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Two Distinctions in Environmental Goodness

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ABSTRACT: In her paper, 'Two distinctions in goodness', Korsgaard points out that while a contrast is often drawn between intrinsic and instrumental value there are really two distinctions to be drawn here. One is the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value, the other is that between having value as an end and having value as a means. In this paper I apply this contrast to some issues in environmental philosophy. It has become a commonplace of environmentalism that there are intrinsic values in nature. What is usually meant by this is that some values in nature are not merely instrumental to human ends. By using the notion of intrinsic value to express this philosophers have developed positions which are open to a number of meta-ethical and practical objections. The view that there are objective values in nature, which are independent of human interests, is better served by an environmental philosophy which sees most value in nature as objective, extrinsic value. The resulting environmental ethic is sketched and some apparent difficulties discussed.

KEYWORDS: Intrinsic value, instrumental value, meta-ethics, subjectivism, biocentrism.

1. THE TWO DISTINCTIONS IN GOODNESS

It is a fundamental proposition of most environmental ethics that there are values in nature which are independent of the satisfaction of human desires. These are usually called 'intrinsic values'. Talk of intrinsic value suggests a commitment to an objectivist meta-ethic of the sort familiar from the philosophy of G.E. Moore. But, as has been pointed out by critics of environmental ethics, there are standard and compelling arguments against Moore's intuitionism, among them Mackie's argument from queerness, and the implausibility of the existence of a human faculty of intuition that enables us to recognise intrinsic values. If a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic requires the adoption of an objectivist

meta-ethic of this kind, and if there are good reasons for rejecting such objectivist meta-ethics, it seems that one should conclude that the prospects for a plausible, non-anthropocentric, environmental ethic are bleak.¹ This is not a new dilemma, and there are a number of responses available in the literature. Some offer a theory of intrinsic value in a subjectivist meta-ethic, but, I will argue below, this solution to the problem is inherently unstable.² Instead I contend that the whole difficulty can be avoided by keeping in mind two distinctions in goodness discussed by Christine Korsgaard in a paper of that name (Korsgaard 1983). By failing to notice the two distinctions environmental philosophers have been led to equate every sort of non-instrumental value with intrinsic value. Once one takes into account these two distinctions in goodness it no longer seems necessary to claim that a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic is centrally committed to the existence of intrinsic values in nature. I will argue that, in fact, most values in nature are objectively existing extrinsic values, with one possible exception; the value of the biosphere.³

In her paper, 'Two Distinctions in Goodness', Korsgaard points out that while a contrast is often drawn between intrinsic and instrumental value really two distinctions should be drawn here. One is the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value, the other is the distinction between having value as an end and having value as a means. The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value is a distinction between a thing's having value in itself, and a thing's having value in virtue of a relation to something else. It is the same as the Kantian distinction between unconditioned and conditioned value and is connected with the contrast between intrinsic and extrinsic properties. According to Moore, if a thing has intrinsic value its value must depend on its intrinsic nature (Moore 1922, 256). A thing has extrinsic value if it has value not in itself but in virtue of its relation to something else which has value. Instrumental value is clearly a kind of extrinsic value. A thing has instrumental value in virtue of being a means to bringing into existence something else of value. However, instrumental value is not the only kind of extrinsic value. Korsgaard mentions the possibility of contributive value, which is the value that the part of an intrinsically valuable whole has, in virtue of contributing to the value of the whole. She also mentions the possibility of inherent value, as suggested by C.I. Lewis, which is the value that characterises the object of an intrinsically good experience (Korsgaard 1983, 172; Lewis 1946). The fact that instrumental value is not the only kind of extrinsic value opens up the possibility that the objectivity that environmental ethicists are seeking might be found in some form of non-instrumental, extrinsic value.

A rather different possibility is opened up when one considers the relationship between having intrinsic value and having value as an end. Are all and only things valuable as ends things with intrinsic value? While it seems pretty clear that anything that is intrinsically good is, or ought to be, valued as an end, it is not so clear that all things that have value as ends, rather than as means, are

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intrinsically good. Korsgaard argues that something can be extrinsically good (or to use Kantian terminology, conditionally good) and valued as an end, and she gives as examples a mink coat or a beautiful painting (Korsgaard 1983, 185-6). So it seems that environmental ethicists may have concluded too quickly that because wilderness, for instance, or species preservation, are valued as ends, wilderness and species have intrinsic value. Below we will explore what is involved in valuing something which is extrinsically good as an end. I will argue that, on one interpretation, to say that wilderness is something valued as an end, though extrinsically good, differs merely on a point of terminology from a standard attempt to give a theory of intrinsic value within a subjectivist meta-ethic, and is open to the same difficulties. On another interpretation it amounts to treating most value in nature as objectively existing extrinsic value. But before discussing the interpretation and relative merits of these two possibilities it will be useful to make some observations concerning the relationship between these two distinctions and another distinction; that between objective and subjective value.

As Korsgaard observes, the two distinctions are often collapsed under the influence of a theory which equates things valuable as ends, with intrinsic goods. This theory then leads us to assume that there are just two alternative meta-ethical positions to choose between; subjectivism and objectivism. Either we think that anything that we value as an end is intrinsically good, and we observe that different people value different things as ends, so are led towards subjectivism. Alternatively we assume that, since it is things with intrinsic value which are, or ought to be, treated as ends, we must discover the objective intrinsic values of things. If we take the first option and think that all non-intrinsic value is instrumental, then we are left with an apparently inevitable anthropocentrism. Those things which have intrinsic value are the things valued as ends by us. All other values are means for achieving the things we value as ends. To escape this anthropocentrism it seems that we have to conclude that there are intrinsic values which exist objectively and independently of our recognising them, so non-anthropocentrism becomes identified with objectivism.

In a couple of recent publications John O'Neill has noticed the ambiguity in current philosophical uses of the notion of intrinsic value, and pointed out that there is a third ambiguity (O'Neill 1992, 119-37; 1993, 8-10). He observes, in line with Korsgaard's distinction, that sometimes 'intrinsic value' is used as a synonym for 'non-instrumental value', to designate something which is valued as an end in itself. At other times 'intrinsic value' is used, in the sense Moore intended, to designate the value that an object has in virtue of its intrinsic properties. He observes further that 'intrinsic value' is sometimes used as a synonym for objective value. He then recognises another ambiguity, this time an ambiguity in the notion of instrumental value; that between 'values objects can have in virtue of their relations to other objects' and 'values objects can have in virtue of their relations to human beings' (O'Neill 1993, 14-15). But he himself

sometimes fails to notice that the notion of non-instrumental value is subject to a correlative ambiguity. He says, for instance, that ‘To hold an environmental ethic is to hold that non-human beings have intrinsic value in the first sense: it is to hold that non-human beings are not simply of value as a means to human ends’ (O’Neill 1992, 120). But this conflates having value as a means to human ends with having value as a means to some end, which might not be a human end. We might think that many things in nature have only instrumental value, while thinking that they are means to ends which are not simply human ends. This leaves quite a complex task for the philosopher who wants to get to the heart of the intention behind the claim that there is intrinsic value in nature, and at the same time ground it in a coherent meta-ethic.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES NOT MOOREAN INTRINSIC VALUES

Despite the fact that it has become standard for environmental philosophers to express their commitment to objective value in nature in terms of intrinsic value, most of them cannot have in mind the Moorean notion of intrinsic value, which associates it with intrinsic properties, for the claim that the values that we are concerned with in nature are intrinsic values in this sense is, on the face of it, quite implausible. To see this we need only return to Moore and his definition of intrinsic value. In ‘The Conception of Intrinsic Value’ Moore gives the following definition:

To say that a kind of value is ‘intrinsic’ means merely that the question whether a thing possesses it, and in what degree it possesses it, depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question. (Moore 1922, 260)

As McCloskey noticed quite early on, this definition makes it very unlikely that environmental values are intrinsic values (McCloskey 1980, 80). Take for instance the environmental value of a particular stand of tall trees in Tasmania, or the value of a particular breeding pair of Cape Barren geese, or the value of the Daintree rain-forest. In none of these cases does it seem plausible that the question whether the thing has the value of being worth preserving, or the question of the degree of its preservation value, depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question. Consider the breeding pair of Cape Barren geese. At a certain point in the 1970s Cape Barren geese were in danger of extinction; at that point in time the preservation value of each breeding pair rose extremely high. It was important that no goose’s habitat was disturbed and that no geese were killed. Some twenty years later the population of Cape Barren geese has risen to the point that they are no longer endangered and are sometimes a nuisance. Now the preservation value of any particular pair is fairly low and it may in some circumstances, be better for the environment, if some geese are killed. A significantly larger proportion of projects might now be deemed of

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more significant value than preserving the habitat of one breeding pair of geese than was previously the case. Similar points can be made in the case of the tall trees and the Daintree. If none of Tasmania had been logged, the value of a particular acre of tall trees would be negligible, if a particular acre were the last such acre its value would be immense. If most of Queensland were covered in rainforest the loss of a small portion would be insignificant; the loss of the last area of rainforest is far more momentous. These judgements might be questioned, but it seems central to many environmental campaigns that what is being destroyed is 'the last wild river' or 'the last undisturbed wetland' in a region. The central values that we recognise in nature, rarity and uniqueness, diversity and stability are clearly values based on extrinsic properties of things.

It might be objected that these observations are misguided in that they concentrate on the preservation value of members of a species, or areas of wilderness, whereas what has intrinsic value is the species or wilderness itself. But this thought is largely undermined by the highly relational character of the value of species and wilderness. We are all well aware of the existence of some species which play a valuable role in their native habitats but which become destructive when they are placed in other habitats. Because of this it is very difficult to assign a value to a species per se without considering its environment. How valuable, in the abstract, is the cane toad? In Australia where it threatens the existence of many other species it has a positive disvalue because it threatens diversity and stability. One can imagine a situation, however, where, being the sole predator on an even more prolific beetle, its value would be huge. If the whole world were like Australia there would presumably be an argument for getting rid of this species altogether. If every environment were being threatened by a prolific beetle whose only known predator was the cane toad, it would have incalculable value, because its contribution to the stability and diversity of ecosystems in general would be irreplaceable. When ecologists execrate a particular species it is often because of the damage that they are doing to the integrity, stability and diversity of ecosystems. When they praise others it is often because they make a significant contribution to the diversity of a particular ecosystem. Once again value judgements are clearly based on the extrinsic, rather than the intrinsic properties of the species.

Since intrinsic value is something that a thing has in isolation, emphasis on the intrinsic value of species has the potential to come into conflict with the holistic tendency within environmental philosophy. An interesting example of this is discussed by Anthony Weston (Weston 1992, 236-49). The entire population of the Californian condors was taken into captivity in order to preserve the species, but saving the species by this means was partly at the expense of those programmes of protecting habitat and re-educating people which will ultimately be necessary if the condors are to survive in the wild. From an environmental point of view, much would be lost if condors and other endangered species were only to survive in captivity; what has value is not just

the species, but the species in its natural environment, where it has a beauty, dignity and independence that is lost in captivity.

We should also be wary of talk about the intrinsic value of wilderness. Very few of the judgements that we make are judgements about wilderness per se, they are really judgements about the value of a particular kind of wilderness under particular conditions, and they are really deeply relativised. In fact, the intrinsic value of wilderness is not obvious. Many people would think, for instance, that as things stand, overall value would be enhanced if large tracts of the desert wilderness of central Australia were irrigated and cultivated. It seems reasonable to argue that the addition of cultivated areas to the original world of wilderness enhanced value by adding diversity and enabling the development of cultural values. And as Weston also points out, an overemphasis on the intrinsic value of wilderness can lead in practice to the neglect of the inhabited environment. Instead of energies being directed towards creating urban and rural environments which are compatible with the existence of both humans and many wild animals we preserve wilderness as an escape when it would be more beneficial to change the conditions we feel the need to escape from. Wilderness has value, but how much value it has depends on the total situation in which it exists.

A look at Moore's discussion of the conception of intrinsic value reinforces the inappropriateness of this term for capturing the objectivity of the values which environmentalists find in nature. Moore begins his discussion by suggesting that there are two sorts of objective value, only one of which provides the kind of objectivity really sought by those who want to escape subjectivism. And he explains what he means by way of an example of a kind of objective value which is not intrinsic and not, to his mind, much better than subjective value:

Let us suppose it to be held, for instance, that what is meant by saying that one type of human being A is 'better' than another type B, is merely that the course of evolution tends to increase the numbers of type A and to decrease those of type B. Such a view has, in fact, been often suggested, even if it has not been held in this exact form; it amounts merely to the familiar suggestion that 'better' means 'better fitted to survive.' Obviously 'better,' on this interpretation of its meaning, is in no sense a 'subjective' conception... (Moore 1922, 255-6)

Moore goes on to say that what is objectionable about such a notion of value is that according to it the value of a thing does not depend on its intrinsic nature but on the circumstances and natural laws which obtain. But, as we have seen, real judgements of value in the environmental realm always depend on circumstances, and the obtaining of natural laws, and cannot be interpreted as depending merely on the intrinsic natures of things.

Although they recognise that this Moorean sense of intrinsic value cannot be what is intended in environmental debates, Robert Elliot and John O'Neill are happy to use the term 'intrinsic value', though in ways different to that intended by Moore. Elliot, for instance, gives a subjectivist account of intrinsic value and

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denies that intrinsic value depends on intrinsic properties (Elliot 1992, 139). O'Neill, on the other hand, while he recognises the possibility of the subjectivist's use, prefers to give an objectivist account of value according to which the truth of statements about what is conducive to the flourishing of organisms, or ecosystems, provides the basis for finding objective value in nature (O'Neill 1993, 20). Although these divergences might be a little confusing, philosophers are obviously perfectly entitled to whatever usage they like. As O'Neill points out, there is a subjectivist use of the term 'intrinsic value' which goes back at least to Stevenson, so Moore has no exclusive authority over the use of the term (O'Neill 1993, 11; Stevenson 1944, 174). Nevertheless, I think there are good reasons for following Moore's usage and keeping the term 'intrinsic value' to contrast with extrinsic value, while distinguishing this pair from the instrumental/non-instrumental, or means/ends, contrast. For one thing, this term marks the connection of this kind of value with intrinsic properties.

In the next section I will argue against Elliot and others, that O'Neill is right, and that what environmentalists really wanted when they introduced the notion of intrinsic value was to secure the objectivity of environmental goods. 'Intrinsic value' was, unfortunately, a particularly misleading term to introduce to capture this objectivity, because these goods are extrinsic. In the last section of the paper I will develop the alternative that environmental value is objective, extrinsic value. But, first it seems worthwhile summarising the possibilities:

	Has value as an end		Has value as a means	
	for humans	for non-humans	for humans	for non-humans
Value is intrinsic or unconditioned value.	good-will?	?	X	X
	biosphere?			
Value is extrinsic or conditioned value.	survival painting fur-coat wilderness?	survival	economic growth biosphere?	diversity wilderness?

It is plausible that many of the things which we value as ends only have extrinsic or conditioned value. We can think of conditions under which, despite having the same intrinsic properties, they would not have value, and thus their value cannot depend only on their intrinsic properties. Indeed, once we have made this distinction, it becomes difficult to decide whether any of the things that we value as ends really has intrinsic value. Kant thought that only the good will has this kind of value. Environmentalism might lead one to wonder even about this. If the condition of the existence of one good person was the destruction of

many species of plants and animals would it really be clear that one had to treat the plants and animals only as means to preserving the one good will? The thrust of some holistic ecological thinking suggests, alternatively, that the biosphere is something that we not only value as an end, but which is also intrinsically good. Each living thing acts as though the survival of its kind is a good for it, and while such ends are not conscious ends, we can recognise this as a common end for all living creatures. Having recognised this as the end that each creature strives for, we can also recognise that many things are instrumentally good which are not merely, or even, instrumental for humans; marshes and wet-lands are a good example, some wildernesses another. But while survival is an end for each organism, it is not an intrinsic or unconditioned good, for there are circumstances in which the survival of one species will be at the expense of many others. And there might be circumstances in which the survival, even of humans, would be a worse alternative than their extinction, particularly if the only humans who survived were committed to evil, and possibly, as mentioned before, even if the humans were virtuous. The survival of the biosphere may, however, seem to be an unconditioned good, since it is the precondition for life and value in general.

3. INTRINSIC VALUE WITHIN A SUBJECTIVIST META-ETHIC

From the perspective that we have adopted, the proposal that intrinsic value can be recognised within a subjectivist meta-ethic amounts to the claim that wilderness, endangered species, and wild rivers are like fur coats and beautiful paintings, things which have value as ends, but which have their value in virtue of their being valued, or potentially valued by us. This is obscured in the literature by the fact that 'intrinsic value' is used as a synonym for 'non-instrumental value' (Elliot 1992, 139). But once the position is described in the light of the distinction that Korsgaard reminds us of, I believe that its limitations become manifest. The problem is that if things have value in virtue of their being valued the natural decision procedure for determining action with regard to these values becomes democratic consensus or market demand. Particular beautiful paintings are valued as ends by some people, and not valued as ends by others. A painting will be deemed beautiful by some people and trite, or ugly, by others. Since this is the case, if we have a dispute over the preservation of some particular painting, a fresco, let us say, which is to be demolished for the sake of an apartment block, there seems to be little that we should do, in order to determine its value, other than discover how much it is valued. Some may value the fresco in virtue of its age, others may disvalue it because, being old, it is faded and in bad condition. Once the people whose interests are likely to be affected have been taken into account there seems little likelihood that a mistake over the value of the fresco could have been made. More information might come to light, for instance the fresco might turn out to have been painted by someone famous, and this

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information, had it been known at the time of valuation might have changed some people's judgement, but there seems little scope, in these kinds of cases, if all the information is in, for there to be a later judgement that some objective value has been overlooked.

Defenders of subjectivism have argued that although their theory 'construes intrinsic value as a relational property in which necessarily one of the *relata* is a psychological state of the valuer' the values responded to are nevertheless real values (Elliot 1992, 142). But such comments fail to come to grips with the central weakness of subjectivism. The subjectivist's claim is that intrinsic values are something like secondary qualities, real qualities of things which are nevertheless powers to induce states in us. In the case of colour, we identify colours via judgements of colour made under normal conditions by the normally sighted. In the case of value, we are to identify values via judgements of value made under normal conditions, and perhaps full information, by people of good will. But the colour analogy simply brings out the weakness of this position for environmentalism. As a matter of fact human dispositions to respond to colour are reasonably constant across the population, but where there are differences of opinion, as with blue-green, there just is no fact of the matter as to the real colour. In the case of red-green colour blindness, by contrast, we say that things really are red, because red to standard observers. Democracy rules. And if we are to treat intrinsic values in nature in the same way, surely democracy should rule here too. If the majority see a leech filled ditch where others see a wild river of great value we will have to say that there is no value here because it is not recognised by normal observers. The situation is made worse by a move favoured by some subjectivists in order to counter a common objection. The objection is that subjectivism cannot account for the value of living things or environments in circumstances in which there are no valuers. The response made is that so long as someone exists a future or past state of affairs, in which there are no valuers, may have value in virtue of being valued by some person who exists non-contemporaneously. But suppose that, in the future, the millions of people who then exist in the world no longer value wilderness, and that most people in the past did not value it, then the subjectivist environmentalist ought to admit that, though wilderness has properties which stir judgements of positive value in her or him, on balance it doesn't have value, because these properties do not induce judgements of positive value in the majority. The preconditions for reasoned debate over value are thus not met, and, in so far as the subjectivist tries to bring these in, he or she leaves the ground of subjectivism.

At least since John Mackie wrote *Ethics* it has become common for philosophers to assert that answers to second order, meta-ethical, questions are independent from first order normative ethical opinions (Mackie 1977, 16). Such a view assumes that in general second-order judgements do not affect first order opinions. But this is open to question. It assumes a kind of theoretical naivety on the behalf of ordinary moral agents which is not born out by ordinary practice.

We distinguish quite clearly in our everyday life between those areas of discourse which we agree correspond to nothing objective, and those with regard to which we think there are objective standards of correctness. If someone differs from us, for instance, over what is comic, we are perfectly content to conclude that neither of us has any claim to be correct, and we manifest this in our judgement that the market is a perfectly adequate mechanism for distributing comedy (except perhaps for very cruel, obscene or racist comedy which we believe has harmful effects).⁴ If, on the other hand, someone differs from us over what is poisonous, we will assume that one or other of us is wrong. Our judgement that being poisonous is not just a matter of being taken to be poisonous manifests itself in our insistence that the supply and distribution of poisons be regulated by competent authorities, not simply by public opinion or market demand. Our second order judgements do make a difference to our practice in these areas of discourse, and this is why it is natural to assume that in the case of ethics as well, second order judgements will impact on first order practice. In particular, the second-order judgement that an area is not one where there are objective facts will generally be sufficient for that area to be treated as inappropriate for government regulation and social control.

The subjectivist's account of environmental value differs only on a point of terminology from the view that we value wilderness and species as ends, but the condition of their value is the existence of agents, who are not necessarily contemporaries, for whom these ends have value. There are many objects with regard to which this appears to be the right kind of analysis of value. Gold, for instance, is often valued, by humans, as an end, and not just as a means, but it seems perverse to assert that independently of the existence of human valuers gold has a value that is greater than, let us say, lead. Diverse and complex living things seem however to be different. It is quite plausible to claim that a planet on which unconscious life has evolved is of greater value than a barren rock, and to claim that this would be the case even in a universe in which the consciousness necessary for valuing had not evolved.

4. AN UNSUCCESSFUL ACCOUNT OF THE OBJECTIVITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE

Contrast the subjectivist account of value, considered above, with the notion of environmental value introduced by Aldo Leopold via an analogy which he thinks pertinent to the environmental case. When Ulysses returned from his travels he hung six slave girls on a rope. At the time such an action was quite acceptable. These days most of us would not want to say merely that, while the slave girls had no value as ends within Ulysses' valuational point of view, they do have value within ours, and that that is the end of the matter. Most of us would, I think, want to say that Ulysses failed to respect the lives of the slave girls and was mistaken in not treating their lives with due respect. How have we reached this

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conclusion? Presumably by a reflection of the following sort. We see that we value our own lives and think that we are valuable as ends, and then we are persuaded that others are equally justified in valuing their lives and should equally be treated as ends. Leopold, in introducing this analogy and in suggesting a further extension of the moral community is suggesting that an equally compelling argument is available to convince us that we are mere members of the biotic community and that, in so far as we value our own liberty and survival we should come to recognise that the liberty and survival of other creatures is also of value.

Paul Taylor gives a particularly detailed argument of this kind. He points out that current science suggests that we should adopt a biocentric outlook according to which we are evolved creatures whose cultural development should be understood against the backdrop of evolutionary change. 'Like ourselves, other organisms are teleological centres of life. The constant tendency of their behaviour and internal processes is patterned around the realisation of their good' (Taylor 1986, 157). From this perspective we see that the subjective value that we place on our own good is merely a reflection of the value that all living things place on their good, and we come to see that it is not obvious that we are ends in ourselves while no other living thing is. We value the states which constitute our flourishing as ends, but we are not different in kind from other organisms, which may not be conscious, but which show by their organisation and behaviour that they too strive to flourish in their own way. Taylor concludes with the following claim:

...just as we humans place intrinsic value on the opportunity to pursue our own good in our own individual ways, so we consider the realisation of the goods of animals and plants to be something that should be valued as an end in itself. As moral agents we see ourselves under an ethical requirement to give equal consideration to the good of every entity, human and non-human alike, that has a good of its own. When the good of one conflicts with that of another, we recognise the duty to be initially unbiased in our approach to finding a way to resolve the conflict. Since all are viewed as having the same inherent worth, the moral attitude of respect is equally due to each. (Taylor 1986, 57-8)

Here it is noteworthy that Taylor moves from the quite compelling observation that its own well being and the survival of its kind are ends for any living thing to the conclusion that all living things have the same inherent worth and are all equally owed respect. But what grounds the claimed equality in inherent worth? The fact that I value my survival does not, by itself endow either me, or my survival, with inherent worth. Suppose that I am extremely wicked. Then there will be a good for me, but what is good for me will not be good. Taylor's argument is compelling, up to a point. When we consider the value that we place on those things that we value as ends, and then look at other creatures which also have ends, we come to see that we need some argument if we are to justify a recognition of our right to achieve our ends while denying it to others. As we

come to see our commonality with other creatures the arguments which have forced us to recognise the rights of other people to the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness come to be seen to extend beyond our species to other animals and even to plants. But Taylor's case falls down when he argues that 'it is the simple truth that each [living thing] has a good of its own' that counts as the sufficient ground for its inherent worth (Taylor 1986, 148-9). This conclusion leaves his theory open to serious objections.

What Taylor means by inherent worth is Moorean intrinsic value, but he limits its extension to things which have a good of their own. He uses 'intrinsic value' in a manner compatible with subjectivism to refer to experiences and activities that are valued as ends. The following captures what he means by saying that an entity X has inherent worth.

A state of affairs in which the good of X is realised is better than an otherwise similar state of affairs in which it is not realised:

- a) Independently of X's being valued either intrinsically or instrumentally by some human valuer; and
- b) independently of X's being in fact useful in furthering the ends of some conscious being or in furthering the realisation of some other being's good, human or non-human, conscious or not. (Taylor 1986, 75)

So a thing has inherent worth if it is good that its good is realised, independently of the circumstances. The considerations which were developed earlier should make one wonder whether anything has inherent worth in this sense. Is the situation in which a cane toad successfully breeds better than the state of affairs in which it does not successfully breed? It seems that we cannot answer this question if we have to do so independently of the usefulness or destructiveness of the cane toad to other creatures. But, as we saw, Taylor asserts that having a good of its own is a sufficient ground for inherent worth, and this, plus the fact that he is prepared to argue that all things that have a good of their own have the same inherent worth, makes his ethic incapable of justifying central environmental practices such as encouraging the flourishing of endangered and wild species rather than common and domestic ones. It also leaves it open to the objection that each of our organs will have to be considered to have inherent worth.⁵

5. ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE AS OBJECTIVE EXTRINSIC VALUE

I have argued that most of the things or states of affairs which environmentalists value are conditionally or extrinsically valuable. In the circumstances in which we live, where so much of the earth's surface is exploited, wilderness is valuable. It has become more valuable as it has become rarer. And it does not all have the same value. Some wilderness gains value by being the habitat for many species

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of living things, other wildernesses are less valuable, being less rare or more barren. A wilderness which is instrumentally valuable for many different species has a value which is both extrinsic and independent of human valuing. It is misleading to conclude that it has intrinsic value or inherent worth. Common and intuitive judgements cannot be sustained unless we recognise that most value in nature is conditioned value. This outlook involves a thoroughgoing naturalism. It recognises values in nature which arise from the fact that each individual, species and ecosystem has a good of its own, but it refuses to attempt to place a value on an organic whole achieving its good which is independent of the circumstances in which it exists.

An ethic of the kind proposed seems in many ways the natural ethic for environmentalism. As Taylor emphasises, following Leopold, biology and evolutionary theory tell us that we are evolved creatures, closely related to many other species that exist on the earth, and dependent like them on the ecological stability of the biosphere.⁶ From this perspective our subjective judgements of value seem to be not the source of value but rather the result of evolution and the coming to consciousness of tendencies which have survived because they are an aid to survival. In the past our survival has not required us to give much consideration to the well being of members of other species (though many native peoples have recognised non-human animals as being owed moral consideration) and this may explain why it is difficult to raise ecological consciousness. But as we become aware of how our power has grown, and how unjustifiable our disregard for other forms of life is, our own best world view requires that we recognise that there are many species which have a good of their own and are as justified as we are in pursuing their own good. So, most of the things which environmentalists value as ends are extrinsically good, but their value does not depend on our valuing, since values exist for all living things simply in virtue of their constitutions as living things.

In the rest of this paper I want to consider some objections to this proposal. The first results from asking whether all value could be extrinsic value. There is a well known argument which goes back at least to Aristotle that not all things can be valued as means, some must be valued as ends, for fear of infinite regress. Once we have distinguished things valued as ends from things with intrinsic value, this argument no longer stands as an argument to the conclusion that there must be some unconditioned value, but it nevertheless seems that there is something problematic about the idea that all value is extrinsic. The point can be brought out by considering the conclusion that I was prepared to draw from Taylor's reasoning. Taylor argued that since we are just living organisms we cannot rationally justify the pursuit of our own ends without recognising that there is just as much value to be found in the pursuit of their ends by other living creatures. He illegitimately went beyond this conditional conclusion when he argued that every living thing has inherent value simply in virtue of having a good of its own. He assumed, in fact, that the philosophical tradition had given us reason to believe that we have inherent value, and so can justify the pursuit

of our own ends. But it simply doesn't follow from the fact that we have a good of our own that we have inherent value. And Kantian arguments to the effect that we do have inherent value are not available to Taylor.

The attempt to argue, from naturalistic premises, to the conclusion that the case for people being ends in themselves applies to all living creatures, jars with Kant's intentions. Kant's moral philosophy was completely opposed to naturalism. Ethical truth, he thought, cannot be empirical. This comes out very clearly in his argument for the conclusion that the goodwill is the one thing with intrinsic unconditioned value (Kant 1959, 9-13). Kant argues that if our reason were merely a means to our preservation, welfare and happiness, then it would be redundant, for we would be better off being guided by instinct. This he thinks is proved by the fact that those who place their reason in the service of their own happiness are doomed to disappointment. The purpose of reason must be, he thinks, to produce a will that is good in itself, one which is determined by reasonable ethical principles, even if following these principles is injurious to its own inclinations. And it is only on the basis of attributing to humans the potential for possessing a good will that Kant is able to conclude that we should value each other as ends. If we give up this conception of ourselves, according to which we are unique in having a rational capacity which enables us to see beyond empirical truths to *a priori* ethical principles, there is no basis in Kant for thinking that we have inherent value. And if we have no reason to suppose that the pursuit of our own good has inherent value why should we conclude that it is true of other beings that the pursuit of their good has inherent value?

If our flourishing is valuable then the justification we find for the value of our flourishing may well extend to other creatures, but if all value is extrinsic and conditional, how are we to decide whether or not our flourishing is valuable? If we take the attitude to ourselves that I took formerly to the cane toad we might well decide that, under present circumstances, things being as they are, our flourishing is to the detriment of so many other species that it is not valuable. But then, if moral values are simply evolution's latest device for enhancing our survival, it would be self-defeating for it to tell us to curtail our flourishing. On this conception, morality is just nature's prudence gone self-conscious, so how can it fail to be anthropocentric? How should we, any more than the cane toad, curtail our instincts for the sake of other species? Our pursuit of our own good may not be justified, but then neither is it unjustified. It simply exists as the strivings of other creatures exist. From the point of view of such a thoroughgoing naturalism it seems that all ethical value is in danger of being bleached away, and it is surely this kind of thought which lies behind the insistence of thinkers like Kant and, in a rather different way, Moore, that there must be some intrinsic unconditioned and non-natural value.

Perhaps the environmentalist can avoid this worry by postulating, as suggested earlier, that there is one thing which has intrinsic value, the biosphere. This would cohere nicely with the holism that is a common feature of much

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environmentalism. Then we could say that our flourishing has value just in case it contributes to the flourishing of the organic whole of which we are a part. Our value is not intrinsic but is still considerable in so far as we contribute to an organic whole which has intrinsic value. The value of each species will now also be seen as contributive value, rather than intrinsic value, and this coheres with the arguments which are given for species preservation. For these are characteristically arguments from the importance of diversity, given its relation to stability, rather than arguments from the intrinsic properties of the endangered species, many of which are small and, considered in isolation, unimpressive. A theory of this sort seems to be the natural stopping place for many environmentalists, but is not, by itself, able to account for all environmentalist intuitions. Many would want to count natural rock formations and the desert wastes of Antarctica as things of objective value. But, if these play no role in the health and functioning of the biosphere, then the proffered account is unable to explain their value. This suggests that a mature environmental ethic may need to account for the different kinds of value which are to be found in nature differently. Beautiful rock formations, like beautiful paintings, may be valued as ends, but their value will be relative to the existence of creatures capable of appreciating beauty. Healthy ecosystems, by contrast, will have value that is independent of any conscious valuer since their health is constitutive of the health of the biosphere.

I have argued that the meta-ethical outlook proposed coheres best with much environmental reasoning, particularly that which emphasises the value of the biosphere as a whole. It makes environmental values objective without introducing the misleading implications which arise from dubbing these values intrinsic. I am not, however, myself convinced that it is the most coherent outlook overall. As it stands, the view developed seems to concede too little to the thought that humans do have some intrinsic value, and it also concedes too little to the view that higher animals and complex plants have a value which is independent of their contribution to the ecosystem within which they are flourishing. These worries do not, however, derive so much from environmental ethics as from the ethics of our treatment of humans and animals. A sophisticated environmental stance would, no doubt, try to combine our intuitions from these other areas with those which arise from considerations of environmental value. This is a complex task. The aim of this paper has merely been to argue that the values which are specifically environmental are most often extrinsic and objective, not intrinsic.

NOTES

¹ An early statement of this argument against the possibility of a genuinely new environmental ethic is provided by McCloskey (1980).

² Versions of this response can be found in J. Baird Callicott (1989a, 133-4) and Robert Elliot (1985). A very clear exposition of the position is provided by John O'Neill, though

he himself wants to defend the idea that there is objective value in nature (O'Neill 1993, 10-13 and 19-22).

³This possibility is canvassed by Tom Regan (1992), but only as an alternative to a theory of intrinsic values which recognises a hierarchy of ends-in-themselves. It is not clear whether this is Regan's own considered view.

⁴I borrow the example of the comic from Crispin Wright (1992, 7).

⁵These objections are developed by Janna Thompson (1990) and Tom Regan (1992, 174-6).

⁶J. Baird Callicott (1989b) provides an interesting discussion of the relationship between Leopold's ethic, Hume's naturalism and Darwinism.

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