

# MORALITY'S PROGRESS

*Essays on Humans,  
Other Animals,  
and the Rest of Nature*

DALE JAMIESON

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question of killing some animals in order to make room for others who would also be unjustly confined. This is the least that morality demands. These conclusions, contrary to what some may think, do not turn on any particular analysis of wild and captive. For those who want to reject these conclusions there is no substitute for doing the hard work of confronting the moral arguments that I have given.

## Animal Liberation is an Environmental Ethic

In an influential essay first published in 1980, J. Baird Callicott argued that animal liberation and environmental ethics are distinct and inconsistent perspectives.<sup>1</sup> Callicott had harsh words both for animals and animal liberationists. He referred to domestic animals as “living artifacts” and claimed that it is “incoherent” to speak of their natural behaviour (1980/1989: 30). He wrote that it is a “logical impossibility” to liberate domestic animals and that “the value commitments of the humane movement seem at bottom to betray a world-denying or rather a life-loathing philosophy” (p. 31). All of this is in distinction to Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic” which, according to Callicott, is holistic: “[It] locates ultimate value in the biotic community and assigns differential moral value to the constitutive individuals relatively to that standard” (p. 58). “Some bacteria, for example, may be of greater value to the health or economy of nature than dogs, and thus command more respect” (p. 39). From the perspective of the land ethic, “inanimate entities such as oceans and lakes, mountains, forests, and wetlands are assigned a greater value than individual animals” (p. 58). While Callicott grants that a variety of environmental ethics may exist, he suggests that “the extent to which an ethical system resembles Leopold’s land ethic might be used . . . as a criterion to measure the extent to which it is or is not of the environmental sort” (pp. 30–1). Animal liberation

This essay began life as a lecture to the Gruppo di Studio “Scienza & Etica” at the Politecnico di Milano in Italy. Subsequent versions were presented in the Faculty of Philosophy at Monash University in Australia, to an environmental ethics seminar in Oxford, and to an environmental ethics conference in London. I have benefited from the probing questions and comments of many people, especially Paola Cavalieri, Roger Crisp, Lori Gruen, Alan Holland, Steve Kramer, and Rae Langton.

<sup>1</sup> 1980/1989. Callicott expresses some misgivings about this essay in the introduction to his 1989 and in a new preface to the original paper published in Robert Elliot’s (1995) collection.

fails to satisfy this criterion since, according to Callicott, animal liberation and conventional anthropocentric ethics "have much more in common with one another than either has with environmental or land ethics" (p. 57).<sup>2</sup>

The idea that environmental ethics and animal liberation are conceptually distinct, and that animal liberation has more in common with conventional morality than with environmental ethics, would come as a surprise to many people concerned about the human domination of nature. For one thing, environmentalists and animal liberationists have many of the same enemies: those who dump poisons into the air and water, drive whales to extinction, or clear rainforests to create pastures for cattle, to name just a few. Moreover, however one traces the history of the environmental movement, it is clear that it comes out of a tradition that expresses strong concern for animal suffering and autonomy. Certainly both the modern environmental and animal liberation movements spring from the same sources in the post-World War II period: a disgust with the sacrifice of everything else to the construction of military machines, the creation of a culture which views humans and other animals as replaceable commodities, and the prevailing faith in the ability of science to solve all of our problems. It is no coincidence that, in the United States at least, both of these movements developed during the same period. Peter Singer's first article on animal liberation (1973) appeared less than three years after the first Earth Day. Even today people who identify themselves as environmentalists are likely to be as concerned about spotted owls as old growth forests and to think that vegetarianism is a good idea. Many people are members of both environmental and animal liberation organizations and feel no tension between these commitments.

This is not to say that there are no differences between environmentalists and animal liberationists.<sup>3</sup> Such differences exist, but so do deep divisions among environmentalists and among animal liberationists. My thesis is that the divisions within each of these groups are just as deep and profound as the differences between them. Leopold's land ethic is one environmental ethic on offer, but so is animal liberation. The superiority of one to the other must be demonstrated by argument, not by appeal to paradigm cases or established by definitional fiat.

I begin by briefly tracing the history of the split between environmental ethics and animal liberation, go on to sketch a theory of value that I think is

<sup>2</sup> For Leopold's land ethic see Leopold (1949).

<sup>3</sup> The Norwegian government has appealed to theoretical differences between environmental ethics and animal liberation in its attempt to reconcile its reputation as an environmental leader with its flouting of the international consensus against whaling.

implicit in animal liberation, and explain how this theory is consistent with strong environmental commitments. I conclude with some observations about problems that remain.

### 1. ORIGINS

I have already mentioned Callicott's role in setting environmental ethics against animal liberation. However, he does not deserve all the blame. In order to see why we must recover some recent history.

The origins of the contemporary environmental movement were deeply entangled in the counter-culture of the 1960s. Generally in the counter-culture there was a feeling that sex was good, drugs were liberating, opposing the government was a moral obligation, and that new values were needed to vindicate, sustain, and encourage this shift in outlook and behaviour. In 1967 (during the "Summer of Love" in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury), the UCLA historian Lynn White Jr. published an essay in which he argued that the dominant tendencies in the Judaeo-Christian tradition were the real source of our environmental problems. Only by overthrowing these traditions and embracing the suppressed insights of other traditions could we come to live peacefully with nature.

This view gained philosophical expression in a 1973 paper by Richard Routley. Routley produced a series of cases about which he thought we have moral intuitions that cannot be accounted for by traditional ethics. Routley asked us to consider a "last man" whose final act is to destroy such natural objects as mountains and salt marshes. Although these natural objects would not be appreciated by conscious beings even if they were not destroyed, Routley thought that it would still be wrong for the "last man" to destroy them. These intuitions were widely shared, and many environmental philosophers thought that they could only be explained by supposing that non-sentient nature has mind-independent value.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the 1970s there was a great deal of discussion about whether a new environment ethic was needed, possible, or defensible. In a widely discussed 1981 paper Tom Regan clearly distinguished what he called an "environmental ethic" from a "management ethic". In order to be an environmental ethic, according to Regan, a theory must hold that there are non-conscious

<sup>4</sup> The intuition that it would be wrong for the last man to destroy non-sentient natural features can also be explained by concerns about character or by appeal to transworld evaluations. For the first strategy see Hill (1983); for the second strategy see Elliot (1985). Routley himself adopted a version of the second strategy.

beings that have "moral standing". Passmore had argued in his 1974 book that such an ethic was not required to explain our duties concerning nature, but in a 1973 paper Naess had already begun the attempt to develop a new ethic that he called Deep Ecology.<sup>5</sup>

At the time Callicott was writing his 1980/1989 essay the very possibility of an environmental ethic was up for grabs. Animal liberationist views, on the other hand, were already well-developed and comparatively well-established. Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975/2001) and Stephen Clark's *The Moral Status of Animals* were in print, and Bernard Rollin's *Animal Rights and Human Morality* was about to go to press. *Animals, Men and Morals*, the influential anthology edited by Stanley Godlovitch, Rosalind Godlovitch, and John Harris had appeared in 1972, and the first edition of *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, edited by Regan and Singer, appeared in 1976. By 1980 the philosophical literature already included contributions by such philosophers as Thomas Auxter, Cora Diamond, Joel Feinberg, Colin McGinn, Mary Midgley, Timothy Sprigge, and Donald VanDeVeer, in addition to those mentioned above. Callicott hoped to gain a hearing for a new environmental ethic by rejecting as inadequate and denouncing as conceptually conservative both what he calls "ethical humanism" and "humane moralism". Ethical theory should become a "triangular affair", with the land ethic as the third player.

Callicott is correct in pointing out the close affinities between animal liberationist ethics and traditional ethics. There are utilitarian, Kantian, libertarian, Aristotelian, and communitarian animal liberationists. Animal liberationists typically accept the projects of traditional Western ethics, then go on to argue that in their applications they have arbitrarily and inconsistently excluded non-human animals. Part of the explanation for the comparative conceptual conservatism of animal liberationist philosophers is that, for the most part, they have been educated in the mainstream traditions of Anglo-American philosophy, while environmental ethicists often have been educated outside the mainstream and are influenced by continental philosophers, "process" philosophers, or theologians. The split between environmental ethics and animal liberation is as much cultural and sociological as philosophical.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the weakness of the argument and the caricaturing of animal lib-

<sup>5</sup> Other important early publications directed towards developing a new environmental ethic include Stone (1974) and Rolston III (1975).

<sup>6</sup> Obviously in part this is an empirical claim that would require systematic investigation to establish fully. I believe that it is true based on my general knowledge of the development of the field.

erationist views, Callicott's 1980 article was remarkably influential within the environmental ethics community.<sup>7</sup> Some of Callicott's themes were echoed by Mark Sagoff in an influential 1984 paper.<sup>8</sup> Sagoff charged that if animal liberationists had their way they would institute such anti-environmentalist policies as contraceptively eliminating wild animals so that fewer would suffer and die, converting wilderness areas into farms where animals could be well taken care of, and adopting starving deer as pets. Sagoff concludes that "[a] humanitarian ethic—an appreciation not of nature, but of the welfare of animals—will not help us to understand or to justify an environmental ethic."<sup>9</sup>

By the early 1980s it seemed clear that environmental ethics and animal liberation were conceptually distinct. To be an environmental ethicist one had to embrace new values. One had to believe that some non-sentient entities have inherent value; that these entities include such collectives as species, ecosystems, and the community of the land; and that value is mind-independent in the following respect: even if there were no conscious beings, aspects of nature would still be inherently valuable. What remained to be seen was whether any plausible ethic satisfied these conditions.

## 2. CANONICAL ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Once it became clear what was required for membership in the club of environmental ethicists, most animal liberationists did not want to join. Some began to fling Callicott's rhetoric back in his direction. In 1983 Tom Regan wrote that

The implications of [Leopold's maxim] include the clear prospect that the individual may be sacrificed for the greater biotic good . . . It is difficult to see how the notion of rights of the individual could find a home within a view that . . . might be fairly dubbed "environmental fascism" . . . Environmental fascism and the rights view are like oil and water: they don't mix.<sup>10</sup>

Almost immediately some environmental philosophers abandoned one or more of the conditions that had been thought to be definitive of an environmental ethic. By 1986 Callicott himself had given up his belief in the mind-

<sup>7</sup> As Edward Johnson (1981) points out in his neglected but definitive refutation, Callicott seems to think that all animal liberationists are hedonistic utilitarians; he neglects to distinguish pain being evil from its being evil all things considered; and his claims about the ecological consequences of widespread vegetarianism are downright preposterous.

<sup>8</sup> Sagoff (1984/1993).

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* 92. However, it is important to note that Sagoff explicitly states that he is not advocating environmentalism in this article (p. 87).

<sup>10</sup> Regan (1983: 361–2).

independence of value and had adopted a value theory that he attributed to Hume and Darwin.<sup>11</sup> Collectives such as species, ecosystems, and the land have inherent value, according to Callicott, but the existence of valuers is a necessary condition for their having value.

Holmes Rolston III emerged as the most prominent spokesperson for the old-time religion. He vigorously attacked Callicott for having departed from the true path and having abandoned the idea that "nature is of value in itself" (1992). The philosophy that Rolston has developed satisfies all of the conditions for an environmental ethic: value is mind-independent and exists at several different levels including those of "higher" animals, organisms, species, and ecosystems (1988). Although Rolston has an environmental ethic by anyone's standards, it has not commanded widespread assent. As it has become clearer in his work what mind-independent values would have to be like, there have been few who have been willing to follow him. When the normative implications of his views have been made explicit—that, for example, we should sometimes let animals suffer when we could easily intervene, that on many occasions we should prefer the lives of plants to those of animals, that we have a positive duty not to be vegetarian—few have been willing to embrace his philosophy.

During the 1980s the new environmental ethic that Routley wanted was, to some extent, developed. The problem was that not many philosophers found it plausible. In recent years environmental philosophers have begun to return to more conventional views in value theory. But this makes one wonder what happened to the titanic struggle between environmental ethics and animal liberation which some seem to think continues unabated.

### 3. TOGETHER AGAIN?

Callicott has expressed regret for the rhetoric of his 1980 essay and, by his own lights anyway, attempted a reconciliation between animal liberation and environmental ethics. In an essay published in the late 1980s Callicott wrote that "[a]nimal liberation and environmental ethics may thus be united under a common theoretical umbrella" (1989: 59), but in the same article he wrote that there is nothing wrong with slaughtering "meat animals" for food so long as

<sup>11</sup> "In my own papers, going back to 1979, I have also affirmed the importance of the value question in environmental ethics and early on endorsed the postulate of nature's objective, intrinsic value . . . After thinking very hard, during the mid-1980s, about the ontology of value finally I came reluctantly to the conclusion that intrinsic value cannot exist objectively" (Callicott 1992a: 131–2). For further discussion of Callicott's value theory, see Norton (1995a); Callicott (1996); and Lee (1996).

this is not in violation "of a kind of evolved and unspoken social contract between man and beast" (p. 56) and claimed that animal liberationist philosophers must favour protecting "innocent vegetarian animals from their carnivorous predators" (p. 57). When his 1980 essay was reprinted in his 1989 book, Callicott wrote that "this is the one [of all the essays reprinted] that I would most like to revise (cancel) for this publication" (p. 6). When the same essay was reprinted in a 1995 collection Callicott wrote that "I now think that we do in fact have duties and obligations . . . to domestic animals", and that "a vegetarian diet is indicated by the land ethic". However he also says, puzzlingly enough, that "the land ethic leaves our traditional human morality quite intact and pre-emptive".<sup>12</sup>

I suspect that what is going on in part is that Calliott senses that, since he is no longer a canonical environmental ethicist, the differences between his views and those of animal liberationists cannot be as philosophically deep as they once appeared. Yet the revolutionary idea, rooted in the culture of the 1960s, that what we need is a new environmental ethic is one that dies hard. In the next section I will show how an animal liberationist ethic, rooted in traditional views of value and obligation, can take non-sentient nature seriously. A deep green ethic does not require strange views about value.

### 4. ANIMAL LIBERATION AND THE VALUE OF NATURE

In my view any plausible ethic must address concerns about both animals and the environment. (Indeed, I think that it is an embarrassment to philosophy that those who are most influential within the discipline typically ignore these issues or treat them as marginal.) Some issues that directly concern animals are obviously of great environmental import as well. The production and consumption of beef may well be the most important of them.<sup>13</sup> The addiction to beef that is characteristic of people in the industrialized countries is not only a moral atrocity for animals but also causes health problems for consumers, reduces grain supplies for the poor, precipitates social divisions in developing countries, contributes to climate change, leads to the conversion of forests to pasture lands, is a causal factor in overgrazing, and is implicated in the destruction of native plants and animals. If there is one issue on which animal liberationists and environmentalists should speak with a single voice it is on

<sup>12</sup> These quotations are from Callicott's new preface to "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair", in Elliot (1995: 29–30).

<sup>13</sup> The case for this has been very convincingly argued by Jeremy Rifkin (1992).

this issue. To his credit Callicott appears to have recognized this, but many environmental philosophers have not.

In addition to there being clear issues on which animal liberationists and environmentalists should agree, it is also important to remember that non-human animals, like humans, live in environments. One reason to oppose the destruction of wilderness and the poisoning of nature is that these actions harm both human and non-human animals. I believe that one can go quite far towards protecting the environment solely on the basis of concern for animals.

Finally, and most importantly, environmental ethicists have no monopoly on valuing such collectives as species, ecosystems, and the community of the land. It has only seemed that they do because parties to the dispute have not attended to the proper distinctions.

One relevant distinction, noted by Callicott in different language, is between the source and content of values.<sup>14</sup> We can be sentientist with respect to the source of values, yet non-sentientist with respect to their content. Were there no sentient beings there would be no values but it doesn't follow from this that only sentient beings are valuable.<sup>15</sup>

The second important distinction is between primary and derivative value. Creatures who can suffer, take pleasure in their experiences, and whose lives go better or worse from their own point of view are of primary value. Failure to value them involves failures of objectivity or impartiality in our reasoning or sentiments.

Suppose that I recognize that I matter morally in virtue of instantiating some particular property, but I withhold the judgement that some other creature matters morally although I recognize that this other creature also instantiates this property. On the face of it, I hold inconsistent beliefs, though they can be made consistent by conceptual gerrymandering. Just as I can appear to assert  $P \ \& \ \sim P$  but limit the interpretation of  $P$  to "then or there" and  $\sim P$  to "now or here", so I can say that a particular property is morally relevant only if it is instantiated in me or my close relatives. However, such consistency is not worth having since it rests on an absurd view of how morally relevant properties function. Indeed, it seems to strip them of their significance. Contrary to what has been granted, what makes me morally significant in this case

<sup>14</sup> John O'Neill (1993, ch. 2) also makes a similar distinction.

<sup>15</sup> Here we border on some important issues in philosophy of mind that cannot be discussed here. For present purposes I assume that sentience and consciousness determine the same class, and that there is something that it is like to be a "merely conscious" (as well as self-conscious) entity, although a "merely conscious" entity cannot reflect on what it is like to be itself. I say a little more about these matters in Jamieson (1983b). See also various papers collected in Bekoff and Jamieson (1996b).

is not instantiating the property under consideration but rather instantiating the property of being me or my kin. Similar points apply with respect to the sentiments. If I fail to value a creature who instantiates a property in virtue of which I matter morally, then the reach and power of my sentiments are in some way defective. Whether it is reason or sentiment that is involved, in both cases I look out into the world and see creatures who instantiate properties that bestow moral value, yet I deny moral value to those who are not me or biologically close to me. It is natural to say about these cases that I lack objectivity or impartiality. Sidgwick would have chided me for failing to take the point of view of the universe.

Non-sentient entities are not of primary value because they do not have a perspective from which their lives go better or worse. Ultimately the value of non-sentient entities rests on how they fit into the lives of sentient beings. But although non-sentient entities are not of primary value, their value can be very great and urgent. In some cases their value may even trump the value of sentient entities. The distinction between primary and derivative value is not a distinction in degree of value, but rather in the ways different entities can be valuable.

A third distinction is that between intrinsic and non-intrinsic value. Before explaining how I use this distinction, I want to be clear about how I do not use it. G. E. Moore (1922) inaugurated a tradition in which some entities were supposed to be of value because of properties intrinsic to themselves, while other entities were of value because of properties that were extrinsic to them (i.e. relational properties). At first glance it might be thought that this is the same distinction as that between primary and derivative value. What underwrites the value of a sentient creature is that its life can go better or worse, and these properties may be thought to be intrinsic to the creature. But whether a creature's life goes well or ill depends on its relation to the world. These value-relevant, world-relating properties are not intrinsic in Moore's sense. A further reason for avoiding Moore's distinction is that it invites conflating the source and content of values. One and the same property may appear intrinsic under one description and extrinsic under another. For example, the properties that make a creature internally goal-directed may appear intrinsic, but when these properties are described as value-conferring they may appear extrinsic because they require the existence of sentient beings in order to be of value. Various responses can be made to these concerns, but I think that enough has been said to show at least that Moore's distinction is troublingly difficult to make out.

The distinction that I think is useful is that between intrinsically and

non-intrinsically valuing something. I speak of "intrinsically valuing" rather than "intrinsic value" because it makes clear that the intended distinction is in the structure of valuing rather than in the sorts of things that are valued.<sup>16</sup> We intrinsically value something when we value it for its own sake. Making the distinction in this way also makes clear that one and the same entity can be valued both intrinsically and non-intrinsically at different times, in different contexts, by different valuers, or even by the same valuer at the same time. For example, I can intrinsically value Sean (i.e. value her for her own sake) yet non-intrinsically value her as an efficient mail-delivering device (i.e. for how she conduces to my ends).

Collecting these distinctions we can entertain the possibility that the content of our values may include our intrinsically valuing an entity that is of derivative value, and that this valuing may be urgent and intense, even trumping something of primary value. The obvious candidates for satisfying this description are works of art. Many of us would say that the greatest works of art are very valuable indeed. We value them intrinsically, yet ultimately an account of their value devolves into understandings about their relations to people (e.g. artists, audiences, potential audiences, those who know of their existence, etc.).

During World War II Churchill evacuated art from London to the countryside in order to protect it from the blitz. Resources devoted to this evacuation could have been allocated to life-saving. Although he may not have represented the decision in this way, Churchill made the judgement that evacuating the art was more important than saving some number of human lives. I don't know whether he was correct in his specific calculation, but he might well have been. Quantity of life is not the only thing that matters; quality of life matters too, and it is to this concern that Churchill's judgement was responsive.

A similar point could be made concerning the destruction of parts of the old city of Dubrovnik by Serbian gunners. I believe that over the course of human history the destruction of the old city would be a greater crime than some measure of death and destruction wrought upon the people of Dubrovnik. Indeed, I believe that some of the people of Dubrovnik share this view. This particular judgement need not be shared, however, in order to accept the basic point that I am making.

Non-sentient features of the environment are of derivative value, but they can be of extreme value and can be valued intrinsically. There are geological

<sup>16</sup> This of course is not to deny that some things are better candidates for intrinsically valuing than others. For further discussion see Jamieson (1994).

features of the Dolomites that are profoundly important to preserve. Rivers and forests can have the same degree of importance. Indeed, there may be features of the Italian natural environment that are as important to preserve as the city of Venice.

The main point I am making here is that many people have traditional evaluational outlooks yet value works of art intrinsically and intensely. There is no great puzzle about how they can both intrinsically value persons and works of art. Similarly, animal liberationists can value nature intrinsically and intensely, even though they believe that non-sentient nature is of derivative value. Because what is of derivative value can be valued intensely and intrinsically, animal liberationists can join environmental ethicists in fighting for the preservation of wild rivers and wilderness areas. Indeed, rightly understood, they can even agree with environmental ethicists that these natural features are valuable for their own sakes.

But at this point an objection may arise. The most that I have shown is that non-sentient entities can be intrinsically valued. I have not shown that they ought to be intrinsically valued. Canonical environmentalists can give a reason for intrinsically valuing non-sentient nature that animal liberationists cannot: aspects of non-sentient nature are valuable independently of any conscious being.

The objection is correct in that environmental ethicists who believe in mind-independent value can appeal to normative high ground that is not available to those philosophers who do not believe in mind-independent value. However, it should be noted that even if the value of non-sentient nature were mind-independent, it would not immediately follow that non-sentient nature should be valued intrinsically or that its value would be of greater urgency than that of other entities. But putting that point aside, the fundamental problem with this attempt to seize the normative heights is that they are a mirage. There is no mind-independent value, but none is required in order for nature to be valued intrinsically. Still, having said this, some account needs to be given of how my kind of environmental philosopher moves from the claim that wilderness can be intrinsically valued to the claim that wilderness ought to be intrinsically valued.

First, we should see that this question plunges us into the familiar if difficult problem of how first-order value claims can be defended and justified.<sup>17</sup> In order to give an account of this, very close attention would have to be paid to our everyday moral practices and our strategies of defence, offence,

<sup>17</sup> I have discussed the relation between moral practice and moral theorizing in Jamieson (1991a). See also Weston (1985).

justification, and capitulation. I doubt that very much of general interest can be said about this. But as a first approximation, we might say that in order to see how environmentalist claims are justified, we should look at the practices of persuasion that environmentalists employ. Consider an example.

Many people think of deserts as horrible places that are not worth protecting. I disagree. I value deserts intrinsically and think you should too. How do I proceed? One thing I might do is take you camping with me. We might see the desert's nocturnal inhabitants, the plants that have adapted to these conditions, the shifting colours of the landscape as the day wears on, and the rising of the moon on stark features of the desert. Together we might experience the feel of the desert wind, hear the silence of the desert, and sense its solitude. You may become interested in how it is that this place was formed, what sustains it, how its plants and animals make a living. As you learn more about the desert, you may come to see it differently and to value it more. This may lead you to spend more time in the desert, seeing it in different seasons, watching the spring with its incredible array of flowers turn to the haunting stillness of summer. You might start reading some desert literature, from the monastic fathers of the church to Edward Abbey. Your appreciation would continue to grow.

But there is no guarantee that things will go this way. You may return from your time in the desert hot, dirty, hungry for a burger, thirsty for a beer, and ready to volunteer your services to the US Army Corps of Engineers (whose *raison d'être* seems to be to flood as much of the earth's surface as possible). Similarly, some people see Venice as a dysfunctional collection of dirty old buildings, find Kant boring and wrong, and hear Mahler as both excessively romantic and annoyingly dissonant. More experience only makes matters worse.

If someone fails to appreciate the desert, Venice, or Mahler, they need not have made any logical error. Our evaluative responses are not uniquely determined by our constitution or the world. This fact provokes anxiety in some philosophers. They fear that unless value is mind-independent, anything goes. Experience machines are as good as experience, Disney-desert is the same as the real thing, and the Spice Girls and Mahler are colleagues in the same business (one strikingly more successful than the other). Those who suffer this anxiety confuse a requirement for value with how value is constituted. Value is mind-dependent, but it is things in the world that are valuable or not. The fact that we draw attention to features of objects in our evaluative discourse is the common property of all theories of value.

These anxious philosophers also fail to appreciate how powerful psychological and cultural mechanisms can be in constituting objectivity. Culture,

history, tradition, knowledge, and convention mediate our constitutions and the world. Culture, together with our constitutions and the world, determines our evaluative practices. Since the world and our constitutions alone are not sufficient for determining them, common values should be seen in part as cultural achievements rather than simply as true reports about the nature of things or expressions of what we are essentially. Evaluative practices are in the domain of negotiation and collective construction, as well as reflection and recognition. But the fact that these practices are in part constructed does not mean that they cannot be rigid and compelling. We can be brought to appreciate Venice, Mahler, or the desert by collectively and interactively educating our sensibilities, tastes, and judgements, but such change often involves a deep reorientation of how we see the world. When I try to get you to appreciate the desert I direct your attention to objects in your visual field, but I am trying to change your way of seeing and thinking and your whole outlook towards nature. I am also trying to change our relationship from one of difference to one of solidarity. Similarly, when advocates of the enterprise society point to missed opportunities for profit and competitiveness, they are trying to educate our sensibilities as well as referring us to economic facts. Their descriptions of how economies work are to a great extent stories about the social world they want to construct.

What I have argued in this section is that animal liberationists can hold many of the same normative views as environmental ethicists. This is because many of our most important issues involve serious threats to both humans and animals as well as to the non-sentient environment; because animal liberationists can value nature as a home for sentient beings; and because animal liberationists can embrace environmental values as intensely as environmental ethicists, though they see them as derivative rather than primary values. What animal liberationists cannot do is claim the moral high ground of the mind-independent value of nature which, since the early days of the movement environmental ethicists have attempted to secure. But, as I have argued, this moral high ground is not there to be claimed anyway. Those who are deep green should not despair because some of our environmental values are to a great extent socially constructed. Constructivism is a story about how our practices come to be, not about how real, rigid, or compelling they are.

Still, many will think that this is a flabby ethic that leans too far in the direction of subjectivism, relativism, constructivism, or some other postmodern heresy. One way of making their point is to return to the distinction between primary and derivative value. Imagine two people: Robin, who thinks that trees are of primary value, and Ted, who denies that humans or gorillas are included in this class. What kind of a mistake are Robin and Ted making? If

I say they are making a conceptual mistake then I will be dismissing some very influential views as non-starters; if I say they are making a normative mistake then my view of what has primary and derivative value will turn out to be just as subjective as my view that deserts are valuable, and therefore just as vulnerable to other people's lack of responsiveness to my concerns.

I want to reiterate that first-order value judgements can be both rigid and compelling, even though to some extent they are relative and socially constructed. But having said this, I want to reject the idea that Robin and Ted are making a logical or grammatical error. Robin, Ted, and I have a real normative dispute about how to determine what is of primary value. At the same time this dispute has a different feel to it than first-order normative disputes (e.g. the dispute about whether or not to value the desert). We can bring out this difference by saying as a first approximation that someone who fails to value deserts lacks sensitivity while someone who fails to value people or gorillas lacks objectivity. Although in both cases the dispute involves how we see ourselves in relation to the world, to a great extent different considerations are relevant in each case. Because questions about primary values are at the centre of how we take the world, abstract principles (e.g. those that concern objectivity and impartiality) are most relevant to settling these disputes. Differences about whether or not to value deserts, on the other hand, turn on a panoply of considerations, some of which I have already discussed.<sup>18</sup>

In this section I have argued that there is a great deal of theoretical convergence between animal liberationists and environmental ethicists. There is also a strong case for convergence at the practical and political level. The environmental movement has numbers and wealth while the animal liberation movement has personal commitment. Both environmental and animal issues figure in the choices people make in their daily lives, but they are so glaringly obvious in the case of animals that they cannot be evaded. Anyone who eats or dresses makes ethical choices that affect animals. Refraining from eating meat makes one part of a social movement: rather than being an abstainer, one is characterized positively as "a vegetarian". While other consumer choices also have profound environmental consequences, somehow they are less visible than the choice of whether to eat meat. This is part of the reason why self-identified environmentalists are often less motivated to save energy, reduce consumption, or refrain from purchasing toxic substances than animal

<sup>18</sup> There is much more to say about these questions than I can say here. However, it may help to locate my views if I invoke the Quinian image of the web of belief in which what is at the centre of the web is defended in different ways from what is at the periphery, not because such beliefs enjoy some special epistemological status, but because of the density of their connections to other beliefs.

liberationists are to seek out vegetarian alternatives.<sup>19</sup> Not only is animal liberation an environmental ethic, but animal liberation can also help to empower the environmental movement.

##### 5. REMAINING CONUNDRUMS AND COMPLEXITIES

Where Callicott saw a "triangular affair" and Sagoff saw "divorce", I see the potential for Hollywood romance. It might be objected that my rosy view only survives because I have not dealt in detail with specific issues that divide animal liberationists and environmental ethicists. For example, there are many cases in which environmentalists may favour "culling" (a polite term for "killing") some animals for the good of a population. In other cases environmentalists may favour eliminating a population of common animals in order to preserve a rare plant. Hovering in the background is the image of "hunt saboteurs", trying to stop not only fox hunting but also the fox's hunting.

These difficult issues cannot be resolved here.<sup>20</sup> For present purposes, what is important to see is that while animal liberationists and environmentalists may have different tendencies, the turf doesn't divide quite so neatly as some may think. Consider one example.

Gary Varner (1995), who writes as an animal liberationist, has defended what he calls "therapeutic hunting" in some circumstances. He defines "therapeutic hunting" as "hunting motivated by and designed to secure the aggregate welfare of the target species and/or the integrity of its ecosystem" (ibid. 257). Varner goes on to argue that animal liberationists can support this kind of hunting and that this is the only kind of hunting that environmentalists are compelled to support. What might have appeared as a clear difference between the two groups turns out to be more complex.

In addition to such "convergence" arguments, it is important to recognize the diversity of views that exists within both the environmental and animal liberation movements. Differences between animal liberationists are obvious and on the table. At a practical level animal liberation groups are notorious for their sectarianism. At a philosophical level Tom Regan has spent much of the last fifteen years distinguishing his view from that of Peter Singer's, and I have already mentioned other diverse animal liberationist voices. In recent years the same kinds of divisions have broken out among environmental philosophers, with the rhetoric between Callicott and Rolston (and more

<sup>19</sup> These and related issues are discussed in two reports to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (Jamieson and VanderWerf 1993, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> For my approach to some of these conflicts see Essay 12, and Jamieson (1995a).

recently Callicott and Norton) increasingly resembling that between Singer and Regan. Generally within the community of environmental philosophers there are disagreements about the nature and value of wilderness, the importance of biodiversity, and approaches to controlling population. At a practical level there are disagreements about the very goals of the movement. Some would say that preservation of nature's diversity is the ultimate goal; others would counter that it is the preservation of evolutionary processes that matters. Sometimes people assert both without appreciating that they can come into conflict.<sup>21</sup>

There are many practical issues on which neither animal liberationists nor environmentalists are of one mind. For example, South African, American, and German scientists working for the South African National Parks Board, with support from the Humane Society of the United States, are currently testing contraceptives on elephants in Kruger National Park as an alternative to "culling". The Worldwide Fund for Nature is divided about the project, with its local branch opposing it.<sup>22</sup>

Part of the reason for the divisions within both the environmental and animal liberation movements is that contemporary Western cultures have little by way of positive images of how to relate to animals and nature. Most of us know what is bad—wiping out songbird populations, polluting water ways, causing cats to suffer, contributing to smog, and so on. But when asked to provide a positive vision many people turn to the past, to their conception of what life is like for indigenous peoples, or what it is to be "natural". None of this will do. So long as we have a paucity of positive visions, different views, theories, and philosophies will compete for attention, with no obvious way of resolving some of the most profound disagreements.

These are early days for those who are sensitive to the interests of nature and animals. We are in the midst of a transition from a culture which sees nature as material for exploitation, to one which asserts the importance of living in harmony with nature. It will take a long time to understand exactly what are the terms of the debate. What is important to recognize now is that animal liberationists and environmental ethicists are on the same side in this transition. Animal liberation is not the only environmental ethic, but neither is it some alien ideology. Rather, as I have argued, animal liberation is an environmental ethic and should be welcomed back into the family.

<sup>21</sup> To some degree differences among environmentalists have been obscured by the rise of "managerialist" forms of environmentalism which are favoured by many scientists and are highly visible in the media. For a critique, see Jamieson (1990). For alternative forms of environmentalism, see Sachs (1993).

<sup>22</sup> "Villagers slam 'Pill for Elephants'", *New Scientist*, 9 (1996).

## Ecosystem Health: Some Preventive Medicine

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years the language of health and disease has often been employed in discussions of environmental quality. Many people in everyday life find it natural to speak of environments as healthy or diseased. A Southern California mesa, formerly populated by interesting and subtle forms of life, now bulldozed and covered with tract houses and shopping malls, can strike one as the environmental equivalent of a cancer-wracked body. A highly acidic lake or a beetle-infested forest can strike us in the same way.

Recently the idea of ecosystem health has emerged, not as an admittedly loose idea gleaned from ordinary conversation, but as a fledgling technical term to be deployed in the discourse of environmental science. Some ecologists, philosophers, and policy analysts believe that ecosystem health can be defined in a rigorous way and employed as a management goal in environmental policy.<sup>1</sup>

For reasons that I explain in what follows, I am dubious about the utility of 'ecosystem health' as a technical term. This expression may have something to recommend it as part of a rhetorical strategy, but even here I am suspicious. Environmentalists have all too often been trapped by their own rhetoric, and the movement as a whole has suffered from its use of

Earlier versions of this essay were discussed in seminars at the Hastings Center and the University of Colorado and I thank everyone who participated in these events.

<sup>1</sup> See the papers collected in Costanza *et al.* (1992), which emerged from research funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency.