

Environmental Ethics

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Environmental Ethics, in the western tradition, is the study of the moral features of humankind's relationship with and the moral status of the surrounding non-human world. In this entry I will consider (I) concerns, both practical and theoretical, that motivate a distinctively environmental ethic, (II) the history of environmental ethics, in brief and in light of the challenges presented to traditional anthropocentric (human centered) ethics, (III) attempts to accommodate the motivating concerns of environmental ethics within traditional accounts of consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, (IV) alternative accounts including deep ecology, ecofeminism, and environmental pragmatism, and (V) a sampling of new directions and developing interests.

I. Motivating Concerns Driving A Distinctively Environmental Ethic

I. A. Why a Distinctively Environmental Ethic?

Is there a moral justification for special protections of endangered species or ecosystems? If so, what is it? Should greenhouse gas emissions be curtailed in an attempt to save the habitat of the polar bear? How many people, if any, should be allowed to visit wilderness areas? What is acceptable, or required, to be done to preserve the integrity of the ecosystems from which lumber companies draw trees? Should lumber companies be required to replant one (or two?) trees for each one they cut? These are the practical problems of environmental ethics. But just beneath the

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surface of these problems are a set of deep theoretical issues. If the existence of polar bear habitat is to be weighed against a lifestyle that uses huge quantities of carbon fuels, on what scale of value should the habitat and lifestyle be compared? Does the value of bear habitat depend on our preferences? Does nature have a value “in itself”? Do individual trees matter? Is one tree as good as any other? Or should we not consider individual trees (or bears) at all, but rather consider the ecosystems in which they live or the species they instantiate? These more theoretical questions are focused on what has value in itself (as opposed to being merely instrumentally valuable for something else), whether that value extends beyond humans (as opposed to being human centered, referred to as “anthropocentric”), and whether individuals or collectives and systems should be the primary focus of our ethical considerations. They make what may seem a set of challenging practical problems inseparable from a set of theoretical problems in value theory. This inseparability compels the focus of environmental ethics to be not merely on the application of various preexistent ethical systems to a set of environmental problems, but rather on the development of an ethical system suited to the particular kinds of problems presented by our relationship with the environment. While some have argued that there need be no new, particularly environmental ethic, and that more traditional systems can be applied to these problems, many have argued that, in the least, there needs to be a significant modification of existing theories in order to accommodate the distinctive concerns of environmental ethics.

To make the tight connection between these practical and theoretical concerns clear, it helps to consider a classic thought experiment advanced by Richard Routley (who later changed his name to Richard Sylvan). Known as the “Last Man” argument, it runs as follows (Sylvan, 1973): Suppose there were a Last Man on Earth; all other human beings had died. This person, let us suppose, both knows that no humans will ever again occupy the earth and also has the

means to destroy all life on earth. Would it be wrong to cut down the last redwood, just for fun, right before you die? To many it seems intuitively clear that it is wrong to destroy the last redwood, independently of any human concern.

But how do we account for the value of that redwood? How do we attribute value to the nonhuman world apart from the interests or concerns of humans? Can we even coherently do so? Finding grounds by which to justify this attribution of value, or explaining why we simply cannot coherently do so, serves as one of the founding motivations of the theoretical side of environmental ethics. Of course there is a good deal of practical motivation as well. It has struck many that our present way of interaction with the nonhuman world is deeply worrying: from unsustainable resource depletion and the general degradation of the atmosphere, to the heartless treatment of nonhuman animals and the general exploitation of the nonhuman world, to many it seems that our relationship with the nonhuman world is morally problematic.

I. B. What entities are moral considerable?

Unlike other “applied” or “practical” ethical concerns, environmental ethics is taken to be inseparable from a robust set of theoretical challenges. Environmental ethics requires that we reconsider the scope of morality, which things should be morally considerable, and the nature of the objects of moral concern, which kind of individuals and whether we should recognize more than individuals. Central to the examples above are questions as to what sorts of things are supposed to count, morally speaking. Traditionally, both in theory and as a pervasive cultural norm, it has been assumed that humans count morally. But do only humans count morally? Should we include other animals in our moral deliberations? The moral significance of nonhuman animals and vegetative life is precisely what is questioned within environmental

ethics, and this human centered bias epitomizes that attitude those motivated to form a “new” environmental ethics attempt to surmount. Clearly the scope of morality cannot be assumed if it is just this scope that is being called into question. Below, we will look at the difficulties associated with restricting the scope of morality to humans (called “anthropocentrism”). But an even more untraditional idea appears frequently in environmental ethics, that the scope of morality should be extended not merely to nonhuman animals, or even plants, but also whole systems. We will look below further at the challenges posed by the possibility of a systemic, holistic ethic.

Determining a criterion for moral considerability has been a centerpiece of much work in environmental ethics (see Goodpaster, 1978; Brennan, 1984). If the scope of morality is to be extended there must be some principle according to which it should be extended. If moral concern is to be extended to all things, then it is no longer clear that plays the sort of role we expect it to: distinguishing those entities that should be included in our moral deliberations, and those that need not be. Some criterion is needed to distinguish those entities that count morally.

One of the founding figures of environmental ethics, Aldo Leopold (1949) noted that there has been an historical tendency to include ever more sorts of entities into our moral consideration, and that expanding the scope of morality to include the environment is just the next obvious, and ecologically necessary step. But what criteria should be used to make that extension? We will see Leopold’s answer to this below, but the need for some criterion or justification is a common theme in environmental ethics, and has served as a central theoretical challenge for the development of a new environmental ethic.

Following a similar line regarding the historical progression of moral considerability, Christopher Stone (1972) wrote that (even) trees ought to be given legal standing and the

protections afforded with this standing. The increasing tendency to acknowledge previously oppressed groups as having been merely means to the use of others is clear in the history of legal standing. As a matter of this progression, legal standing, legal personhood, should be attributed to certain entities or features of the environment. While his concern was with legal status, his position is commonly taken to allow and even encourage the attribution of moral standing to plants, animals, and ecosystems. His motivation was largely pragmatic: these entities are in need of protection, and should be afforded the requisite standing to warrant that protection. A clear moral criterion would then be required to justify this legal standing.

I. C. Intrinsic value

One common way of approaching the problem of providing a criterion for moral considerability is to provide an account of intrinsic value (i.e., non-instrumental value). The distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value has played a central role in the development of environmental ethics. Where instrumental value is a value something has for something else, as a means to some end, intrinsic value is the value of things in themselves. For example, grass has instrumental value for the deer that feeds on it; the deer needs to eat and the grass satisfies that need. But most would agree that the grass does not have value in itself; its value is generally held to be in its use for other entities (below we will consider positions that dispute this). By contrast it is generally held that a person has value not limited to their value for other ends; they have value in themselves, that is, intrinsic value. Insofar as they have intrinsic value, it is generally assumed that they are due some degree of direct moral concern or some form of protection.

While traditionally intrinsic value was limited to humans, providing a satisfying account of why every human but no other creatures have intrinsic value is more difficult (Taylor, 1981; Singer, 1975, 1979, 1981; Callicott, 1987). Once we have excluded the conceptually problematic standard of “being human” as a necessary and sufficient condition for moral considerability, and therefore intrinsic value, an array of possible standards for the attribution of intrinsic value are available. We will look at many of the related normative positions below.

Finding an acceptable standard according to which we might extend intrinsic value to nonhumans may not be so easy. Joel Feinberg (1974) pointed out that for an entity to have value there must be some way for things to go better or worse for that thing. It must have interests. This, according to Feinberg (see also, 1992), limits what sort of nonhuman entities can be sensibly said to have value. While humans and perhaps some higher mammals might be said to have interests, can sense even be made of claiming that, for example, trees have interests? One might wonder whether nonhuman animals have interests adequately similar to human interests to recognize those interests as morally relevant.

One way to extend intrinsic value much further is by appealing to sentience (Singer, 1979). Surely suffering matters, regardless of whether that suffering is human or nonhuman. Following on the basic utilitarian position of John Stuart Mill (1863/2001), the underlying point is that pleasure, whether human or otherwise, should be promoted, and pain should be reduced. All beings capable of feeling pain have intrinsic value.

It has been suggested by some (Taylor, 1986, 1988) that this does not cast the net widely enough. For Taylor the appropriate criterion is being the sort of entity that is capable of having an end that can be hampered or hindered, and not the ends themselves. That is, as a tree can be hampered in its growth or a person can have their wellbeing hindered or their plans frustrated, so

there is a good for that creature; they have ends, are “teleological centers of life,” and have intrinsic value.

Another way of setting such a standard is in terms not of the experiences themselves, as Singer would have it, but in terms of being a subject of experience, of having a particular point of view (Regan, 1984). This position has the virtue of extending Feinberg’s form of interest-based intrinsic value, but may leave the standard for intrinsic value too metaphorical. A wide range of interest-based views of intrinsic value have been presented (See, for example, Varner, 1998).

A more radical departure from these accounts of intrinsic value comes from J. Baird Callicott (1987, 1989, 1999). Following Leopold (1949), intrinsic value is found in the integrity and stability of the biotic community (but see Norton, 1991). We will look at this position more carefully below.

While standards for intrinsic value are a common way of generating a nonhuman ethic, some have cast doubt on the very project (See the discussions of Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism, and Environmental Pragmatism below), and others on a perceived failure to adequately specify the concept of intrinsic value at issue (O’Neill, 1992; Hargrove, 1992). In any event, the search for an acceptable, and acceptably precise, criterion for intrinsic value has provided a daunting challenge for environmental ethics.

I. D. Objective and Subject Value

Tied to questions of intrinsic value is the question of whether the source of value is objective or subjective, a central concern of contemporary metaethics. The question of objectivity comes to this: is there some feature of the valuable thing that makes it valuable, or is

value attributed to that thing on the basis of it being valued? We can say, roughly, that a value is objective if that value is characteristic of some features of objects of value, and subjective if that value is characteristic of our reactions to, attitudes toward, or beliefs about objects of value.

The idea that there could be no value without a valuer has been a basic feature of many approaches to moral theory since the enlightenment. Hume's (1740/1978) discussion of the gap between facts and values, closely related to his "is-ought" gap, has been taken by many to entail that there is no place for values in the natural world. Value comes from valuers, it is thought, whether explicitly as a matter of our preferences, desires or expectations, or implicitly, through the tacit projection of value onto the world.

On first blush this contrast may seem to reduce to a question of whether all values are anthropocentric or not, for if values are subjective then they may well seem to be limited to those things which attribute value. No value without a valuer it is often said; and, traditionally, humans are thought to be the only valuers. A rejection of human oriented value would then entail accepting that values are objective. But it is not so simple, and a range of positions are available.

In particular, there can be both objective and subjective intrinsic value theories. Holmes Rolston III (1994), advocating an objective intrinsic value theory, claims that insofar as organisms are self organizing they have intrinsic value. But while they are the source of that value, and nothing is added to them when they are valued, they can only be valued by a valuer. So any value of an ecosystem is objective, it does not need a valuer to be valuable. But it does need a valuer to be valued. So while we can say nothing is of value without a valuer, value does not lie in human preferences.

J. Baird Callicott (1989) on the other hand advocates a subjective intrinsic value theory (See also Hargrove, 1992). According to Callicott intrinsic value comes from individuals valuing

something for its own sake. While there are features of the environment (say the integrity of the ecosystem) that make that something worth valuing, it is only our relationship with that thing that makes it intrinsically valuable. As Callicott puts it, while the source of value is in the consciousness of the valuer, the locus of value is in the thing valued (1989: 133-4).

In summary, the contrast between subjective and objective value theory should not be thought of simply as the contrast between holding that values exist independently of valuers and holding that they only exist because of valuers. The precise characterization of the relationship between the source of value and valuer has generated a range of positions. Objectivists claim the source of value is in the valuer; subjectivists claim the source of value is in the valuable object.

Parsing this conceptual matter has proved difficult in environmental ethics, just as it has in metaethics. And while some have taken the debate to be distracting to the ultimately practical goals of environmental ethics (Norton, 1991; Light, 1996), others take the debate to be of great, perhaps even central importance (Hargrove, 1992; McShane, 2007).

Tied to the problem of determining whether the source of value is objective or subjective is the basic challenge posed by anthropocentrism. It is not an uncommon intuition that the value of humans, at least, is not dependent on our valuing those humans. But whether this intuition is warranted is another question; and whether this intuition extends to attitudes toward the nonhuman world is yet another.

I. E. Anthropocentrism and Nonanthropocentrism

One of the primary motivations for the formation of environmental ethics as a distinct branch of philosophy is what is perceived to be the pervasive anthropocentrism, or human orientation of traditional ethical theory. Whether through a human based account of interests, a

Kantian (Kant, 1785/1998, 2005) conception of reason as the foundation for morality, or other common forms of ethical theory, traditional accounts of morality generally have been anthropocentric, that is, human centered, in one form or another. Humans and only humans are the objects of moral concern. Any other entities get their worth either from being valued by humans or from some other value-laden relationship with humans. While this is in no doubt due in part to the focus of our concerns on practical problems of interhuman relationships, as the concerns raised above indicate there are value theoretic reasons to restrict the objects of considerability to humans, or at least to attribute additional moral significance to humans.

Of course the reasons to restrict intrinsic value or moral considerability to humans have seemed unconvincing to many. And just this restriction has motivated much of the work in environmental ethics. Indeed, Leopold (1949) claims that we need to move beyond just this restricted, even primitive, conception of moral considerability if we are to address the many pressing problems posed by our relationship with the environment. On this read, anthropocentrism is the key component of our present worldview, a worldview that has led to the very problems that motivated the development of an environmental ethic. Anthropocentrism, in the early years of environmental ethics, was often the theoretical target. It was thought that if one could dethrone anthropocentrism from ethical theory it would be possible to account for intrinsic value in the nonhuman world. And this theoretical development would lead, in practice, to a less troubled relationship with the nonhuman world.

As a challenge to the pervasive orthodoxy of anthropocentrism Sylvan (1973) presented his Last Man argument (referenced above). If all values are tied to human valuers then it would seem there could be nothing wrong with the Last Man destroying all remaining life. And yet the intuitions of most who are confronted by this thought experiment is that the Last Man should not

destroy all life, that it would be *wrong* to do so. But this only follows only if there is nonanthropocentric value. We might well conclude that even though our prevailing theories are anthropocentric in nature, we understand – perhaps cannot help but understand – value in the natural world not to be exhausted by anthropocentric values.

In *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, John Passmore (1974) responds to this thought experiment by claiming that though we may have troubles with our intuitions about Last Man cases or the more real problems of the preservation of species, it is doubtful that there may be any rigorous grounds for intrinsic value in the nonhuman world. Values are generated by humans and focused on them. Existing traditions of environmental management, when properly applied and understood in the context of modern ecology, can be adequate for resolving our present environmental problems. According to Passmore, anthropocentrism is not merely as problematic as some might have thought. We have all the resources we need for understanding the value of the natural world, and to respond to our problematic relationship with the natural world, within a broadly anthropocentric framework.

Bryan Norton (1984, 1991, 2005) has argued that the pragmatic tradition (addressed below) allows for taking a broadly anthropocentric view on value in the natural world. This approach relies on denying the unflinching endorsement of Hume's (1740/1978) fact-value distinction. Through recognizing our interconnections with the natural world, and the denial of a strict valuer-valued dichotomy, the pragmatists attempt to avoid the difficulties of anthropocentrism (characterized by attitudes of dominance of and alienation from the environment) without endorsing the troubling metaphysics of nonanthropocentrism.

Eugene Hargrove (1992) argues that there is a sense in which we cannot help but be anthropocentric, a weak sense to be sure. We cannot help but approach the world as humans,

from a human point of view. All value is sourced in humans. If Hargrove is right, then even Callicott's view is weakly anthropocentric, despite Callicott's denials. But this focus on the source, rather than the locus, is not what moves many to argue for nonanthropocentric value.

To some these anthropocentric-friendly approaches move us too far away from the concerns that motivated environmental ethics to begin with: a concern for the environment. While anthropocentric and anthropocentric-friendly positions can accommodate the prudential value of the environment (and we can presume that concerns about pollution, resource depletion, and population, among other problems, are at least partially prudential concerns), they cannot well accommodate those who hold nature to have value in itself, or independently of its instrumental value to us. Many of the positions outlined below constitute attempts to develop a position that can accommodate the nonanthropocentric intuitions that lead both to the common response to the Last Man thought experiment, and to attempts to form a unique environmental ethic.

I. F. Individualism and holism

A further concern is that our very presuppositions about the objects of moral considerability might be misleading. The systems of individuals – ecosystems and species and communities – might be a more proper focus than those individuals themselves. We will look more at normative theories with this focus below but for now note that one of the motivating concerns, theoretically and practically, is that we should place value on the organization of systems and communities. Following Aldo Leopold, J. Baird Callicott (1987, 1989, 1999) argues that there is intrinsic value in the integrity, stability and beauty of ecological systems (as opposed to the individuals in those systems).

Balancing the apparent need to value systems as well as individuals has served to generate a different set of normative principles, what Callicott considers an entirely new ethic, which will be considered below. As one of the motivating concerns for environmental ethics is that there seems to be a need to balance the needs of individuals with the systems of which they are a part, there have been several attempts to incorporate some form of holism into an overarching system (Rolston, 1988; Katz, 1983, 1997; Westra, 1994). But the problem of shaping a value theory such that it can accommodate both individualistic value and systemic value is daunting.

One of the problems raised against Callicott's holism seems to be that there is no (or little) room for any intrinsic value apart from the value of the system. He has argued (1987) that there should be a reconciliation between our tendency to give preferential treatment toward those of our own species over others within this holistic framework, but this has led to certain problems with his theory (Norton, 1995 ; Lo, 2001). The larger point, here, is that Callicott's system is monistic; there is only one value, instantiated in a principle, that had moral weight.

I. G. Monism and Pluralism

Early in the development of environmental ethics Christopher Stone (1987, 1988) wrote that a variety of values should be acknowledged, and that these values can not all be reduced to a single source. However there is an apparent problem with this form of environmental value pluralism. If there are several different principles at work, how are we to resolve conflicts between them? It seems we need to appeal to something to resolve those conflicts, and, in so doing, we show that those independent principles are not as incommensurable as the pluralists

would have had us think. Moreover, what sort of metaphysics is required of this extreme form of pluralism? Are there metaphysically distinct kinds of values? On what grounds?

Traditionally, monism was a common way of addressing matters of ethics. Such theories provided a single principle or grounding for value. Jeremy Bentham (1789/1948) presents a classic monistic moral theory with his act utilitarianism (modern presentation in J.J.C. Smart (1973)). We can see monistic positions in, for example, the intrinsic value theories of Singer (1975), and Taylor (1986), and Rolston (1988). Each theorist relies on a single principle either to determine rightness or wrongness of action, or to indicate what has intrinsic value. Contrasting positions are said to be pluralistic, accommodating a range of values or moral principles. Traditionally we see this pluralism in the work of David Ross (1930) and Thomas Nagel (1979).

Peter Wenz (1993) worried that the debate between monists and pluralists was underdefined, and went some way to clarify this debate. He argued that there were three forms of pluralism in environmental value theories: minimal, moderate, and extreme. Minimal moral pluralism is a form of pluralism under which a single answer is not provided for each moral quandary. Any theory that does not provide a “universal algorithmic decision procedure” is pluralistic in this sense (Wenz, 1993: 221). Extreme moral pluralism is “characterized by alternations among several ethical theories.” One might make some decisions (say, social policy decisions) as a utilitarian, others (say, personal decisions) as a deontologist, and so forth. According to this extreme form of pluralism the theories between which one alternates are incommensurable in a fashion that Wenz believes makes prohibitively difficult the required alternation. This form of pluralism, the sort Baird Callicott (1990) attacks when he rejects pluralism, fails to provide enough framework to avoid rampant inconsistency in our moral lives. It embraces a sort of moral schizophrenia that would cripple our ability to engage in moral

deliberation, and suffers from the extraordinary deliberative and metaphysical problems alluded to above. Lastly, moderate moral pluralism includes only a plurality of principles that must be weighed whenever a moral quandary arises (this last form has close similarities to the sort of pluralism expressed by Nagel (1986)). The minimal form of pluralism should be acceptable to anyone who accepts that what one should do varies according to context. Not only Mill-style (1863/2001) rule utilitarianism, but even forms of act utilitarianism (Smart, 1973) may be found to satisfy this requirement. The remaining view, moderate pluralism seems to steer a course between the triviality of minimal pluralism, and the prohibitive theoretical difficulties of extreme pluralism.

Practically, some (the environmental pragmatists, addressed below) note that so long as attempts are made to resolve disagreements over matters of environmental policy, so long as we adopt pluralism as a means of forming practical solutions to policies, it may not matter what particular values we hold. As a matter of practice we would do well to operate with some level of value pluralism. Practically, we should do the best we can to accommodate those who advance other values, and recognize that we have the same object of concern. Of course this may not satisfy those who advocate a more extreme form of pluralism. But, as Andrew Light (1996; see also Norton 1991) has argued, “Environmental pragmatism provides us with just the sort of framework we need to temper pluralism....” In practice, as we saw above with respect to the environmental pragmatists, it is thought by some (Brennan, 1992; Norton, 1991) that the debate among those who espouse different monisms will come to naught, so long as their concern is with the development of an adequately inclusive policy. As Brennan puts it, without explicitly endorsing environmental pragmatism, “In environmental ethics, pluralism offers the hope of reconciling the various rival theories, even if none of them is universally applicable” (1992: 15).

This solution to the monism-pluralism debate is subject to the concerns raised below against environmental pragmatism, however. And this political or practical solution may seem theoretically unsatisfying.

Balancing the theoretical concerns surrounding the nature of intrinsic value with the need to find practical solutions to real environmental problems has driven an active set of research programs. These research programs have a rich history. Before the basic normative positions in environmental ethics are addressed we would do well to take a short look at that history.

II. The Historical Foundations of Western Academic Environmental Ethics

While debates about man's proper place in the world go back to antiquity, as a western academic discipline modern environmental ethics appeared in the early 1970s in the United States, Australia, and Norway. In 1973, in Norway, Arne Naess published "The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movements," a piece which launched a movement commonly referred to as "deep ecology" (we will consider deep ecology in its own section below). In the same year, Richard Sylvan presented a paper, from which the "Last Man" argument is extracted, asking "Is there a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?" The next year John Passmore, in Australia, wrote his anthropocentric response, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*. In the United States Christopher Stone published his essay (1972) arguing for the legal, and perhaps moral standing of trees. This was soon followed, in 1975, with Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*. These all followed on the first conference on environmental ethics, held at the University of Georgia in 1971.

In the United States the academic formation of environmental ethics can be traced back to two vital sources: the preservation-conservation debates between John Muir and Gifford Pinchot

near the beginning of the 20th century in the United States, and the writings of Aldo Leopold. Pinchot, an advocate of what has come to be called conservation, argued for the commercial development of the U.S. forests for present and future Americans; he advocated policies of wise use, and focused on long term sustainable management of our resources. Muir, by contrast, argued that nature should not be treated merely as a resource, that nature provides humankind with an experience of the holy; nature had value apart from its use. Merely treating it as a resource, this preservationist line runs, is a moral wrong. While this debate is framed in within the political framework of the United States at the turn of the century, the basic problems expressed in that debate reflect one of the basic conflicts motivating environmental ethics. In short, should nature be valued intrinsically and preserved, or should nature be conserved for our future use, and thereby valued instrumentally? This contrast, between preservation and conservation led to one of the modern classics of the environmental movement, Aldo Leopold's "The Land Ethic," presented in his *The Sand County Almanac* (1949) and reprinted widely.

Leopold was a resource manager in the Southwest of the United States in the early part of the twentieth century and saw the massive destruction of land and the degradation of ecosystems through overgrazing and predator eradication. There is some debate as to the moral principles he held and whether these principles changed over the years (see Callicott, 1987; Norton, 1988). But by the 1940s he came to see that the problems in resource use could not be resolved through the imposition of laws and incentive programs. Rather, they required a change in attitude, a change in ethical orientation, and the development of an ecological conscience. The realities of failed management pushed Leopold to recognize the importance of an expanded mentality, a shift of conscience away from exploitation (and mere instrumental or economic valuation) to

something richer, something acknowledging an ethical relationship with our surrounding environment. To that end, he proposed his land ethic.

Leopold (1949) proposed that, following on the historical precedent of ever increasing scope of moral considerability, we should include the land itself in our moral deliberations. We should extend moral concern to, “soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (1949: 204). Leopold argued that, in contrast to some prevailing versions of the conservationist ethic, we should not see ourselves simply as overlords and masters of the subservient land, but also as fellow citizens within it. The Land is a community to which we belong; we should acknowledge our place, as part, not merely as controller of the land. Hence, his oft quoted expression of what he called the Land Ethic, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1949: 224-5). While there are a wide range of interpretations of this position, and Leopold did not present his ethic in a systematic fashion (Brennan, 1988; Callicott, 1987; Norton, 1988; Hettinger and Throop, 1999; Katz, 1997; Rolston, 1989), it is commonly acknowledged that the object of moral concern was taken to be the biotic community, understood as an extension beyond man’s parochial concern for his own wellbeing (although see Norton, 1995). The system-centered, holistic interpretation of Leopold has been presented forcefully by J. Baird Callicott (1987, 1989, 1999), whose interpretation of Leopold will be the subject of later discussion.

Perhaps the next watershed event in the development of academic environmental ethics was the publication, in 1963, of Rachel Carsons’ *Silent Spring*, a terrifying look at the ever increasing effects of pesticides and other pollutants on the environment. Carson’s work motivated a new generation of activists to take up the environmental cause, and to help see the

need for fundamental changes in the way we understand the value of nature and our relationship with nature.

Of course pollution was not the only problem facing the environment. The exponential rate of human population growth, especially following the second world war, gave rise to tremendous concerns over the resources needed by the increasing throngs, and the effects of those resource needs on the environment. In 1968 Ehrlich published *The Population Bomb*, a pessimistic consideration of the future of a species with exponential population growth and limited resources. The effects of an ever-increasing population on the environment are sobering. While *The Population Bomb* received a mixed response, for some it provided yet more evidence that humans needed to reexamine their relationship with the nonhuman world.

Academic interest grew in response to concerns over the cultural roots of our problematic attitudes with respect to the environment, the pressures of population, and the difficulties associated with our use of pesticides, herbicides, and other useful but ultimately environmentally problematic products. The relationship between humankind and the world in which we live became a concern of ethics. Our relationship with that environment constituted a worthy subject of ethical consideration in its own right.

Lynn White (1967) provided one highly contentious diagnosis of our present “ecological crisis,” the problematic way in which we conceptualize our relationship with the nonhuman world. He claimed that the root of our environmental crisis comes from the way in which the prevailing orthodoxy of the Judeo-Christian tradition inculcated the belief that we are separate from and of a different kind than the natural world. This was coupled with a mandate to control and dominate the environment. With a religiously-inspired sense of domination of the nonhuman

world, exploitation soon follows. The consequence is our present unhappy relationship with the environment.

Whether White's diagnosis was correct or not, it does point us to some substantial questions. The problems acknowledged by commentators on our practices of resource management, our burgeoning population, our excessive use of pollutants and pesticides, and the possibility of religious foundations for our troublesome attitude require us to face the philosophical and ethical backdrop of the general attitude had by humans (or those humans subject to a particularly problematic cultural background) toward their nonhuman environment.

The practical and theoretical concerns motivating the formation of a distinct environmental ethic have led to a range of normative positions. Following Palmer (2003) I will consider three common forms taken by normative environmental ethics – individualistic deontological theories, individualistic consequentialist theories, and holist theories – before addressing a set of alternative positions.

III. Attempts to form a normative environmental ethic

III. A. The significance of the various formulations

In large part because of the deep theoretical concerns expressed above, and the nontraditional nature of the concepts at play in environmental ethics, many have expressed misgivings that traditional positions in normative theory can be applied to environmental ethics. In particular, the anthropocentric leaning of most traditional theories has led to skepticism that any are adequate. Despite this drive away from one of the hallmarks of traditional ethics, many of the positions held by key environmental ethicists contain elements of traditional theories of

normative ethics. Indeed, those traditional theories are often able to capture concerns about the troubling relationship between humans and the nonhuman world.

A further debate has taken place between those whose focus has been on the extension of moral concern to other animals as individuals, or to the natural world understood more systemically. Indeed, the very possibility of integrating the animal rights movement within environmental ethics has been debated (Singer, 1975, 1979, 1981; Regan, 1984; Callicott, 1980, 1988; Sagoff, 1984; Jamieson, 1998; Katz, 1983; Varner, 1995, 2000). The challenge of integrating a concern for individuals with a concern for ecosystems or species has led to a distinction between individualistic and holistic approaches to normative environmental ethics, between, for example approaches to ethics that focus on individual animals (Singer, 1975) and those that focus on the integrity and stability of ecosystems (Callicott, 1987). Among individualistic positions some take a consequentialist approach, according to which the right course of action is determined in terms of states of affairs to be promoted, and some take deontological positions, according to which states of affairs do not play this role. We will begin by looking at different forms on individualistic deontology.

III. B. Individualistic deontology

Following Goodpaster's (1978) aforementioned account of moral considerability, the idea that certain entities cannot be treated merely as means to further ends has motivated a range of deontological positions. Deontological positions may be understood to be those that take there to be moral restrictions, prohibitions, or requirements on the treatment of other entities, where those normative constraints are not dependent for their moral nature on the consequences of ones actions or other states of affairs. Albert Schweitzer (1923), writing years before Goodpaster,

argued that all with a “will to live,” a drive toward self-realization, should be given reverence. The range of entities that Schweitzer took to have this will-to-live was exceedingly wide, including not only animals and plants but also, contentiously, crystals and snowflakes. The breadth of this application, compounded by Schweitzer’s egalitarianism – all those things with a will-to-live were to be equally revered – made this position exceedingly problematic.

More recently Paul Taylor (1981, 1986) developed an individualistic account in which he argues that all organisms are teleological centers of life and therefore are to be treated not with reverence, as Schweitzer would have it, but with respect. As all organisms are teleological centers of life, each has an end and therefore a good of its own. It follows, claims Taylor, that all organisms have intrinsic value, and are therefore worthy of respect. Just as Schweitzer, Taylor argues for a form of egalitarianism, called “biocentric egalitarianism” whereby all teleological centers of life are to equally warrant respect. In his *Respect for Nature* (1986), he attempts to develop a range of principles for determining our duties to those organisms, and a set of principles for adjudicating conflicts between these duties. Crucially Taylor holds that we can resolve conflicts between our duties to all teleological centers of life without either treating them instrumentally or relying on the consequences of our actions, that is, without sacrificing the deontological nature of his position.

Many have found the concept of a “teleological center of life” a troubling ground for inherent worth and duties grounded in that inherent worth. One way of generating deontological restrictions without relying on the good for an entity, is to generate a foundation for rights. Tom Regan (1974) argues that rights are possessed by all those beings that are the “subjects of a life.” By relying on having a point of view, and the experiences necessary for that view, Regan avoids having to account for the “good for” an entity.

Whether spelled out in terms of reverence, respect, or rights, the general shape of individualistic deontological approaches to normative environmental ethics is that individual entities are not to be treated as mere means to some further end, and that the foundation for this restriction is to be found in the individual entity itself.

Apart from the concern regarding specifically egalitarian individualistic deontological positions (that some means of adjudicating between conflicting duties is required), one might also worry that these positions do not allow, for example, for the culling of animals for the sake of an ecosystem or other considerations. For it may seem that the ecosystem in which they live or the species they represent has a value that cannot be accommodated in such individualistic schemes. The foundation of the reverence, respect, or rights may also be called into question: is being the subject of experience the right sort of condition for generating rights? Why does having a “will to live” constitute anything of moral value (or does it depend on artificially anthropomorphizing the “will” of nonhuman entities)? Further, one may also worry that these positions have trouble accommodating the special position humans cannot help but have as managers, planners, and designers of policy with respect to other animals. Even if all individual living things are to be treated with moral considerability – to be moral patients, not all are moral agents – and one might think that moral agents should be given special moral consideration. We will see several of these concerns raised with respect to individualistic consequentialist positions as well.

III. C. Individualistic consequentialism

The classic individualistic consequentialist position is utilitarianism, in the spirit of Bentham (1789/1948) and Mill (1863/2001). Both hold that the pleasurable experiences of

individual persons have intrinsic value, and that the maximization of pleasure and minimization of pain constitute moral goodness. On such a view suffering is to be minimized, for painful experience is bad in itself. The pains and pleasures of individual entities provide the basic unit of concern. The consequences of ones actions, therefore, are what serve to shape this normative ethic: whether ones actions promote more happiness than suffering, more pleasure than pain, constitutes right action (see also Smart, 1973).

While Mill makes reference to all sentient life his focus is clearly on humanity. However Peter Singer (1975) explicitly makes the focus of his concern all sentient life. Insofar as an animal is capable of experiencing pain, of suffering, that creature must be taken into account, as a matter of moral significance, when we determine what we ought to do. While Singer takes this to provide prohibitions on our treatment of animals, and this has uncomfortable similarities to a deontological restriction not well in keeping with his utilitarianism, the point we should take from his position is this: if pleasure and pain, or happiness and suffering are taken to be the foundation of or constitute good and bad, then the scope of moral considerability is significantly expanded. Our normative ethic should include not merely humans within its scope, but all sentient creatures. Following classical utilitarianism at least this far, we are to maximize pleasurable experiences and minimize suffering, but for all sentient life. This standard entails, however, that all nonsentient creatures, and all other features of the environment have no moral significance, except instrumentally.

Singer's account relies on a tight connection between experience and value. Rather than relying on sentience as a foundation for moral considerability, one might think that the flourishing of an entity, its ability to develop the basic capacities of its species, is itself a good. This is precisely the route taken by Robin Attfield (1983, 1987). An entity capable to develop

has an interest in doing so. Insofar as this flourishing is understood to be a state of affairs that is good, it should be promoted. Understanding an individual entity's good as a state of affairs worthy of being promoted makes this position consequentialist. Of course just as individualistic deontological approaches there needs to be some means of adjudicating conflicts, where the flourishing of one creature conflicts with the flourishing of another. Attfield presents a set of principles for making this sort of determination, the details of which not concern us here. For our purposes here we should note that as a consequentialist position there is no particular theoretical difficulty in adjudicating between the flourishing of different entities.

Flourishing provides for an extremely wide range of creatures to be morally considerable. And one may doubt that the focus of moral concern should be on the development of capacities, which need to be distinguished from one another by membership in a species. Alternatively, one might focus not on the development of capacities but on the interests had by all living things. Of course one must be careful not to anthropomorphize interests. However, following Gary Varner (1998), if we take interests to indicate that a thing "has a welfare or good of its own, that matters from a moral point of view" this may be possible. Varner creates a hierarchy of interests, and a corresponding hierarchy of value. All individual beings matter morally such that their interests ought to be satisfied, but those with desires take priority over those with strictly biologically related interests (such as having enough water, nutrients, and sunlight). Similarly, those with long term desires, what he calls ground projects, take precedence over those beings that merely have appetitive desires. Thus we have a hierarchy, built into his value system, differentiating morally considerable beings. Humans (and any other being capable of having ground projects) matter more, morally, than animals with only appetitive urges. And animals matter more than

plants. But throughout this hierarchy the normative position presented is consequentialist: the satisfaction of interests constitutes a state of affairs to be promoted.

Individualistic consequentialist positions suffer from the same concerns regarding the value of ecosystems and species raised against individualistic deontological positions. It is not clear how to account for the value of systems or species if all value is to be spelled out individualistically. While states of affairs of individuals (spelled out in terms of the flourishing of individuals, for example) might well provide for the instrumental value of the systems of which they are a part, it is difficult to sacrifice individuals for the sake of the larger community unless doing so can be justified in terms of the greater good (to use a classic utilitarian form of justification). But this may not adequately capture the sort of justification required if good is to be found in the flourishing of individuals. However, if individualistic consequentialist positions are slightly better off with respect to the systemic concerns, they suffer from an additional problem. On such an account all individuals are exchangeable. They have value insofar as they might experience pain or pleasure, or flourish, or have their interests satisfied; but each individual could simply be replaced by another without any moral significance. It would seem fully justifiable on such an account to kill one antelope and replace it with another; such an act could make no moral difference. While there may be occasions where this is intuitively acceptable, to conclude that there can be no moral difference whatsoever in this sort of replacement, as a matter of principle, seems problematic. More generally, consequentialist positions may not provide the sort of protection (e.g., principles that prohibit treating certain entities in certain ways) that seems at the core of our motivations for developing a particularly environmental ethic in the first place. An entity is only valuable insofar as it is related to a state of affairs (whether experiencing pleasure, flourishing, or having its interests satisfied); the moral

considerability accorded individual entities on such an account is notably weaker than that accorded by deontological positions.

III. D. Holism

A criticism common to individualistic deontological and consequentialist positions alike is that they cannot accommodate the intrinsic value of ecosystems and species. This general concern can be traced back to Aldo Leopold's (1949) Land Ethic. As noted above the position he presents advocates taking "the integrity, stability, and beauty of the land" to be a thing of intrinsic value. As such the ecosystem as a whole should be taken to have value, and not merely instrumental value with respect to its parts. Positions that endorse the intrinsic value of ecosystems, environmental communities of life, or other "wholes" are often referred to as "ecocentric."

There is a reasonable basis for attributing an ecocentric view to Leopold. Leopold, as noted above, was interested in land management; and he thought that we needed to reformulate our attitude toward the natural world. We needed, he thought, to consider the systemic features of our environment as well as the individual elements. This seems in line, roughly, with ecological science. Insofar as environmental ethics rests on ecological science, it would make sense to focus on the ecosystem as its basic unit. Indeed, the failing health of the biotic community, ecosystems, served to motivate the development of a uniquely environmental ethic, and this failing was thought by many to constitute a moral failing. From this starting point, the health of the system, community, or species is the proper object of moral concern (see Katz, 1983). Contrary to the individualistic positions outlined above, this approach puts primary focus on notions like integrity and stability, notions which make little sense in individualistic ethics.

Following Leopold, J Baird Callicott (1987, 1989, 1999) has forcefully advocated this sort of holistic approach.

Some have cast doubt on Callicott's thoroughly holistic interpretation of Leopold. Bryan Norton (1988, 1995) has argued that this way of understanding Leopold, as advocating the intrinsic value of the systemic whole, misconstrues Leopold's own motives. Leopold was interested in management, and this involved recognizing the instrumental value of the land as well as whatever value it might be said to have in itself. This interpretation changes the sort of "ecological conscience" Leopold advocated.

More worrying is the general charge, made by Tom Regan (1984) among others, of "environmental fascism." The charge is that if the collective, ecosystem, or species is to be attributed intrinsic value at the exclusion of its individual members, then those individual members have only instrumental value. If they have no more than instrumental value then they are expendable for the sake of the good of the collective. This, it is thought, leads to disturbing consequences. Individual humans, as much as individual trees or individual animals, could be sacrificed for "the greater good." Any viable holistic normative environmental ethic must address this concern.

Callicott (1987) has attempted to develop a solution: while all members of the biotic community are due respect (as members – their value comes from being part of the overall system), the degree of moral considerability they are accorded is graded. There are increasingly constraining circles of moral considerability. The hope of this response is to show that the land ethic does not cancel human morality, but rather supplements it with a concern for an enlarged moral world, changes it by transcending anthropocentric and egocentric morality, and enriches it by integrating a more complete ecological understanding. However some have expressed

concerns over whether Callicott has the conceptual resources to make this move from within his holistic framework (Lo, 2001; Norton, 1984; Light, 1996; Ouderick and Hill, 2002).

An alternative holistic approach might focus on the integrity of the system such that the integral parts of a system are necessary features of that system. This approach, advocated by Laura Westra (1994), goes some way toward avoiding the misanthropic elements of Callicott's holism, while still holding onto the moral significance of the system. The focus on the interdependence of individual entities within the overall system, rather than the merely instrumental value of those individual entities shifts the debate away from determining what can be sacrificed for the sake of the whole to questions of how best to maintain the overall system, dependent as it is on its constituent parts. There are similarities between Westra's focus on the integrity of the system, and Bryan Norton's (1984, 1991, 1995) focus on the interdependence as the centerpiece of a different form of holism. Norton's work is addressed below with respect to environmental pragmatism.

Ned Hettinger and Bill Throop (1999) have expressed concern that the stability elements emphasized by Callicott notably misconstrue the ecological science which underpins his holism. While the system may have value, that system is dynamic, continually in flux. Restricting environmental value to the stability of such a system leads to an ethic that eschews the natural changes taking place in ecosystems. This concern might well be extended to challenge a holism based on integrity, unless integrity is not understood as the integrity of discrete and substantial systems (but see Westra, 1994: 21-78; and Katz, 1997: 33-51).

III. E. Environmental Virtue Ethic

While debates in environmental value theory have generally focused on consequentialist or deontological perspectives, recently there has also been a growing movement toward environmental virtue ethics (Cafaro, 2001, 2004; Chapman, 2002; Fransz, 2001; Sandler, 2004, 2006; Swanton, 2003; and the essays in Sandler and Cafaro, 2003). Where a consequentialist would look to the overall balance of good and evil in the world to determine right action, and the deontologist would look at rule-governed motivation, the virtue ethicist looks to noble traits of character and the motivations someone with such a character would have. Rather than focus on right and wrong, or good and evil, this approach focuses on “thick,” substantial concepts like friendship and loyalty. One can see that notions like “health,” “integrity” and “beauty,” so central to Leopold’s conception of ethics, and motivating features of an environmental ethic, would be well suited to this approach. While this theory would appear to be straightforwardly anthropocentric, if the character of a virtuous person requires “biotic harmony” (Chapman, 2002), then a virtue ethic might not be so anthropocentric (but see Hill, 2006). It may well be that a flourishing life, central to traditional conceptions of virtue, may only be possible if we value nature for its own sake.

IV. Alternatives to standard models

IV. A. Deep Ecology

In 1973 Arne Naess published his essay, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary” in which he argued for a position that has come to be known as Deep Ecology, or as Naess later called it ecosophy (1991). The focus of Deep Ecology is to found our relationship with the environment on something “deeper” than merely science. This is

not to deny the role of science, but only to recognize that we should not rely exclusively on any science, even ecology, for the foundation of our understanding of the natural world.

Often Deep Ecology is defined in an oppositional manner. It sets itself apart from the dominance, atomism, and separateness that are taken to characterize the modern scientific worldview. Harmony and synergy with nature, recognizing and experiencing one's place in nature (geographically as well as metaphorically) provide better models for our relationship with the nonhuman world. Positively, Deep Ecologists advocate an extended and decentered benevolence, a position taken to be in line with Leopold's (1949) call for an evolved ecological conscience.

The position advanced by Naess (1974, 1991; subsequently developed by Devall and Session, 1985; Warwick Fox, 1984; and others) points to an intimacy with nature, with seeing ourselves as simple parts of the ecosystem. Interrelation and interconnection are recurring themes in Deep Ecology, and biocentric equality (understood to indicate non-domination rather than self-subordination) plays a key role. But this interdependence is not simply a matter of a more advanced ecological understanding of our place in the world. Rather it should be thought of as a matter of "Self-Realization," a spiritual awakening wherein we see ourselves as part of the world, and reflected in that world.

However Deep Ecology is not supposed to be *merely* a matter of reflective personal experience. There is a clear role for activism. As a consequence of Self-Realization, we are to see ourselves as part of our environment; the defense of that environment is inescapably motivating. There is an overarching importance of place and local practice. To defend the environment is to defend an extended sense of oneself.

Naess himself indicates that this position, while clearly containing activist elements, is not designed as a formal moral doctrine. He says,

I am not much interested in ethics of morals. I'm interested in how we experience the world.... If deep ecology is deep, it must related to our fundamental beliefs, not just to ethics. Ethics follow from how we experience the world. If you articulate your experience then it can be a philosophy or a religion (Naess, 1991: 20).

While this position has similarities with Leopold's call for a new ecological conscience, it does not of itself constitute a formal doctrine. Indeed, Naess claims there are a range of principles which roughly characterize the deep ecology perspective, but a complete system is not in the offing. Naess hoped that his position would serve not as a uniform system in its own right, but as a platform on which thinkers concerned about deep issues of environmental value could agree.

Criticisms of Deep Ecology abound. Some take the position to be straightforwardly antihuman, or misleadingly focused on the nonhuman world rather than on the social structures that seem so central to our environmental problems (Bookchin, 1994). Perhaps more deeply worrying is whether this position could serve to change the attitudes of someone who was not predisposed to accept that our attitudes toward the environment should be shaped in a "deeper" way. Self-Realization cannot be mandated, and using this as a foundation for social change seems problematic (Westra, 1994: 102).

IV. B. Ecofeminism

Another approach comes from the recognition that one of the basic causes of our problematic relationship with the environment comes from an attitude of domination and exploitation. Karen Warren (1990) points out that there are striking structural similarities, similarities in the underlying logic, between our attitude of domination of nature and that of the

domination of women: “The promise and power of ecological feminism is that it provides a distinctive framework both for reconceiving feminism and for developing an environmental ethic which takes seriously connections between the domination of women and domination of nature” (1990: 125).

Warren claims that the issue of environmental exploitation is not an exclusively environmental problem, but rather a general problem resulting from belief in a value hierarchy, and the acceptance of a pattern of argument referred to as a “logic of domination” (Warren, 1990, 2000; Plumwood, 1986, 1988, 1993; see also Cheney, 1987 for connections between ecofeminism and deep ecology). The general problem, the invalid and patently unjust logic of domination, can be summed up as follows: for any X and Y, if X is morally superior to Y then X is morally justified in subordinating Y. Warren claims, in general accordance with ecofeminist positions, that the problem on which environmentalists should be focused is this general logic of domination. Without resolving the general problem represented in this logic, it seems unlikely we will resolve our problematic attitudes and generate an appropriately ecological conscience. To live, in Leopold’s terms, as citizens rather than masters, it seems overcoming the logic of domination would be required.

The feminist insight, the hope and promise of ecological feminism, is to shift the way we understand the natural environment away from the abstract, dominating, individualistic approach. The focus should be on contextualism, individual narratives, on both the emotionally-laden nature of experience and the value laden nature of theory, on interpersonal relationships and the concrete rather than the abstract (Gruen, 1994). The hope is to reconceptualize our relationship away from abstract individualism to networks of relationships. Through the reconceptualization of these relationships we should replace the structures and practices that

allow and even encourage policies of domination with just, life-affirming, and liberating ones that reflect an increased care and sensitivity toward the environment.

But ecofeminism is not without its critics. While there may be parallels between attitudes of domination with respect to nature, and attitudes of domination with respect to women, the precise way in which these attitudes are similar has been called into question. Few doubt that both attitudes of domination exist, and that they are similar, but, as Gaard and Gruen (1993) point out, the precise way in which they are similar will affect how best to address the problem. Moreover, one might worry whether or not the themes of care and sensitivity (1) require an undue sensitivity to those features of the world that can be no better or worse than they are, (2) require an unwarranted and unjustifiable degree of anthropomorphization, and (3) are not capable, without significant augmentation, of generating the just set of social practices and institutions that are the primary goals of ecofeminism. After all, if too much depends on context and the particular experiences of the individuals involved, it is difficult to see how one might justify declaring any course of action unacceptable.

IV. C. Environmental Pragmatism

While Deep Ecology focuses on the expanded self, and ecofeminism focuses on the general problem of domination, Environmental Pragmatism takes issue with the very idea of intrinsic value, as it has commonly been employed in environmental ethics. More practically, the motivating force behind environmental pragmatism (as explicitly noted by Light and Katz, 1996; and Norton, 1991, 2005) is the concern that debates over theoretical matters of environmental ethics (especially the debates over intrinsic value) have had little effect on environmental policy. The focus of environmental ethics, say the pragmatists, should be on the particular problems

faced in the environment, not exclusively theoretical matters. To wait for the resolution of theoretical matters of intrinsic value is to risk that, while we wait, the environment will be damaged.

Environmental pragmatists are focused then on practical solutions to problems, not the application of (antecedently determined) theory to problems. In this sense (following Norton, 1991), environmental pragmatism is practical philosophy, not applied philosophy. Effectively, this requires that environmental pragmatists be pluralists, that they acknowledge a wide range of sources for value – but note that many cast doubt on the very idea of intrinsic value (Weston, 1985; Norton, 1984, 2005). Indeed, it is taken by Norton (2005: 166) that focusing on intrinsic value historically diverted environmental ethics from its more practical reformative mission, a mission he finds central in the work of Leopold (Norton, 1991).

Environmental pragmatism is practical in the sense of being experimental, asking what is the best working hypothesis, not what is the right theory (Norton, 2005: 160). With a focus on particular problems, environmental pragmatism is also thereby contextual; it focuses on the particular features of the particular problem at issue and acknowledges that the concrete situation “on the ground” should guide environmental policy deliberation. As the focus of our concern is on a problem, then we should do what we can to work together toward a policy that addresses that problem, not a policy that reflects a particular theoretical orientation.

The position, in this regard similar to ecofeminism and deep ecology, is methodological. Rather than relying on a theoretical stance with respect to value in the environment, environmental pragmatism involves taking a particular sort of approach to environmental problems. While not explicitly endorsed by all advocates of environmental pragmatism, Bryan Norton’s (1991) convergence hypothesis provides a paradigmatic example of this approach. His

hypothesis is that, over adequately long time frames, an enlightened anthropocentric theory (one that accepts a wide range of values and perspectives) and nonanthropocentric theory will converge on a single policy. While the details need not concern us here, the point is that as long as the long term resolution of an environmental problem is driving political discourse and the formation of policy, the value theoretic predispositions of participants need not prevent those participants from coming to the same practical solution. Of course if participants dogmatically bind themselves to a particular point of view, are not interested in developing a long term solution, or are unwilling to engage in serious discourse about the shape of public policy, all bets are off. But for those earnestly engaged in the formation of public policy, differing intrinsic value commitments do not indicate differing policy. Or so the convergence hypothesis claims.

However, there are critics. The rejection of the intrinsic value debate (or at least the minimization of the importance of that debate) is called into question. While opening ourselves up to different possibilities is important, the debate and final policy may be shaped with respect to certain intrinsic values. This debate itself may be part of what shapes policy and may provide a nontrivial stumbling block in the formation of solutions to environmental problems. More significantly, the denial of intrinsic value in the nonhuman world ends up making the position broadly (or, as Weston, 1985, and Norton, 1991, call it, “weakly) anthropocentric.

Further, the thoroughgoing contextualism of environmental pragmatism may generate criticisms akin to those raised against ecofeminism. A methodological approach may provide some guidance toward policy formation, but it does not seem adequate, of itself. If too much depends on context and situation, it is unclear what might be an unacceptable policy. Moreover, monists object to the pervasive pluralism in the environmental pragmatist project; maintaining a multitude of values leads to charges of inconsistency.

V. New Directions and Developing Interests

The alternative positions presented share a common concern, the importance of moving the debates of environmental ethics beyond mere academic discourse. In this closing section I will examine a sampling of the many directions of current research in environmental ethics. I make no claims to completeness or even to the absolute priority of those directions I here mention.

One central area of interest, both old and new, is the relationship between economics and environmental values. The interconnections between environmental concerns and resource allocation, poverty, and economic systems have been examined in some detail. Sagoff's (1988) *Economy of the Earth* helped stimulate interest in considering the links between economic valuation and traditional environmental values (see also Shrader-Frechette, 1984; and Sagoff, 2004). Sagoff argued that we should not confuse the decisions made as citizens, with political values in mind, from those made as consumers, with preferences in mind. The practical roots of environmental ethics have also reasserted themselves with an increased interest in the role of civic engagement and active political participation in the development of environmental policy and the installation of environmental values in that policy (see, for example, Norton, 2005; Curtin, 1999).

Since the debates between Muir and Pinchot, much of the discussion in environmental ethics has focused, implicitly or explicitly, on wilderness and reasons for preservation of the wild. The wilderness experience has captivated many environmental philosophers, and its role as a counterpoint to civilization has served as a motivating force for many developments in environmental ethics (for just a few of the many examples, see Leopold, 1949; Naess, 1973;

Callicott, 1989; Rolston, 1988). However, while there is general agreement that wilderness plays an important role some have worried that an excessive reliance on the wilderness paradigm in generating an environmental ethic is a mistake (Callicott and Nelson, 1998; Cronon, 1995). Shifting away from an exclusive focus on the wilderness paradigm provides a lens through which several different developments in environmental ethics might be viewed.

The wilderness paradigm may have disturbing cultural implications. As some (Guha, 1989; Shiva, 1998) have pointed out the focus on wilderness may import a set of cultural values and amount to a form of cultural imperialism. Reallocating local resources to promote these “environmental” ends may well undermine the traditional and perhaps sustainable practices of local people. Sustainability, sustainable development, and the relation between sustainability and economic valuation have factored in a tremendous range of literature (Norton, 2003, 2005; Curtin 1999; Solow, 1993; Daly, 1996; Daly and Cobb, 1994; Daly and Townsend, 1993). And there is a wide range of related literature on the obligations we owe to future generations and the pressures of population (Parfit, 1984; Partridge, 1981).

Further, in relying on this paradigm, Americans and other “western” environmentalists may fail to recognize not only their cultural bias, but also the dependence of that paradigm on a set of economic conditions as well. Wilderness preservation may not have the priority in areas where the dominant concerns involve subsistence agriculture and other issues associated with sustainable development.

Relying on this paradigm also may artificially separate humankind from the non-human world, making a stark contrast between human and nature, between the cultural and the natural. This distinction between the natural and the artificial or artefactual has also spawned a fair bit of

literature, both in terms of the distinction itself and in terms of important worries about the ethical import of restoration (Cronon, 1995; Katz, 1992b; Gobster and Hall, 2000).

Not all of our environmental concerns are tied to wilderness paradigms, but does wilderness, in the sense of being independent of human involvement, constitute an ideal? We might say that independence from human interference is a good in its own right, perhaps even the good on which environmental ethics is focused. However, then one might ask, does the restoration of nature in some sense entail a domination or degradation of nature? It seems important to restore nature that has been degraded, whether through human (anthropogenic) or nonhuman causes. However it also seems that in restoring nature, natural settings, species, or even ecosystems we have changed, perhaps reduced, the value of what we have restored (Chapman, 2006; Gobster, 2000; Gunn, 1991; Heyd, 2005; Elliot, 1982, 1997; Katz, 1992; McKibben, 1989; Palamar, 2006; Rolston, 1994b). While redeveloping an ecosystem, previously degraded or destroyed through strip mining, for example, is the redeveloped ecosystem less valuable, solely because of its anthropogenic nature? In restoring nature have we sullied what is natural? Is there something wrong in those actions or is it just the best of our bad options, or is there no harm in restorative practices at all? These questions clearly link to the concerns raised with respect to “the natural.” Moreover, as restoration is certainly not limited to rural environments, it brings us to another exciting new area of research in environmental ethics.

Another recent focus of concern, shifting away from the wilderness paradigm is a set of environmental issues associated with urban life and urban development. The subject of a special 2003 symposium in the *Journal of Social Philosophy* (Vol 34: 1-90), the role of environmental values in our ever more urbanized world has received an increasing amount of attention (Light, 2001, 2003; Heynen, et al. 2006).

There are clear overlaps between environmental ethics and the ever growing field of environmental justice. The costs of environmental malfeasance and the unequal distribution of those costs have led to increased interest in the intersection of environmental ethics and environmental justice (Schlossberg, 1999; Shrader-Frechette, 2005; Sandler and Pezulla, 2007; Pellow and Brulle, 2005). Indeed, some would take these two fields to be thoroughly integrated. Unfortunately in these pages I will not be able to provide comprehensive coverage of cognate issues in environmental and social justice.

For a more substantial examination of the exciting new developments in environmental ethics I would direct readers to the “additional sources,” noted below. While, compared with much of philosophy, environmental ethics is a remarkably young field, it has interconnections not only with some of the deepest and oldest questions of value theory, but also with some of the most important and far reaching practical problems of our day.

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Additional Sources

Since the 1970s a wide range of publications have advanced positions in environmental ethics. Apart from the monographs noted above, there are many anthologies, both topical and pedagogical in focus, and an ever increasing collection of journals.

While important work in environmental ethics has appeared in a range of more general philosophy journals (including *The Journal of Philosophy*, *The Monist*, *Inquiry*, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, *Ethics*, and *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*), several journals devoted to environmental matters have appeared, starting with *Environmental Ethics* in 1979. More recently formed dedicated journals include *Environmental Values*; *Ethics and the Environment*; *Ethics, Place, and Environment*; and *Environmental Politics*.

Notable among anthologies is Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III's *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003). The Light and Rolston volume contains Clair Palmer's concise "An Overview of Environmental Ethics" (15-37), to which this author is very much indebted. Among the pedagogically oriented collections should be included Louis Pojman (ed.) *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application* (Wadsworth, 2004), now in its fourth edition; Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce (eds.) *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book* (Thompson, 2002), now in its third edition; David Schmidtz and Elizabeth Willott (eds.) *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works* (Oxford University Press, 2002); Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren, and John Clark (eds.), *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (Prentice Hall, 4th ed. 2005); Joseph R. DesJardins *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, 4th ed. (Wadsworth, 2006); and Peter S. Wenz, *Environmental Ethics Today*, 4th ed (Oxford, 2001).

A wide range of online sources have also become available. In the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Andrew Brennan and Yeuk-Sze Lo provide an excellent and concise overview of the field as of 2002 (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/>). Also notable are the collections of material found at The University of North Texas (<http://www.cep.unt.edu/>), and at the “Ethics Updates” pages maintained by the University of San Diego (<http://ethics.sandiego.edu/>). The two largest professional associations, The International Society for Environmental Ethics (<http://www.cep.unt.edu/ISEE.html>), and the International Association for Environmental Philosophy (<http://www.environmentalphilosophy.org/>), also maintain their own excellent online resources, and provide links to yet more.