of a description of the object of appreciation<sup>24</sup>. The observer must see the object in order to determine its positive or negative aesthetic features. I now turn to my main objection.

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<sup>21</sup> Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* Temple University Press, Philadelphia. (1988), p239.

<sup>22</sup> E.J. Coleman develops this point. See E.J. Coleman, "Is Nature Ever Unaesthetic?" *Between the Species*, Summer, (1989), pp140-141.

<sup>23</sup> E.J. Coleman, "Is Nature Ever Unaesthetic?" *Between the Species*, Summer, (1989), p140.

<sup>24</sup> I. Kant, "Analytic of the Beautiful," in the *Critique of Judgement*, translated by J.C. Meredith, Oxford: Clarendon Press, (1957), pp41-42 or [203-204].

My objection to Rolston's argument is straightforward. It is so uncomplicated that other philosophers seem not to have noticed the possibility. It simply does not follow<sup>25</sup> that the negative aesthetic features of a natural object (or process) will be transformed into positive aesthetic features when the object is set (understood) in its correct evolutionary and ecosystemic context. The enlargement of scope (facilitated through scientific understanding) that Rolston describes only demonstrates that the ugliness and grotesqueness of nature is more widespread and all encompassing. The cycle that he portrays of the rotting carcass of the elk returning to the humus, of transformed maggots (flies) providing food for birds and of the suffering and death of "monstrous mutants" not suited to the particular environments they happen to inhabit *only* shows that the ugliness of nature is constant, unrelentless and omnipresent in most parts of the animate environment. The ugliness and grotesqueness of the dismemberment of the gazelle is set in a wider context of acts that are themselves ugly and grotesque. Why does an understanding of the "big picture" facilitate a move from negative to positive aesthetic features? I do not deny for a moment that the consumption of one organism by another does have *value* (survival value) in an evolutionary and ecosystemic context. Clearly, the merry go round of life can only be sustained and maintained on the basis of this dog eat dog scenario. But, this is a different claim from the claim that such a scenario is aesthetically valuable. The positives—maintenance of life and reproduction—that Rolston sees in the dynamic of the food chain are not aesthetic positives.

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<sup>25</sup> I am not suggesting that it does not follow logically in the sense that it cannot be logically deduced. My claim is that an appeal to evolutionary and ecosystemic context offers nothing in terms of a rational justification of the position cited by Rolston. We are still left asking the question: why does evolutionary and ecosystemic context transform negative aesthetic features into positive aesthetic features.

My contention above helps me counter another possible defense of Rolston's contextualism. It may be claimed that I have not met Rolston's argument head on. His real point is that individual processes in nature superficially taken to be ugly and grotesque, like the example of the mutilation of the gazelle, when placed in the proper context contribute to the positive aesthetic features of something else—namely the ecosystem. It is in this sense that the death and disembowelment of the animal can be said to be aesthetically positive. But, this reply fails to recognize the distinction between regenerative/reproductive/survival values and aesthetic positives. There can be no doubt that the consumption of one animal by another *contributes* to the regenerative and reproductive value of the whole called the ecosystem. But, again this has nothing to do with aesthetic positives. We are still left asking the question: why does enlargement of evolutionary and ecosystemic context result in positive aesthetic evaluations of particulars?

So far, I have asked a basic question about Rolston's position. Why should a scientific understanding of nature render the natural environment aesthetically positive? I have claimed that there is simply no connection between a scientific understanding of nature and positive aesthetic evaluations of the natural environment. However, in an attempt to resurrect the Rolstonian position or, *at least make some themes in his theory more explicit*, the anthropocentrist could enlist the help of another philosopher who claims that there is an intimate connection between scientific understanding and positive aesthetic features. I am thinking here of Allen Carlson's version of positive aesthetics. I should say at the outset that I do not think that Carlson's account of positive aesthetic works. As a result, my original objection to

Rolston stands. Of course, I must substantiate this claim. I now turn to consider the claims of Carlson.

### **Carlson and Positive Aesthetics**

In his article “Nature and Positive Aesthetics”, Allen Carlson examines the position that *all* of the natural environment is beautiful<sup>26</sup>. We are told according to this view that:

“the natural environment, in so far as it is untouched by man, has mainly positive aesthetic qualities; it is, for example, graceful, delicate, intense, unified and orderly, rather than bland, dull, insipid, incoherent, and chaotic. All virgin nature, in short, is essentially aesthetically good.

The appropriate or correct aesthetic appreciation of the natural world is

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<sup>26</sup> In his paper “Nature and Positive Aesthetics” Allen Carlson examines three arguments supporting the view of positive aesthetics. First, he analyses the position that holds that “our appropriate appreciation of the natural world is essentially as the positive aesthetics position indicates, except that it is not genuinely aesthetic.” Carlson argues that this position is simply untenable. It simply contradicts the intuitive view that our appreciation of nature is aesthetic. For a particular example of this limited view on strong positive aesthetics see Robert Elliot “Faking Nature” in *Inquiry* 25, (1982) pp81-39. It would be better to discount this view altogether because it is not in the final analysis an account of positive aesthetics. Second, Carlson looks at the idea that the fact that the natural world is not an artifact, is not the product of rational conscious design, acts as some form of justification for the view that the only way in which to appreciate nature appropriately is in a positive way. According to Carlson, “The idea is that the natural world, by not having an artist, is in an important sense outside the bounds of human control.” It is claimed, by those that support the argument, that this factor helps to explain why we appreciate virgin nature in the way we do (excluding any negative aesthetic evaluations). Of course, a great deal hangs on the notion of “outside the bounds of human control.” There are two important ways in which to conceive of the aforementioned phrase (1) it is beyond mans physical control in the sense that (virgin) nature was not brought into being by man, is not and cannot be maintained by man and is not shaped by man (2) nature is beyond mans mental control in the sense that we do not understand how it works, why it exists and what it is really like. It is claimed given these two factors that a negative criticism (of virgin nature) in the form of negative aesthetic features is simply out of place. I will not rehearse Carlson’s objections to this position. See pp14-17 of the cited article. Third, Carlson looks at an account of virgin nature that does involve the idea of an author/creator. This view of positive aesthetics relies on the theological claim that the world is in an important sense an artifact. In other words, the natural world is created by God. The argument runs that “since [the world] is of divine design and origin, [it] is a perfect world, at least in so far as it has not been marred by man. As a consequence, “virgin nature is, therefore, only aesthetically good and closed to negative criticism.” I will not rehearse the objections to this position. See pp17-21 of the cited article. I will not examine any of these abovementioned arguments for positive aesthetics as Allen Carlson provides convincing counter arguments to all of these accounts.

basically positive and negative aesthetic judgements have little or no place.”<sup>27</sup>

The doctrine of positive aesthetics may seem deeply counter intuitive. After all, as Carlson warns us, such a position regarding the appreciation of art objects “would not warrant serious consideration”<sup>28</sup>. In art it is simply not the case that *all* art is aesthetically good. The simple fact of the matter is, in the appreciation of art, negative aesthetic features are common place. What sort of argument then can be given to support the view that *all virgin* nature is essentially aesthetically positive? It is here that Carlson draws a connection between scientific understanding and the positive aesthetic features of nature.

He claims that the development of science has to some extent aided a growth in the aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment. He writes:

“Seventeenth century developments in astronomy and physics, followed by those in geology and geography, explain and expand the natural such that the notion of the sublime can find a place in its appreciation. Wonder and awe, formerly thought appropriate for a deity, now become aesthetic responses to the seemingly infinite world...”<sup>29</sup>

It may be claimed historically that science has had an important influence on the aesthetic appreciation of natural objects<sup>30</sup>. However, it is not apparent, nor obvious that this contribution in any way connects with the issue of positive aesthetics. How

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<sup>27</sup> Allen Carlson, “Nature and Positive Aesthetics”, *Journal of Environmental Ethics* Vol. 6 (1984), p5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p5.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p21.

<sup>30</sup> For a very brief history of the influence the emergence of science has had on the aesthetic appreciation of nature see Allen Carlson, “Nature and Positive Aesthetics”, *Journal of Environmental Ethics* Vol. 6, (1984), pp21-23.

does the emergence of science, and with it a science-based appreciation of nature, connect with a positive aesthetic evaluation of the natural environment? According to Carlson, the answer is obvious: “science provides knowledge about nature.”<sup>31</sup> But, how does knowledge of nature connect with a positive aesthetic evaluation of (virgin) natural objects? Carlson answers “I think there is no doubt that scientific knowledge...can transform the landscape”<sup>32</sup>. What is the nature of this transformation? In this context we may say that scientific knowledge renders a “meaningless jumble” (nature) into an ordered, united and harmonious whole for the spectator. Scientific description and scientific method finds *unity*, *harmony* and *pattern* in the natural world. For example, the science of ecology reveals through discovery a unity and harmony between certain natural biological mechanisms. We can now begin to see the connection between a science-based appreciation of nature and positive aesthetics. Science reveals, objectively, the aesthetic features of unity, harmony and pattern, features that traditionally are seen as being positive and aesthetic<sup>33</sup>. In other words, science by discovering order or by imposing order reveals the aesthetic goodness of the natural world. Carlson writes:

“a more correct categorization in science is one that over time makes the natural world seem more intelligible, more comprehensible to those whose science it is. Our science appeals to certain kinds of qualities to accomplish this. These qualities are ones such as order, regularity, harmony, balance, tension, conflict, resolution, and so forth....

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p23.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p24.

<sup>33</sup> Of course, a science-based approach to positive aesthetics allows us to develop very easily an account of negative aesthetic features. We simply adopt the negative side of the positive aesthetic quality. For example, the positive aesthetic qualities of Unity, Harmony and Balance can be contrasted with the negative aesthetic qualities of disunity, incoherence and imbalance.

Moreover, these qualities which make the world seem comprehensible to us are also those which we find aesthetically good. This is not surprising for qualities such as order, regularity, harmony, balance, tension, conflict, and resolution are the kinds of qualities which we find aesthetically good in art.”<sup>34</sup>

We see then that a scientific based appreciation of virgin nature discovers and reveals (objectively) all (virgin) nature to be aesthetically valuable. We may say that a scientific understanding and description of the natural world is deeply aesthetic in the sense that our scientific understanding of the world can be cashed out and interpreted in terms of positive aesthetic concepts<sup>35</sup>.

It is easy to see how the position of Carlson helps the claims of Rolston. The very structure of scientific understanding transforms the “momentary” ugliness of natural objects, processes and environments into positive aesthetic features. The rotting carcass of the elk set in an evolutionary and ecosystemic context *must* be seen as a part that is *harmonious* with a *regular* and *ordered* whole. The harmony of the part with the whole has positive aesthetic import.

There are two major objections to the argument of Carlson described above. First, it just does not follow that the *order* revealed by a scientific understanding of nature is

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<sup>34</sup> Allen Carlson, “Nature and Positive Aesthetics”, *Journal of Environmental Ethics* Vol. 6 (1984) pp 30-31.

<sup>35</sup> Allen Carlson’s science based approach to the aesthetic appreciation of nature is basically a combination of Walton’s theory of categories and Aldo Leopold’s land aesthetic. See Kendall Walton, “Categories of Art”, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 79 (1970) and Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, With Essays on Conservation from Round River*, New York: Ballentine, (1970). For additional information see J.B. Callicott, “Leopold’s Land Aesthetic,” *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, State University of New York Press, (1989). For more information on Carlson’s position see Allen Carlson, “Nature, Aesthetic Judgement, and Objectivity”, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XXXX/1 fall (1981), “Appreciation, and the Natural Environment”, in *Arguing About Art*, Eds. Neill, A. & Ridley, A. (1995) and “Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature,” in S. Kemal and I. Gaskell (Eds), *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Cambridge University Press, (1995).

positively aesthetic. In fact, it is just not obvious that the order revealed by science is aesthetic at all. There was a great deal of order in the Nazi's industrialized approach to the extermination of the Jewish population of Europe. However, we would not want to claim that the *order* inherent in this process of genocide is in some way aesthetically positive. My point is that order<sup>36</sup> in itself is aesthetically neutral. We require a further step before order can become a positive aesthetic feature. This further step is not forthcoming in Carlson's account. We are left wondering why the order supplied by science is aesthetically positive. It is, if my contention is correct, simply not enough to claim that science reveals the natural world to be ordered and presuppose, as Carlson has done, that order is aesthetically good in *all* circumstances. Of course, this point about order relates to the objection I cited earlier against Rolston's contextualist position. His claim that the food chain exhibits *order* only demonstrates that the ugliness and grotesqueness of the food chain is widespread and structured.

However, there is a major objection<sup>37</sup> to a science-based approach to positive aesthetics<sup>38</sup>. It simply has no discriminatory power. This worry is articulated by Janna Thompson in her paper "Aesthetics and the Value of Nature", she writes:

"Carlson points out that many people admire wild nature because it is both complex and orderly: systems and organisms are diverse and

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<sup>36</sup> The same point can be made about harmony, unity, balance and pattern.

<sup>37</sup> There are two other objections to the position of Carlson. First, his scientific based conceptual approach to aesthetic appreciation, like Rolston's approach minimizes the importance of the element that is essential to aesthetic appreciation—the perceptual. Second, a scientific based account of the aesthetic appreciation of nature excludes those that sit outside the scientific culture. It means, for example, that an Amazonian tribe cannot appropriately aesthetically appreciate the environment in which they live. This seems deeply counter-intuitive.

<sup>38</sup> Apart from the objection that I will voice in the context of this paper it is worth noting that there are some other significant concerns about a science-based approach to positive aesthetics. This justification of positive aesthetics depends on the discipline of science and the knowledge that comes forth from such a discipline. As a result, such an account of positive aesthetics depends very much on whatever interpretation is placed on science itself. There are various interpretations of science as absolute, culturally relative and paradigm relative. In other words, an account of positive aesthetics that is based on scientific knowledge must itself be open to the above-mentioned interpretations.

related in complex ways, and at the same time create a unity. Let us allow that this claim is a reason for finding natural systems and processes aesthetically pleasing. But these are not qualities that distinguish wilderness areas from those systems that are not so natural. A system with introduced animals and plants can be complex and orderly; so can an area used for agriculture or even a lot full of weeds or a flower bed or a compost heap. It is true that a wilderness may contain more diversity than land used for agriculture, but this agricultural land is likely to have other qualities that we can value aesthetically.”<sup>39</sup>

What I want to suggest here is that Thompson is on to something quite important. A scientific understanding of virtually any object, natural or artificial, will reveal and emphasize the positive aesthetic features of unity, complexity, balance and order in the object under scrutiny. This is true in virtue of the fact that all objects are in an important sense subject to the “laws of nature”. In fact, a scientific understanding of artificial objects may reveal that such objects have a higher degree of positive aesthetic qualities than natural objects because artificial objects are designed and constructed *specifically* to be ordered, unified, balanced and regular.

The first point I wish to make is that there is something deeply unsatisfying about a position that includes everything with such ease. The claim must be, on this science-based approach to positive aesthetic features, that nature is aesthetically positive because *everything* (including the artificial) just is aesthetically positive. It seems that nature is aesthetically positive by default. Nature is aesthetically positive in virtue of

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<sup>39</sup> Janna Thompson, “Aesthetics and the Value of Nature”, *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol.17, (1995), P298

the fact that there are no alternative scenarios regarding the aesthetic value of (all) objects (natural and artificial). But, if nature is aesthetically positive by default, then the sophisticated anthropocentrist can hardly claim that the aesthetically valuable provides a good foundation on which to base an adequate ethic of nature. Second, the claim that everything, natural and artificial, is aesthetically positive is simply false. As I intimated earlier, Carlson himself is happy to concede the point that the doctrine of positive aesthetics does not stand up to scrutiny when applied to art. Third, in terms of the aesthetically valuable, we lose an important contrast between virgin nature and non-virgin nature, and an important contrast between the natural and the artificial<sup>40</sup>. It is the case, according to a scientific understanding of reality, that every object process and environment, natural or unnatural, is aesthetically valuable because every object, process and environment is ordered, unified, etc. This means that a scientific based account of positive aesthetics is not going to be able to account for the commonly held intuition that *virgin* nature is more aesthetically valuable than *non-virgin* nature because, in accord with a scientific understanding, positive aesthetic concepts apply (almost) equally to both elements of nature. In addition, such an account may well face the very counter intuitive position that agricultural landscapes are more aesthetically valuable than wilderness areas because agricultural landscapes, according to a scientific description, have a higher degree of positive aesthetic feature in virtue of the fact that such a landscape is more ordered and regular than a virgin piece of

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<sup>40</sup> It may be thought that the contrast between the natural and artificial can be saved if we make a distinction between imposed order and non-imposed order. It may be claimed that a scientific understanding of reality reveals an order that is not imposed by human beings whereas the order we find in artificial objects is imposed by members of mankind. However, this distinction is not helpful. If both sets of object are in an important sense subject to the "laws of nature," then a scientific understanding of both the artificial and the natural will reveal a fundamental non-imposed order. We do not impose the "laws of nature".

nature. Of course, it may be claimed that the intuition that virgin nature is more aesthetically valuable than artificial landscapes is simply misplaced and unfounded. However, we need to be well aware of the dangers of discarding such an intuition. As Thompson warns us, if on a scientific account the artificial (in virtue of being more ordered, unified, than the natural) is more aesthetically valuable than the natural, then we are making the claim that in terms of the aesthetically valuable the artificial is aesthetically superior to the natural. This claim takes us all the way back to the artificial objects that we first started with—art objects. If we accept that art objects are to a greater degree more harmonious, united and ordered than natural, then it becomes apparent that in terms of the aesthetically valuable art objects may well be aesthetically superior to natural objects. This represents, in terms of protection, a dangerous disanalogy between art objects and natural objects. If we accept the claim that art objects are aesthetically superior to natural objects, then it may be argued that the argument cited by Hargrove (the argument described at the beginning of the chapter) does not and cannot support the view that we ought to protect nature on the basis of its being aesthetically valuable<sup>41</sup>. Why? The very reason that human beings protect art objects rests on the fact of their aesthetic superiority to all other aesthetic objects. The inferior is simply discarded.

I suggest then that Calson's science based account of the positive aesthetic value of

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<sup>41</sup> The idea that the natural environment is aesthetically inferior to artworks is not something that is foreign to the aesthetic tastes of human beings. In fact, up until the eighteenth century, the natural environment was seen by many as being deformed in some way, a corruption of God's original intent. For more information on this point see John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Duckworth, (1980), pp107-110. In addition, Hargrove produces a limited discussion on this subject see E. Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, (1989), pp185-191.

nature ought to be rejected for the reasons listed above<sup>42</sup>. This means that my original objection to Rolston's contextualism stands. My claim so far is that Rolston's argument fails to demonstrate that certain fundamental elements of nature—for example, the food chain—are aesthetically valuable. He draws a conclusion that simply cannot be justified on the basis of the premises of his argument. However, as I intimated at the beginning of the section, I now want to look at the implications of *accepting* such a contextualist argument. I will demonstrate that the evolutionary and ecosystemic contextualism of Rolston is in principle inimical to the central tenets of sophisticated anthropocentrism, or for that matter, any form of anthropocentrism. I am now considering the second form of objection to the structure of SAAP described earlier in the chapter.

### **The Aesthetic Virtues and Vices of Natural Selection**

Rolston tells us that the ugliness and grotesqueness of some of the most disturbing scenes in nature can be transformed into positive aesthetic features when these scenes are understood in an evolutionary context. In this respect he makes an explicit reference to the process of natural selection. Due to the workings of natural selection we will have “better adapted elk for the next generation”, the less fortunate “monstrous mutants” will be “edited out of the system”, while new mutants will come forth as life attempts to track environmental change. In other words, there is a “somber beauty” about the death and suffering of animals *now* because of the positives that will come forth in the future due to the ongoing process of natural selection and evolution. It is important to remember that natural selection pressures can be serious in the

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<sup>42</sup> There is one other account of positive aesthetics that I have not considered. I am referring to the account given by Eugene Hargrove. I have not considered this account for two reasons. First, it is not science based. Second, it is not strictly philosophical, but historical. For more information on his position see E. Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, (1989), pp177-185.

extreme for particular groups of organisms. If a group of organisms cannot adapt to their new environment, then extinction, through suffering and death, shortly follows. But, this is not a problem for Rolston's version of contextualism. The extinction of a species leaves a space for other species to live and develop. The ugliness and grotesqueness of the suffering of the species in the process of extinction is transformed into a positive aesthetic feature when we see that other better adapted species will follow. The problem is that Rolston seems to have forgotten that human beings are subject to the same processes of natural selection and evolution. He seems to have forgotten that the existence of human beings over the past 500,000 years is only a "still shot" of the complete "movie". If the environment changed in such a manner that we could not adapt quickly enough to avoid extinction, then we would have to look at the suffering and death of human beings as something of somber beauty. If we buy into Rolston's contextualism, then beauty comes forth because our suffering is set in a *bigger picture*. It may be the case that human beings "are edited out of the system", but other life forms will soon fill our shoes; life forms better adapted for the new and developing environment. It seems that we must admire the beauty of our own demise.

There are three points to be made here. First, there is something morally perverse about finding the actual suffering and death of rational human beings aesthetically positive<sup>43</sup>. We would want to say that there is something morally corrupt about the moral character of a human observer that finds beauty in the pain and misery of his

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<sup>43</sup> It is important to remember that the sophisticated view values aesthetically valuable objects not only non-instrumentally, but instrumentally as well. This means that those objects that are aesthetically valuable are also a means to aesthetic pleasure. In other words, the human observer in taking the suffering of human beings to be aesthetically positive in this context may be taking aesthetic pleasure in that suffering. This has to be morally perverse.

fellow man<sup>44</sup>. Second, to take the suffering of rational human beings to be aesthetically good is certainly not to respect the moral status of such beings. According to the sophisticated anthropocentric view moral agents have a direct duty not to cause harm and suffering to rational human beings. From this perspective the moral agent can hardly go on to find aesthetic goodness in such suffering. The point being that the proposed aesthetic goodness of such a process is inimical to a central tenet of sophisticated anthropocentrism—respect for rational persons. If the processes of evolution and natural selection are aesthetically good, then, within the framework of SAAP, they cannot be valued by *all* rational human beings non-instrumentally; they cannot be objectively non-instrumentally valuable. Third, it is important to realize that the previous point does not *specifically* depend on a contextualist or scientific account of positive aesthetics. It is the claim that processes like evolution and natural selection are aesthetically good that is in direct opposition to respect for rational human beings. If there are non-contextualist or non-scientific accounts of the positive aesthetics of nature, then they will be in conflict with the central tenet of sophisticated anthropocentrism.

In addition, I think there is a deeper point here that needs to be expressed about the claim that nature is by and large aesthetically good when set in ecosystemic and evolutionary context. Philosophers like Rolston and Carlson are quite happy to countenance the idea that the suffering and destruction of non-human animals is aesthetically positive while at the same time claiming that the *same* form of suffering and destruction of human beings is, *at the very least*, aesthetically negative. But, this

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<sup>44</sup> The same point can be made regarding the suffering and death of non-human animals. There is something morally amiss with a human being that finds aesthetic goodness in the suffering and death of animals. In this context, like the human context, it is appropriate to talk about a corruption of moral character.

position is symptomatic of a general attitude that pervades most of western society. We are happy to take a rather romantic approach to the harsh realities of the natural environment, but a more sober approach to the human moral landscape with which we are *immediately* faced. My tactic, by considering the human perspective in Rolston's contextualist theory, has been to demonstrate the danger of romanticizing the harsh realities that a particular organism may face. If we are disturbed about finding aesthetic goodness in the suffering of human beings, then we ought to be disturbed about finding aesthetic positives in the mutilation, suffering and destruction of non-human animals.

I will not pursue this line of inquiry any further. I believe the point is made. I have argued that Rolston's contextualist position (1) does not work on its own terms and (2) even if it did work on its own terms such a position would be inconsistent with the sophisticated anthropocentric position. My claim that certain elements fundamental to the functioning and existence of nature are aesthetically disvaluable stands. If certain fundamental elements of nature are aesthetically disvaluable, then SAAP cannot attribute non-instrumental value to the respective fundamental natural processes. If SAAP cannot attribute non-instrumental value to significant elements of nature, then SAAP cannot meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature.

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## Chapter Seven

### Sophisticated Anthropocentrism

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The Sophisticated Anthropocentric position inform us (1) that human beings are intrinsically valuable (2) nature is non-instrumentally valuable if and only if a rational human person takes an interest in a natural object, process or environment for its own sake and the respective interest in question passes the test of rational universalization and (3) the moral club, as I have termed it, is restricted to rational human persons (human moral agents). These are the elements central to the nature and structure of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook<sup>1</sup>. In the previous chapter I looked at a particular representative of the sophisticated outlook. It was a version that incorporated the aesthetic into the above-described structure to form SAAP. I concluded that SAAP could not provide an adequate ethic of nature. However, I want to broaden the scope of this examination. Clearly, I must move beyond representatives of the sophisticated view that concentrate on the aesthetic to representatives that have a greater scope and are more straightforwardly moral<sup>2</sup>. In this respect, given the content of chapter four, there is a rather obvious candidate for analysis—a Kantian account of the

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, sophisticated anthropocentrism does include the account of nature developed in chapter two. I will not retell that account here. It need only be noted that the idea of naturalness by degree, and the accompanying account of protection, is part of the structure of sophisticated anthropocentrism. I refer the reader to the interim conclusion.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to remember that SAAP is, ultimately, a moral position. It is about deriving moral conclusions from aesthetic premises. However, the attempt to broaden the debate is an attempt to look at representatives of the sophisticated view that derive moral conclusions from moral premises. This is what I mean by “more straightforwardly moral”.

sophisticated view. There are two very good reasons for such an examination. First, most obviously, Kant limits the moral club to rational human persons alone and possesses the resources, via a Korsgaardian interpretation of his ethics, to account for the non-instrumental value of nature. Of course, the non-instrumental value of nature represents a departure from Kant's original position, but this only emphasizes that the finished account will be neo-Kantian. Second, in the context of the discipline of environmental ethics, we have the opportunity to develop an environmental ethic that is truly Kantian in flavor. The importance of this should not be lost on the observer. To use the words of Tim Hayward, "[Kant] is widely viewed as inimical to environmental values."<sup>3</sup> By this he means that Kant's ethics do not seem to square with the intuition, widely held by environmental philosophers, that nature has some sort of non-instrumental value. However, the Korsgaardian interpretation of Kantian ethics, at the very least, provides an opportunity for a Kantian account of morality to make a more positive contribution to environmental ethics. In other words, *on the face of it*, Kantian ethics may have a great deal more to offer regarding an adequate ethic of nature than previously thought. It is then for the above-mentioned reasons that an examination of a Kantian account of the sophisticated outlook is justified and important.

Before I continue, it may be asked, is it possible for there to be a non-Kantian version of the anthropocentric sophisticated view? It is important to remember that the "best possible defense," as I have called it, is about the *structure* of anthropocentrism. It is a claim about what anthropocentrism *needs to look like* if it is to avoid certain

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<sup>3</sup> See Hayward, T. "Kant and the Moral Considerability of Non-Rational Beings", *Philosophy and the Natural Environment*, Ed. Attfield, R. & Belsey, A., University Press: Cambridge, (1994).

substantive theoretical objections. If a proposed ethic of nature, Kantian or non-Kantian, has the *type* of structure described at the beginning of the chapter, then that ethic of nature will be a version of the sophisticated anthropocentric position. I will not push this point any further because, as I will argue later in the chapter, the Kantian/non-Kantian distinction will not save the anthropocentrist.

The project of this chapter can be split up into three segments. First, I will give an account of Kant's original position. Second, on the basis of that account, I will develop two broadly Kantian accounts of the sophisticated anthropocentric view. I will examine in detail the major structural elements of the respective positions—the mechanisms on which the non-instrumental value of nature is based and the scope of the moral club. I will argue that problems with the respective elements demand a rejection of the Kantian version of the sophisticated outlook. Finally, I will broaden the debate yet further. I will consider a structural problem that applies to both Kantian and non-Kantian examples of the sophisticated position. I now turn to the execution of the project of this chapter.

I should make it clear from the outset that I am not, in giving a description of Kant's original position, reconsidering the instrumentalist's view. This stance was rejected at the very beginning of the thesis. I am simply providing a summary of Kant's original outlook on the environment on the grounds that the first version of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook will be developed from such a point of view.

### **Kant and the Environment**

It is worth pointing out that Kant makes a selection of very different almost conflicting statements about the environment. In his *Lectures on Anthropology* he displays a blatant disregard for the welfare of non-human animals. He comments that:

“The fact that the human being can have the representation “I” raises him infinitely above all the other beings on Earth. By this he is a person...that is a being altogether different in rank and dignity from things, such as irrational animals, with which one may deal and dispose at one’s discretion.”<sup>4</sup>

However, in his *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant displays a concern for the welfare of certain non-human animals. Kant writes that:

“...if a dog has served his master long and faithfully, his service, on analogy of human service, deserves reward, and when the dog has grown to old to serve, his master ought to keep him until he dies.”<sup>5</sup>

In a similar vein he comments that:

“The more we come in contact with animals and observe their behavior, the more we love them, for we see how great is their care for their young. It is then difficult for us to be cruel in thought even to a wolf.”<sup>6</sup>

This concern is repeated again in his description of Leibnitz’s treatment of a worm, where the worm is carefully replaced back on a leaf after observation so that the worm “should not come to any harm through any act of his,”<sup>7</sup> and when Kant claims that “cruelty for sport cannot be justified.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For this quote see Allen W. Wood, “Kant on Duties Regarding Non-Rational Nature,” in *The Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, (72), (1998) p190. The original source of this quote is Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798), 7:127.

<sup>5</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Duties Towards Animals and Spirits,” in *Lectures on Ethics*, Trans. Louis Infield, New York:Harper and Row, (1963), p239-241.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp239-240.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p240.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. pp240-241.

On the face of it we have two very different and conflicting sides to Kant's environmental philosophy. There is the side that displays a blatant disregard for the welfare of animals and there is the side that displays some concern for the well being of non-rational, non-human nature. The negative side of Kant's environmental philosophy certainly helps to explain, *in part*, why his moral theory is taken by many environmental philosophers to be inimical to environmental ethics. However, the positive side of his moral views, in conjunction with the Korsgaardian interpretation, offer the possibility of a more subtle and sophisticated ethic that is not in direct opposition to the intuition (nature is non-instrumentally valuable) that is central to the discipline of environmental ethics.

My aim in this chapter is to develop the positive concerns that Kant has for non-rational nature in conjunction with the theory of valuing open to Kant via Korsgaard. However, before I move directly to this project it is worth giving an explicit account of Kant's views on non-rational nature. It is from this starting point that a Kantian account of the sophisticated position may be built.

In his *Lectures on Ethics* Kant gives an explicit account of where non-rational nature fits into his moral theory. In a section entitled, "Duties Toward Animals and Spirits" he writes:

"...so far as animals are concerned, we have no direct duties. Animals are not self-conscious and are there merely as a means to an end. That end is man.....Our duties towards animals are merely indirect duties towards humanity. Animal nature has analogies to human nature, and by doing our duties in respect of manifestations which correspond to manifestations of human nature, we indirectly do our duty towards

humanity. Thus, if a dog has served his master long and faithfully, his service, on analogy of human service, deserves reward, and when the dog has grown too old to serve, his master ought to keep him until he dies. Such action helps support us in our duties towards human beings, where they are bounden duties. If then any acts of animals are analagous to human acts and spring from the same principles, we have duties towards the animals because thus we cultivated the corresponding duties towards human beings.”<sup>9</sup>

Kant Continues:

“If a man shoots his dog because the animal is no longer capable of service, he does not fail in his duty to the dog, for the dog cannot judge, but his act is inhumane and damages in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind. If he is not to stifle his human feelings, he must practice kindness towards animals, for he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men....tender feelings toward dumb animals develop humane feelings toward mankind.”<sup>10</sup>

Moving from the status of animate non-rational nature to inanimate non-rational nature Kant comments:

“Baumgarten speaks of duties towards inanimate objects. These duties are also indirectly duties towards mankind....We ought not to destroy things which can still be put to some use, no man ought to mar the beauty of nature; for what he has no use for may still be of use to

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp 239-240.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p240.

someone else. He need, of course, pay no heed to the thing itself, but he ought to consider his neighbor. Thus we see that all duties towards animals...and towards inanimate objects are aimed indirectly at our duties towards mankind.”<sup>11</sup>

At this point there can be no doubt, given the passages quoted above, that Kant expounds a purely *instrumental* approach to the value of nature. For Kant, we ought not to maltreat animals because such maltreatment may develop a disposition in a rational human to maltreat other rational humans. In other words, in this context non-human, non-rational animals are *merely a means* to a form of good moral<sup>12</sup> character<sup>13</sup>. The kind and sympathetic treatment of animals will help a rational being develop a kind and sympathetic disposition toward other rational persons which is ultimately to respect that which is unconditionally good—rational nature<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p241.

<sup>12</sup> This view, in the literature, is sometimes referred to as “individual moral perfectionism”. It is important to note that the label of “perfectionism” is out of place in this context. Kant is not trying to offer a true account of perfectionism. He is really concerned about people that fall below a certain moral level—a point where a rational human being fails to respect rational nature. The appropriate treatment of animals will keep a person at the required moral level respecting the unconditioned worth of rational persons.

<sup>13</sup> There is a restatement of this position in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. See Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, Translator: Mary Gregor, Cambridge University Press, (1991), pp237-238.

<sup>14</sup> There are a number of obvious objections that may be made against the Kantian position cited above. First, the claim that non-human animals are not self-conscious is inaccurate. There are several groups of non-human animals known to be self-conscious—for example, the chimpanzee and orangutan. See Daniel Hart & Mary Pat Karmel, “Self-awareness and self knowledge in humans, apes, and monkeys,” in *Reading into Thought*, Eds. S.T. Parner, A.E. Russan & K.A. Boro. Cambridge University Press (1996). Gordon, G. Gallup. J.R. , “Self-Awareness and the Emergence of Mind in Primates,” *American Journal of Primatology*, 2:237-248, (1982). D.J Povenelli & J.G.H. Cant, “Arboreal Clambering and the Evolution of Self-Conception,” in *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, Vol. 70, No.4 (1995). See also Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Routledge: London and New York (1983). Second, in his book, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Regan throws some doubt on the claim that non-human animals cannot judge. This claim misses the point. It is obvious that Kant is referring to moral judgement which is certainly not in the power of animals if such judgement requires acting out of recognition of the moral law. See Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, (1983), pp178-179.

Of course, the position cited above is perfectly consistent with the distinction Kant makes between persons and things. In the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, he writes:

“Now I say that a man, and in general every rational being, *exists* as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* for arbitrary use by this or that will: he must in all his actions, whether they are directed to himself or to other rational beings, always be viewed *at the same time as an end*....beings whose existence depends, not on our will, but on nature, have none the less, if they are non-rational beings, only a relative value as means and are consequently called *things*. Rational beings, on the other hand, are called persons because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves—that is, as something which ought not to be used merely as a means—and consequently imposes to that extent a limit on all arbitrary treatment of them.”<sup>15</sup>

Kant is wholly consistent in claiming that non-rational animate and inanimate nature may be used as a means to good moral character because according to Kant non-rational nature has the status of a thing, not a person. For Kant, this is just another way of saying that non-rational nature has only a conditioned and relative worth while rational persons have absolute and unconditioned worth. This statement of value is found, most significantly, in the second formulation of the categorical imperative, “act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an

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<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Trans. H.J. Paton, Routledge: London and New York, (1997), pp90-91.

end.”<sup>16</sup> In this respect “rational nature is respected only by respecting [rational nature] in someone’s person”<sup>17</sup>. I will refer to this derivative thought, via Allen Wood, as the personification principle. I will return to the importance of this principle later in the chapter.

It is apparent that the initial position of Kant described above is very far from the requirements of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook. Despite the fact that Kant limits the moral club to rational (human) persons he does not extend the notion of a conditioned end to non-rational, non-human nature. However, with the claims of Korsgaard ringing in our ears there can be no doubt that Kant has the resources to make such an extension. Or, at least, it may be claimed that such an extension can be made on grounds that are distinctively Kantian. The question is how is this extension to be made?

I want to explore two ways in which this extension may be made. First, given Kant’s account of developing good moral character, I will suggest that there is a way in which this idea can be combined with the idea of non-instrumental valuing to produce an account of sophisticated anthropocentrism. Second, I will develop a more parsimonious version of sophisticated anthropocentrism by bypassing and excluding the idea of moral character development to develop an account where the goodwill is the condition of that that is valued non-instrumentally. Of course, in both cases the goodwill must be the unconditioned condition of the conditioned end (that that is valued for its own sake). The main difference between the former and later accounts of the sophisticated view will be the notion of moral character maintenance.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp91.

<sup>17</sup> Allen W. Wood, “Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature,” *The Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, (72), (1998), pp196-197.

## Sophisticated Anthropocentrism and Moral Character Development

Kant espouses the view that kindness to non-human animals is a means to developing a good moral disposition, a moral disposition that is “his duty to show towards [rational human beings].” In other words, the good treatment of non-human animals is a means to a form of good moral character—“tender feelings towards dumb animals develop humane feelings towards mankind.” We may say then that there is a way in which rational human beings *ought* to act toward non-human animals out of a respect for rational persons.

I want to suggest that the respect for rational nature, on Kant’s account, that justifies the *use* of animals for the moral character development of rational beings may, on the face of it, also justify valuing non-human animate and inanimate nature for its own sake (non-instrumentally). In addition, I will contend that Kant needs to make this move otherwise his own account of character maintenance descends into absurdity. I will begin with the matter of non-rational animate nature.

There is reason to think that the non-instrumental valuing, and as a result, non-instrumental treatment of non-human animals would, if we buy into Kant’s claims about human psychology, improve “in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind.” The reason for this is simple and straightforward. The word “sake” in the phrase “valued for its own sake” refers to the welfare and well being of the non-instrumentally valued non-rational animal. In this context this is just what a “sake” is. This means that the idea of valuing a non-human animal for its own sake (taking an interest in it for its own sake), rather than *merely* a means to some further end, is that the valuer values the well being and welfare of the animal in a more direct

manner. The valuer is taking a *direct* interest<sup>18</sup> in the fact that things can go better or worse for the respective non-human animal concerned. This concern may translate into a number of particular actions that are conducive to the welfare and good of the animal. For example, a rational being that values a non-human animal *for its own sake* will refrain from acts that could affect the well being of the animal in a negative manner. This means that the rational agent will be sensitive to the possible suffering of the animal, desist from acts that cause the animal stress and take part in actions that promote the flourishing of the aforesaid animal. In this situation there need be no redress to certain analogies between human behavior and animal behavior because the welfare of the animal is being considered directly, not *merely* as a means to an end.

It may be asked at this point if there is any real advantage to the move made above. After all, on Kant's basic account, a rational agent will be sensitive to the suffering, stress and flourishing of non-human animals. The only difference here is that the rational agent, on Kant's original account, will not consider the welfare and well being of animals *directly* (as a conditioned end). But, this is exactly the point. If we buy into Kant's account of moral character development (tender feelings toward dumb animals develop human feelings towards mankind), then a rational person that is sensitive to, and considers *directly* the welfare of an animal will develop a better moral disposition than the rational agent that only considers the welfare of a non-human animal indirectly. Or, to put it another way, in a particularly Kantian manner, to treat an

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<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that I am not relying on a rational human being valuing a non-human animal only instrumentally. This sort of interest is the type of interest that can pass the test of rational universalization especially when we consider that such an interest is intimately linked to respect for rational nature. The point is that on this modified account of Kantian character maintenance the non-human animal concerned is objectively non-instrumentally valuable. This accords with the basic structure of sophisticated anthropocentrism.

animal as an (conditioned) end will help maintain and develop in a rational being that moral disposition to treat other rational beings as (unconditioned) ends.

Before I consider Kant's account of moral character maintenance in relation to non-rational, inanimate nature I want to deal with the problem I mentioned earlier in the chapter. I claimed that Kant needed to make something like the move I have made above if his notion of moral character development is not to fall into absurdity. What do I mean by this claim? Kant contends that "he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men." The claim here is that rational moral agents ought not to maltreat non-rational non-human animals because such maltreatment will lead to the maltreatment of rational beings by rational beings. On Kant's original account this is one way of saying that treating non-human animals as *means* leads rational human beings to treat other rational beings as *means* (of course, for Kant, this is morally wrong because to treat a rational being merely as a means is to disrespect the absolute and unconditional value of a rational person). But, this is a disastrous conclusion for Kant. According to Kant, whether or not we maltreat a non-human animal, non-human animals in virtue of their status as mere *things* can only be valued as *means*. But, if non-human animals can only be valued as means, then, following the logic of Kant's moral character development, rational beings will be lead to treat other rational beings merely as means. At this point it may be claimed that there is an obvious distinction to be made between maltreating an animal and treating an animal merely as a means. This is certainly correct. However, due to Kant's own statements on the moral status of persons and things no such distinction is possible because a mere thing must *only* be

instrumentally valuable. For Kant, to maltreat must be to treat an animal merely as a means<sup>19</sup>.

It is important then for Kant and this Neo-Kantian account of sophisticated anthropocentrism that we can say something more regarding the value of animals than simply to claim that non-human animals, as things, can only be instrumentally valuable. The Korsgaardian interpretation of Kant provides that option. A rational being may improve “in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind” by valuing non-human animals as conditioned ends. But, this makes much more sense. Given the claims of the psychological principle at the heart of Kant’s account of moral character maintenance we would expect the treatment, by rational human beings, of non-human animals as ends to lead to the treatment of rational persons as ends<sup>20</sup>.

Of course, it may be claimed that this modification to Kant’s theory of moral character development cannot be made because it directly flouts his views on the moral status of animals in virtue of the fact that they fall under the category of *things*. For Kant, non-human animals can only be instrumentally valuable in virtue of being mere things. However, Kant in claiming that a non-human animal is instrumentally valuable is really trying to substantiate the claim that non-human animals have a “relative value”; that is relative to human persons (the unconditionally good). But, this

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<sup>19</sup> There is an interesting discussion on this point in the literature. See Broadie, A. & Pybus, M. “Kant’s Treatment of Animals”, *Philosophy*, 49, (1974), Regan, T. “Broadie and Pybus on Kant”, *Philosophy*, 51, (1976) and Broadie, A. & Pybus, E.M. “Kant on the Maltreatment of Animals,” *Philosophy*, 53, (1978).

<sup>20</sup> There is another possible solution to the problem stated above. Kant may be able to claim that non-rational animals ought to be valued “as if” they were ends. The justification for this claim would ultimately reside in the fact that such a method of valuing would respect rational nature. In other words, the valuing of non rational organisms “as if” they were ends, by rational persons, would develop in a rational person a moral disposition to treat other rational persons as ends. I think this solution to the problem is less convincing than the solution offered by the three distinctions in goodness. However, it is worth noting that another answer to the problem may be available.

is exactly where the advantage of the three distinctions in goodness comes to the fore. If a non-human animal is valued for its own sake by a rational human person, the value of the non-human animal remains *relative*. As we are aware, the reason for this is that the condition of the goodness of the non-human animal is not the animal itself, but the absolute and unconditioned good of the good will of a rational person. The point is that a departure from valuing non-human animals merely as a *means* in virtue of their status as *things* is not a radical departure from the basic line spelt out by Kant—the value of the non-rational still remains *relative*.

I claimed at the beginning that the above-described account of moral character development might well extend to include not only non-rational animate nature<sup>21</sup>, but also non-rational inanimate nature. This may be achieved, though I suggest this tentatively, by modifying the psychological principle that is at the heart of Kant's moral character development story. As we are aware, he suggests that "he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men." However, there may be an analogous principle of the following sort: he who is destructive toward inanimate objects "becomes hard also in his dealings with men". I will start with some concerns we may have about the treatment of artificial objects by rational persons in order to make the point more forceful. Take, for example, the case of a human being that cuts up photographs of certain other human beings or the case where a person inserts pins into Voodoo dolls. There is a clear sense in which we should be concerned about the moral disposition of a person that takes part in such activities. It is certainly plausible

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<sup>21</sup> It is important to remember that animate nature includes plant life. Christine Korsgaard, in her book, *The Sources of Normativity*, makes the claim that Kant's views make more sense when applied to plants. She writes, "Is it crazy to say that there is something amiss with someone who destroys plant life wantonly?". In other words, she is making the point that the destruction of plants may lead to a corrupt moral disposition. I will not recount the argument here. See Korsgaard, C. *The Sources of Normativity*, Cambridge University Press, (1996), P156.

to claim that such activities may damage “in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind.” In other words, on Kantian grounds such actions display a blatant disregard and disrespect for rational persons—which is to say that such actions are morally wrong. The conclusion is (though it is a tentative one) that Kant’s account of moral character development can extend to include *artificial* inanimate objects.

However, we are still left with a further extension. Can Kant’s account of moral development be extended to include non-rational, inanimate nature? It must be admitted at this point that the connection between the treatment of inanimate objects and Kant’s account of moral character maintenance is at its weakest. The strength of the examples cited above is that each inanimate object cited has an obvious connection to rational human beings in that each example involves a representation of a rational human. The same cannot be claimed about natural inanimate objects. However, it could be claimed that the deliberate destruction of natural inanimate objects may develop a general destructive disposition in a rational human that may be actualized against other fellow rational persons. If we accept this claim, then Kant’s form of moral character development can be extended to include non-rational inanimate nature. A rational person’s duty to develop “in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind” will involve, as I have claimed in the modified account of Kant’s moral character maintenance, valuing and treating inanimate nature not only in terms of means, but also in terms of ends—for its own sake (conditioned end).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> I have to admit that the further the psychological principle central to Kant’s account of moral character development is stretched the less convincing it becomes. It is easy to conceive of a person that smashes stones for pleasure, but would never think of harming a rational human being.

It seems then that Kant's account of moral character development in partnership with Korsgaard's interpretation of Kantian ethics, can provide a version of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook. It is a version of sophisticated anthropocentrism that can, arguably, justify non-instrumental attitudes toward not only, non-rational animate nature, but also non-rational inanimate nature. However, this initial optimism must give way to deep pessimism. In the first instance, on this account, there is an obvious advantage and an obvious disadvantage for the anthropocentrist. The advantage is that the above-described Neo-Kantian account of sophisticated anthropocentrism is based on an alleged *fact* about human beings. In other words, it is a deeply anthropocentric account of the sophisticated position. On the minus side of the equation, the alleged fact about humans that is central to such a form of moral character development, and as a result, central to such a form of sophisticated anthropocentrism is at best a general psychological fact about human beings and at worst a dubious psychological claim<sup>23</sup>.

It may be asked why the claim—tender feelings towards dumb animals develop humane feelings towards mankind—as a general psychological claim about human beings is a problem for this Kantian version of the sophisticated position? The problematic nature of this claim becomes apparent when we consider the distinction between universalism and generalism. The claim that P is *generally* true of the members of a group of organisms is the claim that generally, but not always P is true of the members of the respective group. It is not the claim that P is true of each and every member of the respective group. This means that the claim, described above, is

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<sup>23</sup> This concern is found in the literature. See Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Routledge: London and New York, (1983), p179 and Allen W.Wood, "Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature," *The Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, (72), (1998).

at best true about most human beings, but not true of *all* human beings. If it is not true for *all* human beings that tender feelings toward animals develop humane feelings toward mankind, then we lose the universalism that is central to the Kantian position. There will be a subset of human beings to whom the idea of good moral character development simply does not apply.

In addition, as I intimated a moment ago, it is just not clear that the claim—tender feelings toward non-human animals develops humane feelings towards mankind—is even a general fact about rational human beings. There is nothing to substantiate a connection between tender feelings toward non-human animals and the development of humane feelings toward human beings. If the claim about the development of humane feelings is false, then the idea of good moral character development will not apply to any human beings. The implication of this position should be obvious for this Kantian version of the sophisticated outlook. The anthropocentrist no longer has a foundation on which to base the non-instrumental value of nature.

In fact, there are other well documented worries about Kant's account of moral character development. First, if it were a fact that the harsh treatment of non-human animals developed humane feelings toward rational persons (for example, one may argue that the harsh treatment of animals may remove surplus aggression that would otherwise be vented against human beings), then Kant would be committed to the view that non human animals ought to be *maltreated* by rational persons in order that the aforementioned rational persons develop the appropriate moral disposition that is one's duty to show toward rational nature. In other words, in Kant's account of moral character development there is a reliance on an *accident* of nature. It just happens to be the case that tender feelings toward non-human animals develop humane feelings

toward human beings. However, we cannot accept a version of the sophisticated view that has *accident* at its center because we cannot accept any ethic that is based on *accident*.

Second, even if we did accept Kant's claim about human psychology, it is perfectly possible that a rational person could perpetrate unnecessary suffering on an animal without falling below the minimum required for the possession of good moral character. In other words, a moral agent could take part in *isolated* immoral acts towards non-human animals, but still possess the appropriate moral disposition that is one's duty to show toward rational nature. I am thinking here of a case where someone who has, for example, never been fox hunting, nor will ever go fox hunting again, as part of the hunt chases a fox to a cruel and painful death. This one incident in the moral history of the rational person will not be enough to take the moral character of such a person to such a level that the person can no longer respect rational nature. In *certain circumstances* then rational human persons may well be able to treat non-human animals inhumanely without incurring any real moral cost to themselves or to non-human organisms. It seems that Kant could say little about the immorality of the example above if the moral character of the rational person in this instance remains essentially intact.

Earlier in the chapter I indicated that there were at least two possible Kantian accounts of the sophisticated view. I am suggesting that the first account ought to be rejected on the basis of the reasons described and listed above. The second Kantian account of the sophisticated position that I want to describe and develop takes notice of those reasons on which the rejection of the first account is based. In other words, the second Kantian account endorses the basic structure of the sophisticated view, but

rejects the notion of moral character development central to Kant's original moral theory.

### **A Second Kantian Account of Sophisticated Anthropocentrism**

The second Kantian account of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook is basically a simplification of the first account. Disregarding the idea of moral character development, rational human beings that are intrinsically valuable may value non-rational nature both instrumentally and non-instrumentally (for its own sake), ultimately, out of a respect for rational nature. How does this account relate to the idea of an adequate ethic of nature? Let me explain.

As we are aware, the moral law, according to Kant, demands that rational human beings ought not to be harmed. On Kantian grounds, the reason for this is simple. The principle, central to the goodwill (the categorical imperative), dictates that an agent "act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." We may say that to maltreat or harm a person is to treat them as a means that is at the same time not to respect rational persons as ends. It is clear that harm can be done to a rational human being, though indirectly, through harm being done to natural objects, processes and environments. For example, there can be no doubt that the pollution of the oceans will result in harm being done to rational humankind. This means, on the Kantian account, if moral agents are not the harm rational human beings, then there is a way in which moral agents *ought* to act towards the natural environment out of a respect for the unconditioned worth of rational persons.

So far, this is simply to provide a recap on Kant's original position on the environment. We still have a purely instrumental approach to nature. But, this is

exactly where the three distinctions in goodness, discussed in Chapter Four, come to be important. As we are aware, an object is non-instrumentally valuable if a rational human being takes an interest in it for its own sake and the respective interest passes the test of rational universalization. In respect to the natural environment this means that the non-instrumentally valuable will apply to those natural objects, processes and environments that our valuing of which for its own sake passes the test of rational universalization. The point being that the extent and scope of the non-instrumentally valuable offered by this Kantian account of the sophisticated position will equate with those natural objects that can pass the above described test.

There is then an obvious question to be asked. What is the scope and extent of those natural objects that can pass the test of rational universalization? It has to be said that the outlook is very positive. There seems to be no in principle reason why the vast majority of natural objects cannot pass the test of rational universalization. For example, there seems to be no reason why an *interest* in the oceans of this world cannot pass the aforementioned test, and as a result, be the sorts of objects to which non-instrumental value can be attributed.<sup>24</sup> In fact, the non-instrumental valuing of the oceans, and any other major natural environment for that matter, may help fulfil the duty each moral agent has to respect rational nature because the non-instrumental valuing of the respective object may maintain the long term welfare of rational human beings. Or, to put it another way, if rational agents desist from polluting the oceans on

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<sup>24</sup> I am not claiming, in the example above, that a natural object is to be valued *merely* in non-instrumental terms. The claim here is that natural objects may be both instrumentally and non-instrumentally valuable. This is to say that once we have taken into account the legitimate uses to which natural objects may be put there is still a residue of value—that residue is captured in the notion of non-instrumental value.

the basis of the oceans' non-instrumental value, then such actions will promote the continued survival of rational human beings—respecting rational nature.

We can begin to see how such an account of the sophisticated anthropocentric position is an improvement, not only on the previously described Kantian account of sophisticated anthropocentrism, but on the account developed in chapter six. There is no reason why, for example, an interest in the food chain for its own sake could not pass the test of rational universalization resulting in the food chain being objectively non-instrumentally valuable<sup>25</sup>. In other words, it seems that the second Kantian version of the sophisticated anthropocentric position is beginning to meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature.

Unfortunately, for the sophisticated anthropocentrist, there is a problem with the account described above. It relates to the limits of rational universalization. Let me explain. In the case of actions it may be thought that those maxims that pass the test of rational universality or respect for persons ought to be comprehended as morally obligatory. But, this is not Kant's position. First, Kant holds that moral obligations arise only in a negative manner. In other words, actions based on maxims that do not pass the test are morally forbidden. Second, actions based on maxims that do pass the test are taken to be morally *permissible*. However, it does not follow from the fact that a maxim is morally *permissible* that the maxim is morally *obligatory*, an action based on a maxim that passes the test of rational universalization is not *forbidden* or *mandated*, it is simply *permissible*. To quote Roger J. Sullivan on the matter, "The fact

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<sup>25</sup> There must, however, still be some doubt about the ability of this version of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook to accommodate the intuition that natural processes like evolution and natural selection are non-instrumentally valuable. It is difficult to see how rational human beings could value such natural processes non-instrumentally when the same processes involve, in the long run, human suffering and death. Of course, this is a problem for the anthropocentrist.

that a maxim does not conflict with the Categorical Imperative, then is a sufficient condition for holding that an action based on that maxim is permissible and therefore “fit” ... as a possible maxim in an ideal moral world.”<sup>26</sup> The point to make here is that the notion of *permissibility* opens up a space between what we are morally concerned about and what we are morally indifferent towards. It is plausible to claim that a whole range of actions based on maxims, to which we are morally *indifferent*, will pass the test of rational universalization. For example, the maxim “one ought to wash one’s teeth before going to bed every night” will pass the demands of the categorical imperative. Nevertheless, despite meeting the demands of rational universalization we are simply morally indifferent to the action based on the above-mentioned maxim.

The notion of moral indifference translates in a worrying manner when we apply the test of rational universalization to the idea of valuing. There will be many items that can be valued non-instrumentally by *all* rational human beings, but which human beings are simply morally indifferent toward. For example, there is no in principle reason why *all* rational persons could not value a particular car park non-instrumentally. However, it would not be controversial to claim that the same people would be morally *indifferent* towards that car park. It is *permissible* to value the car park non-instrumentally; it is not *forbidden* or *mandated*. The point is, regarding the non-instrumentally valuable, that the test of rational universalization is not sensitive enough, it is too indiscriminate. The scope of the non-instrumentally valuable, relative to the R.U. test, extends well beyond the scope of the morally important. This means that we cannot *equate* the morally important with the non-instrumentally valuable

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<sup>26</sup> Roger J. Sullivan, *An Introduction to Kant’s Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, (1994), p95.

because, as I have explained, an object can be non-instrumentally valuable without being morally important.

The claims of the previous paragraph ought to worry the sophisticated anthropocentrist. The attempt, in the discipline of environmental ethics, to accommodate the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable is an endeavor to recognize, in some form, the *moral importance* of the natural world. In other words, there is an equating of ideas; the morally important is taken to be non-instrumentally valuable and vice versa. The non-instrumentally valuable ought *not* to extend beyond the morally important. The problem for this account of sophisticated anthropocentrism is that it does not, in the long run, quite meet the demands of the general project of environmental ethics.

Of course, this is not only an objection to the second Kantian version of the sophisticated anthropocentric position. It is an objection that applies to the first version based on good moral character development and the aesthetic version developed in chapter six. In other words, the objections to SAAP in chapter six are further compounded by the above-described problem that relates to the limits of rational universalization.

In reply to this objection the Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrist may claim that he does offer an account of the non-instrumental value of nature that is more discriminating than certain other previously developed ethics of the environment that depend on human valuing. The ecocentrism of Callicott, described at the end of Chapter Four, is a lot less discriminating when it comes to the notion of non-instrumental value. The simple claim of Callicott is that an object is non-instrumentally valuable if it is valued non-instrumentally by a valuer. This means that

anything can be non-instrumentally valuable even if it is bad for human beings. The test of rational universalization that excludes those things harmful to rational nature is not in place, but is excluded. There is no mechanism to limit the capacity of interests to confer value. The point is, claims the anthropocentrist, Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrism though not ultimately discriminating enough regarding the non-instrumentally valuable, is still an improvement on certain existing environmental ethics.

This reply will not wash. The Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrist may offer a more discriminating account of nature's non-instrumental value than other alternative human centered accounts, but it still remains the case that Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrism does not accommodate the intuition that nature is non-instrumentally valuable in an appropriate manner. If Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrism cannot accommodate the non-instrumental value of nature in an appropriate manner, then Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrism fails to meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature.

It is certainly correct to claim that enough has been done to demonstrate that both Kantian accounts of the sophisticated position fail to meet the requirements of an adequate ethic of nature. However, as I indicted earlier in the chapter, there is another *structural* element of the sophisticated view that must be examined. The *implications* of limiting the *moral club* to rational human persons *alone* will, ultimately, take us beyond the sophisticated anthropocentric view to an alternative non-anthropocentric ethic of nature.

In chapter five I said I would return to consider the implications of the conservative outlook regarding the scope and extent of the moral club. I argued that the

conservative view morally discriminates on the basis of rational personhood. Is the *differential treatment* of organisms on the basis of rational human personhood justifiable? I will argue that it is unacceptable.

### **The Extent and Scope of the Moral Club**

The claim of Kant and for that matter any version of the sophisticated view is that the moral club is limited to rational human persons; that is, direct moral standing is limited and restricted to rational human beings. However, this has, to quote Christina Hoff:

“the unwelcome consequence that mentally impaired human beings, lacking rationality and moral autonomy, are undeserving of [direct] moral recognition. The consistent Kantian might take the position that the mentally feeble are not members of the [moral club], and are there “merely as a means to an end”. Alternatively, he might try to amend the theory somehow to account for the claims of non-rational humanity; but it is doubtful that he could do this without also having to grant recognition to the claims of some non-human animals—a recognition that is inconsistent with the center of Kant’s moral theory. To my mind the problem of feeble-minded human beings is an unsolved problem for any moralist who takes rationality as the qualifying condition for moral recognition.”<sup>27</sup>

Of course, the use of the criterion of rationality as a determining ground for moral recognition applies not only to those human beings that are mentally enfeebled, but

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<sup>27</sup> Christina Hoff, “Kant’s Invidious Humanism”, *Journal of Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 5. Spring. (1983), P68.

those humans that lack rationality—human infants, the irrational and the brain dead. This said, the modification, via the three distinctions in goodness, to Kant’s moral theory does allow rational persons to value non-rational human beings *for their own sake*. This is certainly more in tune with our intuitions regarding the *value* and *treatment* of the mentally enfeebled, etc. But, it is important to realize that this modification does not mean that the moral club has been extended to include irrational humans, etc. There are two reasons for this. First, on purely Kantian grounds, the moral club includes rational persons *alone* because only rational persons are unconditionally good. Rational persons have this status in virtue of the fact that they are self-legislating members of the kingdom of ends. Second, if we were to award some sort of direct moral standing to that that is valued for its own sake, then the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook would be committed to the view that certain non-rational inanimate natural objects have direct moral standing. This is a reduction to the absurd because sophisticated anthropocentrism would be committed to the view that rocks, etc. could be morally wronged.

In the quote from Hoff, she makes it clear that restricting the moral club to rational persons has the unwelcome consequence that those human beings that lack rationality are not directly morally considerable. But, why is this a problem? On Kant’s account only rational moral agents can be moral subjects. Hoff refers to this position as the “Subject-Agent Parity Thesis”<sup>28</sup>. In a nutshell the thesis is that we can only *morally* wrong those that can *morally* wrong us. Only rational human beings can morally

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<sup>28</sup> There is a short discussion of the “Subject/Agent Parity Thesis” in Hayward, T. “Kant and the Moral Considerability of Non-Rational Beings”, *Philosophy and the Natural Environment*, Ed. Attfield, R. & Belsey, A., University Press: Cambridge, (1994). Hayward argues that the aforementioned parity thesis demonstrates, only, that a certain moral relationship cannot exist between moral persons and non-rational incapacitated human beings. It does not demonstrate that non-rational incapacitated human beings are not morally considerable.

wrong other rational human beings. The problem is that this view is morally repugnant and desperately counter intuitive. For example, consider the relationship between a rational human being and an incapacitated human (human being in the sense of member of the species *Homo sapiens*). On the one hand, the rational human being cannot morally wrong the incapacitated human being because the incapacitated human being is neither a moral agent nor a moral subject. On the other hand, the incapacitated human being cannot morally wrong the rational human being because the incapacitated human being is not a moral agent. But, it is exactly at this point that we encounter the counter intuitive consequence of the subject-agent parity thesis. It is apparent, despite the fact that an incapacitated human being can do no moral wrong, that an incapacitated human being can be morally wronged by a moral agent. It is counter-intuitive in the extreme to think that a rational human being in torturing and killing an irrational human being does not *morally* wrong the irrational human being. This is the nature of the problem that confronts any moralist that uses the criterion of rationality as a criterion for membership in the moral club.

Is it important to address this problem? There can be no doubt that it is important to address this problem because, in an anthropocentric ethic, we are not only concerned with the plight of the environment, but predominantly the situation of human beings. It would be ironic in the extreme that the best defense of anthropocentrism failed on matters regarding the treatment of mankind. I want to claim at the outset that there is a solution, on broadly Kantian grounds, to the problem stated above. I will claim that direct moral standing can be extended to include those human beings (in the sense of *Homo sapiens*) that are irrational, retarded and mentally incapacitated. However, as Hoff has already warned us, such an extension will come at a considerable cost to the

anthropocentrist. The problem with the modification will be that the extension, if it is not to be speciesist, extends into certain areas of non-human life; resulting in a form of non-anthropocentrism. The sophisticated anthropocentrist will be faced with a dilemma. In order to avoid consequences that are desperately counter intuitive the sophisticated anthropocentrist must extend the moral club to include incapacitated human beings, an extension that will ultimately reach the non-human domain. However, if the sophisticated anthropocentrist is to avoid a collapse into speciesism and/or non-anthropocentrism he must restrict his moral club to rational human beings capable of moral agency incurring the specter of morally repugnant consequences; either way anthropocentrism fails.

Before I address the problem directly it may be claimed that I have misconstrued and misunderstood the nature of the problem. There is, claims the sophisticated anthropocentrist, a distinction to be made between a morally wrong action and morally wronging a particular party. For example, it may be claimed that a moral agent may act morally wrongly when that agent takes part in an activity that causes the retarded human being in question unnecessary suffering—the activity of torture. The moral wrongness of the action may be cashed out, if we stick to the Kantian line for the moment, in terms of not respecting rational persons. The retarded person being tortured may be a relative or loved one of a rational person; to directly harm the retarded person is indirectly to harm the rational person. Now, such a distinction, it may be argued, is able to explain our intuitions in a manner that does not require extending direct moral standing to irrational and retarded human beings. It would be counter-intuitive in the extreme if the above-mentioned *action* of torture is not morally wrong. But, as we have seen, the sophisticated anthropocentrist can certainly account

for the moral wrongness of the action. It is just not obvious, claims the sophisticated anthropocentrist, that a moral agent can morally wrong an irrational human being. If it is not obvious that a moral agent can morally wrong an irrational human being, then the problem of the extent and scope of the moral club is illusory.

The simple fact of the matter is that this defense of the extent and scope of the moral club is desperately unconvincing. The distinction on which the sophisticated anthropocentrist plays—between a morally wrong action and morally wronging a party—is a distinction that adds nothing to the debate. If there is one thing that is obvious when it comes to the moral treatment of the irrational and retarded it is that such human beings can be morally wronged. It is just not convincing to claim that the torturer who causes the incapacitated human being extreme pain and suffering does not morally wrong the incapacitated human being. It is the capacity of the human being in question to experience pain and pleasure that makes such a being deserving of direct moral consideration<sup>29</sup>. My claim then is that the intuition that a moral agent can morally wrong a non-rational human being is correct.

It should be noted that I am not alone in holding the above-discussed intuition. In his book, *What We Owe to Each Other*, T.M. Scanlon is keen to accommodate the view that incapacitated, non-rational human beings be included in the scope of the moral club. In his discussion on the scope of morality he writes the following piece about the moral status of incapacitated and non-rational humankind. He comments:

“Not every human being develops normal human capacities, however,  
so there is the question of what this criterion implies about the moral

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<sup>29</sup> In her Book, *The Sources of Normativity*, Christine Korsgaard, makes the point that pain/pleasure as a kind of normative fact “is an objection to Kantian ethics, or to any ethics which makes the value of humanity the foundation of all value.” See Korsgaard, C., *The Sources of Normativity*, Cambridge University Press, (1996), P145.

status of those severely disabled humans that never develop even the limited capacities required for judgement sensitive attitudes. The question is whether we have reason to accept the requirement that our treatment of these individuals should be governed by principles that they could not reasonably reject, even though they themselves do not and will not have the capacity to understand or weigh justifications. The answer is that we clearly do. The mere fact that a being is “of human born” provides a strong reason for according it the same status as other humans.....The beings in question here are ones who are born to us or to others to whom we are bound by the requirements of justifiability. This tie of birth gives us good reason to want to treat them “as human” despite their limited capacities. Because of these limitations, the idea of justifiability to them must be understood counterfactually, in terms of what they could reasonably reject if they were able to understand such a question.”<sup>30</sup>

In an explicit statement of the scope of the moral club Scanlon continues:

“The answer to the....question of scope, then, is that according to contractualism the class of beings whom it is possible to wrong will include at least all those beings who are of a kind that is normally capable of judgement sensitive attitudes.”<sup>31</sup>

There are two points I want to make about the position of Scanlon described above.

First, my real aim in quoting Scanlon’s position is simply to show that the intuition I

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<sup>30</sup> T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, (1998). P185.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p186.

play on regarding the problem of the extent and scope of the moral club is substantive and one that other theorists try to accommodate in their moral theory. It is then an intuition, given the methodological basis of this thesis discussed in chapter one, that I am entitled to hold on to. The problem of the extent and scope of the moral club stands.

Second, it may be thought that there is a rather simple solution to the problem of the extent and scope of the moral club. It involves a move similar to the move Scanlon makes above. His claim revolves around the idea of natural kinds. In Scanlon's words, "The mere fact that a being is "of human born" provides a strong reason for according it the same status as other humans."<sup>32</sup> He continues "This tie of birth gives us good reason to want to treat them "as human" despite their limited capacities."<sup>33</sup> If you are the *kind*<sup>34</sup> of being that is normally capable of judgement sensitive attitudes, then you are a member of the moral club. This, it may be thought, translates into the Kantian sophisticated view in a quite uncomplicated manner. If you are the *kind* of being that is normally capable of exercising rational capacities, then you are a member of the moral club. However, it is the reference to a *natural kind* that rules out the Scanlon type move for the Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrist and for that matter any sophisticated anthropocentrist. The references to "human born" and "tie of birth"

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<sup>32</sup> T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, (1998), P185

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p185.

<sup>34</sup> In the literature the argument from natural kinds is often referred to as the argument from sorts. The basic idea behind the argument from sorts is that an organism despite its incapacities or capacities ought to be treated in a manner that is normal and appropriate for its kind/sort. Of course, this involves taking into account what capacities a normal example of the kind possesses. However, the logic of this argument is deeply flawed. For instance, if we were to come across a chimpanzee that could talk to us, work out complex mathematical equations, create great works of art, then we would be committed, by the logic of the argument from sorts, to treat the prodigious chimpanzee in the same manner as we treat normal chimpanzees. In other words, we would have to treat the prodigious chimpanzee according to its kind. This I take not to be credible. But, this is a passing criticism of Scanlon's position.

demonstrate that Scanlon is working with a species concept of human being. However, as I argued in chapter five, species concepts cannot provide a justifiable basis for an ethic of nature. The obvious conclusion is that the Scanlon type move is not available to the Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrist. I now turn to develop a plausible solution to the problem of the scope and extent of the moral club.

### **Extending the Moral Club**

For Kant, and this Kantian account of the anthropocentric sophisticated position, it is important to realize how the scope and extent of the moral club is set. The most straightforward articulation of this is found in the second formulation of the categorical imperative—“So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means”. This means that the claims of rational nature have “a moral claim on us only in the person of a being who actually possesses it”. This is the idea of a personification principle that may be said to drop out of the second formulation. The duties we owe to ourselves are duties we owe to the humanity in our own *person*. The duties we owe to others are duties we owe to humanity in the *person* of others<sup>35</sup>. As a result, for Kant, the moral club includes rational *persons* alone, but excludes the non-rational, human<sup>36</sup> and non-human alike.

In his paper, “Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature,” Allen Wood writes:

“where Kant goes wrong regarding his theoretical defense of our duties regarding nonrational nature is not in accepting his logocentric

<sup>35</sup> In the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant repeats and reinforces his position regarding the idea of the personification principle. See Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, Translator: Mary Gregor, Cambridge University Press, (1991), p230.

<sup>36</sup> For Kant, the irrational and retarded do not have the status of persons because they are not self-legislating members of the Kingdom of ends. In other words, the aforementioned groups of human beings have the status of mere things, not persons.

principle but in accepting what I have called the personification principle. This principle says that rational nature is respected only by respecting humanity in someone's person, hence that every duty must be understood as a duty to a person or persons....I argue that, a logocentric ethics, which grounds all duties on the value of humanity or rational nature, should not be committed to the personification principle. It should hold that honoring rational nature as an end in itself sometimes requires us to behave with respect toward nonrational beings if they bear the right relations to rational nature. Such relations, I will argue, include having rational nature only potentially, or virtually, or having had it in the past, or having parts of it, or necessary conditions of it."<sup>37</sup>

It is important to note that Wood is not rejecting the personification principle<sup>38</sup>. He is suggesting that there is another way in which rational nature may be respected that does not pull on the singular idea of rational nature as possessed by *persons*. He continues:

“Of course, we should respect rational nature in persons themselves. But my main argument here depends on saying that we should also respect rational nature in the abstract, which entails respecting

<sup>37</sup> Allen W. Wood, “Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature,” *The Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, (72), (1998), pp196-197.

<sup>38</sup> In a chapter entitled “The Origin of Value and the Scope of Obligation,” in *The Sources of Normativity*, Christine Korsgaard argues that the moral club can be extended beyond the domain of the human to the non-human using a modified account of the personification principle. Woods rejects this account on the basis that it is just not remotely convincing. For more information on this see Allen W. Wood, “Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature,” *The Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, (72), (1998) and Korsgaard, C. *The Sources of Normativity*, Cambridge University Press, (1996).

fragments of it or necessary conditions of it, even where these are not found in fully rational beings or persons.”<sup>39</sup>

The idea here is that the direct respect for rational nature not only includes respecting rational nature possessed by persons, but also includes respecting those beings that “possess” fragments of rational nature—this is what is meant by rational nature in the abstract. This is just another way of saying that the moral club ought to include those persons that possess rational nature and those beings that “possess” fragments of rational nature<sup>40</sup>.

We can begin to see how the argument from “fragments of rational nature” can be applied to the problem presented by the limited extent and scope of the moral club. Wood writes:

“The point I am making is easiest to see, and hardest to deny, in the case of many human beings (in the nontechnical sense) who lack “humanity” (in the technical sense), and therefore must fail (technically) to be persons at all. They include small children and people that have severe mental impairments or diseases which deprive them either temporarily or permanently, of the capacity to set ends according to reason....The point is that it would show contempt for rational nature to be indifferent to its potentiality in children, and to

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<sup>39</sup> Allen W. Wood, “Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature,” *The Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, (72), (1998), P198..

<sup>40</sup> It is important to remember that rational nature (the good will) is absolutely and unconditionally good. This is to say that rational nature ought to be respected (directly) in any and all circumstances. Given this situation, Woods is claiming that respect for fragments of rational nature is consistent with the respect for the unconditioned good of rational nature.

treat children as mere things or as mere means to the ends of those beings in whom rational nature is presently actual.”<sup>41</sup>

For example, the point, according to Wood, is that a human infant in virtue of the fact that he or she has the *potential* for rational nature is a “possessor” of a fragment of rational nature. As a possessor of a fragment of rational nature the aforesaid infant is deserving of direct moral consideration<sup>42</sup>. Not to give such a non-rational human being direct moral consideration would be, ultimately, to *directly* disrespect rational nature which is, as we are aware, to disrespect the absolute and unconditioned goodness of rational nature considered in the *abstract*.

If we buy into this idea of fragments of rational nature, and that non-rational human beings can “possess” fragments of rational nature, then we have a broadly Kantian solution to the problem presented by the limited extent and scope of the moral club inherent in the sophisticated anthropocentric position. It takes little imagination to realize that the fragments of which Wood talks—having rational nature only potentially, or virtually, or having had it in the past, or having parts of it, or necessary conditions of it<sup>43</sup>—can be applied to, and “possessed” by, all classes of non-rational human being (member of the species *Homo sapiens*). It appears then that the Kantian account of sophisticated anthropocentrism can avoid desperately counter intuitive

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<sup>41</sup> Allen W. Wood, “Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature,” *The Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, (72), (1998), P198.

<sup>42</sup> It is important to note that the argument of Woods is designed to show that moral agents can have duties *toward* non-rational beings. Woods is not trying to claim that moral agents have duties toward animals in virtue of the duties moral agents have toward rational persons. He writes about the rejection of relying on the personification principle alone, “this objection opens the way for us to recognize, solely on the basis of Kant’s logocentric principle and without introducing any value outside that of rational nature, duties toward nonrational beings which are not based on or derived from any duties *toward* rational beings.” This is just another way of saying that moral agents can have direct duties toward those non-rational humans that possess fragments of rationality.

<sup>43</sup> The list of “fragments of rationality” that Woods supplies may not be exhaustive. For example, it may be claimed that the *potential for necessary conditions* of rational nature is a fragment of rationality. I will not pursue this point because it is not crucial to the argument of the chapter.

consequences by extending the moral club, on the basis of fragments of rational nature, to include non-rational human beings. In other words, it is now possible to account for the intuition that non-rational human beings can be morally wronged.

It may be objected at this point that a bit of gloss has been applied to the preceding argument. Why should we accept the claim that a *fragment* of rational nature is sufficient for direct moral standing? Why did Kant bother to stress the importance of rational nature, possessed by rational persons, when a fragment of rational nature would do the job equally as well? I suspect that the answer to this question revolves around the distinctive account of moral autonomy that is at the heart of Kant's ethics. However, I will not pursue this line of thought in any detail because, ultimately, it is a problem for the anthropocentrist, it is not a problem for the general thrust of this chapter.

Of course, for the above-described Kantian account of the sophisticated anthropocentric position, the real crunch comes when we look at, in a little more detail, the idea of "fragments of rational nature". To quote Wood, "although nonhuman animals may not possess rational nature itself, they do possess recognizable fragments of it."<sup>44</sup> There are, if we buy into the account provided by Wood, five different ways in which to fill out the notion of a fragment of rational nature. There is having rational nature (1) potentially (2) virtually (3) in the past, but not now (4) in the sense of having parts of it and (5) in the sense of having necessary conditions of it. Despite the fact that all the five ways of possessing a fragment of rational nature are equally as important as one another I will not consider all of these conditions in the order that they are presented. Instead, I will consider one of the conditions alone. The

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<sup>44</sup> Allen W. Wood, "Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature," *The Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, (72), (1998). P200.

strategy of the proceeding argument will apply to all five conditions. This will allow me to make my case in the most economical manner.

There is a clear sense in which certain non-human animals can be said to have fragments of rational nature. In the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant makes the claim that the characteristic of humanity is the power to set an end. In fact, it is this power that sets mankind apart from “animality”. As we are aware, for Kant, this is just another way of saying that one of the characteristics of rational nature is the power to set an end. However, it is apparent that the power to set an end is not restricted to rational human persons. We see this capacity demonstrated by those chimpanzees that take part in the practice of tool using. The chimpanzee that uses a small log to break nuts is consciously using the small log as a means to an end—as a means to breaking the shell of the nut. If the chimpanzee is using the log as a means, then that same chimpanzee must be setting an end in virtue of the fact that a means is always a means to some end. In other words, certain species of chimpanzee have the power to set an end. This means that certain groups of chimpanzee “possess” fragments of rational nature. I am not claiming that these chimpanzees can act out of recognition of the moral law. I am not claiming that they are in some way self-legislating members of the kingdom of ends. But, then I do not have to claim this because we are only interested in “fragments” of rational nature, not rational nature itself.

There is a simple conclusion to be found from this one example. If the Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrist employs the notion of “fragments of rational nature” to solve the problem encountered by the limited extent and scope of the moral club central to sophisticated anthropocentrism, then the sophisticated anthropocentrist must accept that the above-mentioned notion extends to and includes certain groups of non-

human animal. In other words, there is a collapse into, as I will term it, non-anthropocentric ratiocentrism. The anthropocentrist could try and limit the boundaries of the moral club by making an appeal to species membership. But, as we are already aware, this is not an option for the anthropocentrist because, as the arguments of chapter five demonstrated, any system of morality based on species classifications is morally unacceptable. On the other hand, if the Kantian sophisticated anthropocentrist does not employ the notion of “fragments of rational nature,” in order to avoid specisism and a collapse into non-anthropocentric ratiocentrism, then the anthropocentrist is left with the original problem of the counter intuitive consequences that flow from restricting the moral club to rational persons. The point being that either way the Kantian account of the sophisticated anthropocentric position fails.

Before I continue it is important to point out that the Kantian account of sophisticated anthropocentrism described above represents a certain sort of failure, but at the same time represents a certain type of triumph. The second Kantian account of sophisticated anthropocentrism is a failure purely in *anthropocentric* terms because of the dilemma mentioned above. However, it is a triumph in the sense that there is a real possibility of developing a Kantian non-anthropocentric ethic of the environment<sup>45</sup>. In other words, the moral philosophy of Kant may have a very real and substantive contribution to make toward environmental ethics—a contribution that may not have been thought possible before. I will return to this issue in the conclusion.

This said, I now want to broaden the debate by considering a reaction to the argument stated above. It may be claimed that the argument that refers to the notion of

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<sup>45</sup> The possibility of a ratiocentric non-anthropocentric ethic of the environment demonstrates that the basic three way classification—anthropocentrism, biocentrism and ecocentrism—of ethics of the natural environment is not exhaustive.

“fragments of rational nature” stands. In other words, it is perfectly correct to claim that the criteria of “fragments of rational nature” apply not only to incapacitated human beings, but to certain groups of non-human animal as well. But, this is only one attempt to solve the problem of the limited extent and scope of the moral club. There may be other attempts that can accommodate the extension of the moral club to include non-rational human beings, but excludes non-human animals on non-speciesist grounds. If this objection to the claims of this chapter is to hold, then we must be looking for a morally relevant capacity or attribute that is common to human beings, but not possessed in any shape, manner or form by non-human animals. Is there a morally relevant capacity or attribute that is common to human beings, but not possessed in any shape, manner or form by non-human animals?

I have already touched on the answer to the question above in Chapter Five. I made the claim, in relation to qualified speciesism, that it is not possible to correlate a particular morally relevant capacity/attribute with a species. Let me expand on this explanation by first of all offering a list of morally relevant capacities and secondly offering examples of animals that share the respective capacities with human beings.

I take this list to offer and describe those attributes and capacities that are traditionally seen as being morally relevant: self-consciousness, consciousness in the sense of sentience—the capacity to experience pain/pleasure, the possession of desires and preferences, the capacity to act intentionally, the possession of a good and the capacity for rationality. The question is: are any of these capacities and attributes common to human beings alone, but not possessed in any shape, manner or form by non-human animals?

Non-human animals without doubt possess the first two attributes on the list. In psychology it is accepted that the phenomenon of self-consciousness extends beyond the human domain to include non-human animals. At the present time there is a great deal of research to support the view that chimpanzees and Orangutans are self-conscious<sup>46</sup>. The second attribute of consciousness is intimately related to the notion of experiencing pain/pleasure. It is simply not convincing to claim that certain groups of non-human animal cannot and do not experience pain/pleasure especially when we consider the neurophysiological similarities between human and animal. The third item on the list—the possession of desires and preferences—can be straightforwardly attributed to non-human animals on the basis of a dispositional account of desires and preferences. In virtue of the basic biological and dietary needs an animal will be disposed to desire food and sustenance. If, however, we are talking about desires and preferences at a cognitive level there can be no doubt that certain groups of non-human animal possess cognitive desires and preferences. The tool-using chimpanzee demonstrates a very sophisticated cognitive structure when using a stick to break the shell of a nut for the *desired* nut inside the shell. In addition, the tool-using chimpanzee, as a tool user, is not a mere instrument of instinct alone. The chimpanzee in cracking the nut with the stick is taking part in intentional action, not mere behavior. Does the notion of a good or well being extend to the non-human domain? This is perhaps the most obvious example of a morally relevant attribute shared by

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<sup>46</sup> There are several groups of non-human animals known to be self-conscious—for example, the chimpanzee and orangutan. See Daniel Hart & Mary Pat Karmel, “Self-awareness and self knowledge in humans, apes, and monkeys,” in *Reading into Thought*, Eds. S.T. Parner, A.E. Russan & K.A. Boro. Cambridge University Press (1996). Gordon, G. Gallup, J.R. , “Self-Awareness and the Emergence of Mind in Primates,” *American Journal of Primatology*, 2:237-248, (1982). D.J Povenelli & J.G.H. Cant, “Arboreal Clambering and the Evolution of Self-Conception,” in *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, Vol. 70, No.4 (1995).

rational human and non-human animal. There is a clear sense in which things can go better or worse for certain groups of non-human animal independent of the interests and desires of human beings. I have already dealt with the capacity for rationality.

The claims of the previous paragraph indicate that there are no morally relevant capacities/attributes peculiar to human beings (human beings in the sense of *Homo sapiens*). There is always an overlap into the non-human domain. I should say at the outset that I think this conclusion is correct. But, I must explain why it is correct?

Why then does the anthropocentrist's attempt at extension fail? Why does the attempt to extend the moral club to include incapacitated human beings always result in a move from anthropocentrism to a form of non-anthropocentrism? The answer to this question is intimately related to the discussion on evolutionary biology in chapter five. As I explained in chapter five, via Dawkins description of the evolutionary progression of man from ape to modern day *Homo sapien*, evolutionary theory stresses a *continuum* between species. In other words, through a process of gradual change and adaptation human beings have evolved from non-human animals. If we accept the view that human beings through gradual change and adaptation have evolved from non-human animals, then it is a *certainty* that human beings and non-human animals will share in some manner or form all morally relevant characteristics and capacities. We do not just share an evolutionary continuum with non-human animals, but a moral continuum<sup>47</sup> with non-human organisms. For example, we human persons possess the attribute of self-consciousness because we have evolved from self-conscious non-human animals (apes). There is just no strict cut off point between human beings and animals. The major point is that there is a structural problem for the sophisticated

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<sup>47</sup> In the case of the capacity for rationality we can say that rationality and fragments of rationality are spread throughout the evolutionary continuum that exists between human and non-human.

anthropocentrist. No matter what version of sophisticated anthropocentrism we consider, no matter what morally relevant criterion the anthropocentrist tries to use to extend the moral club, that extension will *always* go beyond the human to the nonhuman in virtue of the continuum that exists between mankind and animality. So, the argument of this chapter does not fall because I have dealt with one version of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook in particular. The argument stands because there is a structural problem that anthropocentrism cannot, ultimately, accommodate or avoid. The Kantian account of sophisticated anthropocentrism simply exemplifies the structural fault that rests at the heart of sophisticated anthropocentrism or any other anthropocentrism for that matter.

It is important to remember the objection developed against the scope of the moral club inherent in the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook applies to the first Kantian version of the sophisticated position and the aesthetic version of sophisticated anthropocentrism developed in chapter six.

The finding then of this chapter is that sophisticated anthropocentrism cannot provide an adequate ethic of the natural environment because it fails to accommodate certain intuitions that are central to such an adequate ethic of nature. If we cannot discard the intuition that non-rational humans beings ought to be members of the moral club, if we cannot discard the intuition that an ethic ought to be non-speciesist, then we must discard, on structural grounds, the anthropocentric perspective in favor of a non-anthropocentric ratiocentric or biocentric alternative.

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## Conclusion

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This thesis has been about the *structure* of the anthropocentric environmental ethic and, ultimately, the failure of that *structure* to provide an adequate ethic of nature. The first part of the thesis was an attempt to build a particular structure on the basis of those elements that are fundamental and central to anthropocentric ethical theory. The first half was positive and constructive. The second part of the thesis sought to demonstrate that such a structure could not ultimately accommodate certain intuitions central and fundamental to an adequate ethic of nature. For the anthropocentrist, the second half was negative and destructive. I will begin with the positive aspects of the thesis.

In the introduction, I indicated that it was possible to extract several important strands of thought from the collection of definitions of anthropocentrism listed. I claimed, given these strands of thought, that the principle—the value of nature ought to be derived from the interests of human beings—is definitive of the anthropocentric position. I also claimed that this principle had certain entailments regarding the moral club and the derivation of duties. I will come to this point shortly. My suggestion, given the principle above, was that any anthropocentric ethic had to be made up of four fundamental elements—concept of “nature”, concept of “human being”, concept of “interests” and a conception of value. In structural terms this was anthropocentrism at its most basic.

My project at the outset, given the structural limitations described above, was to produce the most theoretically advantageous version of anthropocentrism; that is theoretically advantageous in the sense of having, *at least on the face of it*, the potential to meet the demands of an adequate ethic of nature. Let me explain.

The process of construction began in chapter two. It was important to provide an analysis of the concept of nature on two levels. First, as I pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, the nature of nature remains a relatively unexplored area within the discipline of environmental ethics. It is simply an incredible omission on behalf of environmental philosophers. It is difficult to see how the philosophical community can do justice to the subject matter of environmental ethics—nature—without first of all considering the fundamental nature of that subject. It is like a doctor making a recommendation about the treatment of his patient without first of all taking account of the patient's medical history and constitution. The analysis of three differing concepts of nature, the resultant development of the idea of naturalness by degree and the suggested mode of protection regarding nature was an attempt to redress such an obvious omission.

On the second level the analysis of the concept of nature revealed that the intrinsic nature of nature made structural demands on the mode of protection to be incorporated within the framework of the sophisticated anthropocentric outlook. If we accept that nature is in a constant state of change, then the only appropriate way in which to protect natural objects, processes and environments is through non-interference. This required a rejection of traditional approaches to the preservation of nature; that is, a rejection of the idea of keeping items in a state of unchange. As I suggested in chapter two, the traditional approach to protecting nature—preservation in the sense of

unchange—is symptomatic of the worst excesses of crude anthropocentric views; that is the taming of nature by man and rendering nature a cultural artifact. The non-interference account of protection was designed to *free* the anthropocentrist from unsophisticated outdated approaches to the protection of the natural environment.

In chapter three, the liberation of the anthropocentrist was emphasized further by a consideration of the second (conception of “human being”) and third elements (conception of “interests”) of the basic structure of anthropocentrism. The two conceptions of human being—human being in the sense of member of the species *Homo sapiens* and human being in the sense of rational personhood—were designed to demonstrate that the anthropocentrist is not restricted, in structural terms, to one account of the moral club. It is possible for there to be radical and conservative interpretations of the moral club within the anthropocentric framework. Of course, the choice between radical and conservative anthropocentrism presented in chapter three was in preparation for what was to follow in chapter five. I will return to this point in due course.

The discussion on the concept of “interests,” like the discussion on the concept of “human being” showed that there were real options regarding the value of nature within the anthropocentric outlook. The fact that human beings can take an interest in something, not only for the sake of something else, but also for its own sake provided, at least on the face of it, the theoretical space for the rejection of traditional anthropocentric views. It meant that there was a real opportunity for the anthropocentrist to spell out the value of nature not *merely* in terms of unenlightened or enlightened<sup>1</sup> instrumentality, but in terms of non-instrumentality.

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction between unenlightened instrumentality and enlightened instrumentality is a reference to the distinction between strong and weak anthropocentrism.

The above-described opportunity was made concrete in chapter four. It was here that the idea of taking an interest in something for its own sake was incorporated into the final basic element of the anthropocentric position; that is a comprehensive conception of value. The three distinctions in goodness provided a structure of value that did not necessarily restrict the non-instrumental value of objects to non-anthropocentric environmental ethics. The three distinctions in goodness meant that the anthropocentric outlook had the *potential* to accommodate the guiding intuition of environmental ethics—nature is non-instrumentally valuable—in a particular manner.

Returning to the scope of the moral club, in chapter five, it was found that species concepts are not an appropriate or acceptable basis for moral discrimination. The phenomenon of change inherent in natural processes, this time *gradual* change exemplified by Dawkins continuum and intrinsic to the process of evolution, demonstrated that the morphological and biological concept of species demarcates organisms into species groups in an arbitrary manner that is inappropriate for an ethic of nature (or any ethic for that matter). This led to a reliance on the phylogenetic concept of species. However, the “one true tree of life” was found to be, in the long run, simply unacceptable as a basis for moral discrimination. This resulted in a rejection of speciesist versions of the anthropocentric outlook. It was a rejection of the radical anthropocentric approach to the moral club.

The rejection of the radical anthropocentric approach to the moral club, though initially a negative outcome, had positive import for the anthropocentrist. It allowed the anthropocentrist, through a process of elimination, to adopt a conservative outlook towards the scope of the moral club. This meant that the moral club was limited to rational human beings. But, more importantly, the option of the conservative

anthropocentric outlook meant that anthropocentrism was freed of the specter of speciesism.

The process of construction was complete by the end of chapter five. The examination and analysis of the basic elements of the anthropocentric position produced a sophisticated anthropocentric outlook that put forward a human centered, non-speciesist, non-instrumental, ethic of the natural environment. This was the high point in the thesis for the anthropocentrist.

The negative element of the thesis began in chapter six. The idea of developing a version of the sophisticated anthropocentric view that concentrated on the aesthetic was based on two grounds. First, the appeal to the positive aesthetic features of nature in regard to nature's protection and value is widespread in environmentalism. Second, as I argued at the beginning of chapter six, the positive aesthetic features of the natural environment are important to human beings in a fundamental manner<sup>2</sup>. The doctrine of SAAP failed, above all, for one very good reason. There are processes fundamental to the proper functioning and continued existence of nature that are aesthetically disvaluable. The necessary condition of aesthetic valuableness, for which the ascription of non-instrumental value to an object, process or environment is required, is simply not present in natural processes like the food chain and natural selection. This straightforward observation by itself was enough to demonstrate that SAAP could not provide an adequate ethic of nature. Nevertheless, it was important to test the *presupposition* that processes like the food chain and natural selection are aesthetically valuable. However, for the anthropocentrist, this proved to be an unfruitful avenue of inquiry. First, the attribution of the aesthetically valuable to processes like the food

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<sup>2</sup> I refer the reader to the thought experiment about the psychedelic nightmare.

chain and natural selection, within the framework of SAAP, violated a central tenet of sophisticated anthropocentrism—respect for rational human beings. It is a simple point, but human beings and human suffering are part of such processes. Second, in connection with the first point, the described presupposition revealed the specter of unthinking discrimination. It is a morally perverse aesthetic that promotes aesthetic positives in the suffering and mutilation of an animal by animal. If a non-human animal were to prey on a non-human animal in a less natural setting there would be public outrage at such a state of affairs. If a domesticated dog were to kill a cat, then, I suggest, people would find this a disturbing, distressing and ugly scene. It certainly would not be evaluated in positive aesthetic terms because the aesthetic would simply be out of place. Why then does the suffering and pain of animals become something of positive aesthetic value when that pain and suffering takes place in a natural setting? The answer cannot be because such natural processes are aesthetically good because this is simply a restatement of the presupposed position. The proposed answer is straightforward. The human observer has an over romanced view of nature where the harsh realities of life are “sanitized” by some reference to the “big picture”. However, as I argued in the later part of chapter six, the reference to the “big picture” only compounds the unreflective nature of the thesis that elements like the food chain and natural selection are aesthetically valuable. The “big picture” does not exclude human beings, but includes human beings. We are subject to the same processes of natural selection and evolution. But, here is the point about unthinking discrimination. If the ugliness and suffering of animals is aesthetically valuable when set in the context of evolutionary progression, then why is the ugliness of the suffering of human beings not aesthetically valuable when that suffering is set in the same process of

evolutionary progression? The anthropocentrist may come back with the claim that the suffering of human beings is not aesthetically valuable when set in the process of evolutionary progression because human beings, unlike non-human animals, belong to a special moral category. This is the claim that human beings are different in type from animals, not different in degree. However, given the description of Dawkins continuum, it is difficult to see how such a claim can bear up to the most minimal amount of scrutiny. If, however, we stick with the claim that human beings are different only in degree, rather than type from non-human animals, then it is difficult to see how a denial of the claim—the ugliness of the suffering of human beings is aesthetically valuable when set in the context of evolutionary progression—is not a mere unjustified prejudice.

In chapter seven, the debate on sophisticated anthropocentrism was broadened. It went beyond those versions of the sophisticated view that focus on the aesthetic to what I termed the more straightforward moral accounts of the sophisticated outlook. However, the widening of the debate only compounded the problems of the anthropocentrist. The process of rational universalization, though more discriminating than other accounts of value conferral (I am thinking here of Callicott's account of value conferral), did not, ultimately, account for the moral importance of nature in an appropriate manner. The residue of moral indifference in the process of rational universalization meant that the "non-instrumentally valuable" extended well beyond the valuable.

The second major structural problem for sophisticated anthropocentrism revolved around the scope of the moral club. The attempt of the sophisticated anthropocentrist to extend the moral club to include incapacitated non-rational human beings, despite

the protestations of Hoff, was not necessarily a project doomed to certain failure. The project of extension *only* became *structurally* flawed when the rejection of speciesism as an acceptable moral doctrine was secured. This is where the importance of chapter five comes to the fore in the debate. The rejection of speciesism, and with it speciesist versions of anthropocentrism, meant that sophisticated anthropocentrism had to depend on the notion of morally relevant capacities and attributes inherent in the rational personhood concept of human being, not species membership. But, as we are aware, there is a seamless continuum between the capacities and attributes of human beings and non-human organisms. The point being that any attempt at extension on the basis of a particular capacity or attribute to include non-rational human beings in the moral club inevitably results in a collapse into some form of non-anthropocentrism. It is important to note that a denial of this collapse is not only an adoption of an unacceptable speciesist morality, it is a denial of the continuum between human being and non-human being. It is, ultimately, a denial of evolutionary theory.

The central conclusion of this thesis is then that anthropocentric environmental ethics cannot provide an adequate ethic of nature. Of course, this is a wholly negative conclusion. However, as I indicated in the introduction I want to sketch, though briefly, the emerging positive non-anthropocentric outlook. In other words, I will describe the strengths and weaknesses of the position that emerged at the end of chapter seven—ratiocentric non-anthropocentric ethics.

The Kantian non-anthropocentric ratiocentric ethic of nature, that emerged in chapter seven, holds that those persons that possess rational nature and those organisms that possess fragments of rational nature are members of the moral club. In this regard, a moral agent can respect rational nature in a person or in the abstract.

However, it may be thought that the idea of fragments of rational nature does not in actuality extend the moral club much further than our immediate primate cousins. These fragments can only be found in the more sophisticated examples of non-human life. The point being that non-anthropocentric ratiocentrism seems to offer a very conservative position on the scope of the moral club and an outlook that is not radically dissimilar from that of the anthropocentrist.

The point I want to make here and now is that the idea of *fragments of rational nature* may extend much further into the non-human animal world than previously thought to include what may be termed the “lower” organisms. This is a tentative suggestion, but there is support for such a position. In his book, *Created from Animals*, Rachels draws attention to Darwin’s work on the rationality of non-human organisms. In his works, *The Descent of Man*<sup>3</sup> and *The Formation of Vegetable Mould, Through the Action of Worms*<sup>4</sup>, Darwin is not only prepared to attribute rationality to chimpanzees, but to the “lowly” earthworm. Of course, it may be thought that attributing rationality to an earthworm is absurd. But, this is to miss Darwin’s point. He is not claiming that the worm is as rational as a human person. Instead, Darwin is claiming that the earthworm is to a much lesser *degree* rational. In other words, the worm may possess a fragment of rational nature. If we buy into the idea that organisms like the earthworm can possess fragments of rational nature, then it becomes obvious that the moral club could be extended to the very extremes of the non-human animal world. In other words, a Kantian non-anthropocentric ratiocentric

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Princeton University Press, (1981).

<sup>4</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Formation of Vegetable Mould*, Faber and Faber Limited, (1966).

ethic may be able to accommodate the intuition that non-human animate nature is non-instrumentally<sup>5</sup> valuable.

There are, of course, a host of problems associated with this view. First, as I indicated in chapter seven, it may be asked why a fragment of rational nature is sufficient for direct moral standing. Why did Kant bother to stress the importance of rational nature, possessed by rational persons, when a fragment of rational nature would do the job equally as well? Second, it may be thought that Darwin is simply mistaken about attributing rationality to organisms like worms. He may be a victim of that all too common sin of anthropomorphism. There are a couple of points to be made here. In the first instance, given the methodology of his research into the behavior of worms it is not obvious that such an error is being made<sup>6</sup>. In the second instance, he is clearly aware of the danger of making such a mistake. He does not try to attribute rationality to all non-human life that *exhibits* intelligent behavior. For Darwin, the attribution of rationality is an empirical matter. If a “lower” organism does not exhibit the *required* behavior for the attribution of rationality, then rationality cannot be attributed to the respective organism. This was the case with the Sphex Wasp. In the words of Rachels, “The sphex could not solve problems by adapting its behavior to meet new challenges, and so Darwin concluded that its behavior, unlike that of the earthworm, was not intelligent.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to remember that non-instrumentally valuable, in this case, is in fact intrinsically valuable because members of the moral club on the Kantian view are intrinsically valuable—unconditionally good.

<sup>6</sup> I will not give a description of his research method here, but refer the reader to the actual work of Darwin. See Charles Darwin, *The Formation of Vegetable Mould*, Faber and Faber Limited, (1966), pp45-58.

<sup>7</sup> James Rachels, *Created from Animals*, Oxford University Press, (1990), pp135-136.

There is, in addition, the thorny issue of what Darwin means by the term “rationality.” Is he referring to the idea of theoretical rationality where a subject deduces a conclusion from a complex chain of reasoning? Or, is Darwin referring to the idea of practical rationality where “we act rationally when we make choices that are appropriately motivated by our beliefs and attitudes. If we want X, and realize that by doing Y we can get X, and act accordingly, then our behavior is rational?”<sup>8</sup> It seems that Darwin must be committed to something like the latter sense of rationality—means/ends rationality. If it is means/ends rationality, then it fits in rather neatly with the structure of Kantian ratiocentric non-anthropocentric ethic of nature. The ability to set an end would certainly qualify as a fragment of rational nature. However, if we stick with the brief description of means/end rationality described above, then there is the problem of attributing belief states to “lower” organisms.

On the positive side we should not forget that the three distinctions in goodness, developed in chapter four, is, in a straightforward manner, part of the Kantian ratiocentric non-anthropocentric ethical position. This means that we have, *potentially*, a very intuitively appealing ethic of the environment. As I indicated above, in the framework of this ratiocentric outlook, the moral club may well extend to include even the “lowest” members of living nature (excluding plant life); the point being that living nature (excluding plant life), on this account would be intrinsically valuable. But, given the distinction between intrinsic value and non-instrumental value supplied by the three distinctions in goodness, it is possible in the framework of this ratiocentric outlook to attribute non-instrumental value to the plant world and inanimate nature. I say that this ethic is more in tune with intuition because the Kantian ratiocentric non-

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<sup>8</sup> James Rachels, *Created from Animals*, Oxford University Press, (1990), p140.

anthropocentrist can tell a more convincing story on three fronts. First, it adheres to the view that rational persons are the source of value in the world. Second, it can extend the moral club in a manner that is consistent with the claim that human beings are different from non-human organisms in degree, not in type. What do I mean by this claim? In chapter seven, when I made the point about the chimpanzee possessing a fragment of rational nature, I was really making the point that rational nature and fragments of rational nature are scattered along the continuum described by Dawkins. Finally, it can spell out the non-instrumental value of the remaining elements of nature without attributing direct moral standing to certain items like trees, rivers and rocks. Of course, there is a problem with this position. As I argued in chapter seven, the test of rational universalization fails to confer non-instrumental value on nature in an appropriate manner. This means that the mechanism used to limit the capacities of interests to confer value is in need of revision, modification or replacement. Nevertheless, the structure of value offered by the three distinctions in goodness, at the very least, gives us reason to think that the Kantian non-anthropocentric ratiocentric position or a position similar in structure has genuine scope regarding an adequate ethic of nature.

It is clear that I cannot deal with any of the problems listed above here and now. But, then I am not committed to such a project in the body of this thesis. The development of ratiocentric non-anthropocentric environmental ethics is a separate project by itself. This thesis has prepared the ground for such a project. However, in support of such a project I want to make one final suggestion. It is a point about the process of gradual change inherent in the process of evolution. It relates, in part, to a tension between human time and geological time. The point is that through gradual

adaptation and mutation the type of organisms that the sophisticated anthropocentric view is centered on or for that matter any anthropocentric position is based on will cease to exist. They will evolve in the fullness of time into another form of rational life or become extinct. The fact that rational human beings, in the passage of geological time, will evolve into physically different rational organisms means that anthropocentrism can only truly be a *momentary* ethic of nature. The whole idea of concentrating on a particular historically situated group of organisms is parochial and short-sighted given nature's predisposition for gradual change. If we are to increase the permanency of an ethic of nature, then it is better to drop the reference to human beings and, at the very least, center on the idea of rational life<sup>9</sup>. But, here is the catch. The relentless progression of natural processes like evolution will ultimately force the hand of the anthropocentrist. Nature itself propels us forward to a non-anthropocentric ratiocentric future.

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, there are other options. We could center an environmental ethic on the concept of life itself. This would be, strictly speaking, a biocentric option.

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## Thesis

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