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Non-Anthropocentrism? A Killing Objection

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ABSTRACT: To take the idea of a non-anthropocentric ethic of nature seriously is to abandon morality itself. The idea of *humanity* is not an optional extra for moral seriousness. Non-anthropocentric environmental ethicists mistake the kind of value non-human entities may bear. It is not moral value, but aesthetic value.

KEYWORDS: Non-anthropocentrism, Humanity, Killing, Aesthetic Value.

Consider this situation:

You are walking along a jungle trail as it is approaching dusk. You round a bend and, in the failing light, see what is obviously a large animal violently attacking what is, equally obviously, a human being. Although the light is not good, you are an excellent shot, and have no doubt that you can hit what you aim for. You shoot the animal.

For most of us, whether we think about the case from the point of view of the agent, or from the point of view of the spectator, no blame could be attached to this action. There may well be some cause for *regret* – in the killing of what could be a magnificent or rare animal – but this would not justify a charge of unethical behaviour, it would simply be an unfortunate and unavoidable consequence of doing the *right* thing. It is one of the harder lessons of life that doing the right thing provides no guarantee that regret is inappropriate. However most of us would not expect the agent to feel *remorse*, the possibility of which is a necessary condition of *guilt*.¹ Indeed, a charge of unethical conduct, and the blame attached to it, could more properly be laid if you were able to intervene in such a situation and did not do so, or did intervene, but to shoot the human being, or simply had, as Bernard Williams puts it, ‘one thought too many’ before you shot the attacking animal.² Yet, from our reading of a number of recent ethical theories associated with the ‘non-anthropocentric’ stream of environmental ethics, this apparently unproblematic case is not as clear cut as it might seem. Indeed, the ‘bio-centric’ logic of moral concern that many of them champion would imply that to shoot the animal, or simply to do so without *thinking*, *would* be an unethical action.

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I.

In his original call for the development of 'Deep Ecology' Arne Naess put forward the notion of 'biocentric equality', which suggests that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere are equal in intrinsic worth. This would seem to be the obvious axiological assumption of a non-anthropocentric, but still, perhaps, ultimately life-centred ethic. So, *in principle*, Naess argues, we should recognise that all organisms have 'the equal right to live and blossom'.³ But in principle only, because 'any realistic praxis necessitates some killing, exploitation and suppression'.⁴ Nevertheless, even accepting such realities, he suggests, 'humans have no right to interfere destructively with nonhuman life except for purposes of satisfying vital needs'.⁵

These are not new propositions, and they have received much criticism from both supporters and opponents of the 'non-anthropocentric' position, but much of this criticism has focused around the concept of 'vital needs' and the hidden anthropocentrism this is taken to imply. There is, however, a more chilling reading, and one which retains the non-anthropocentric character of the formulation. It is a reading which insists on the *moral seriousness* of a non-anthropocentric natural ethic.

This point is crucial to understanding our argument, and it deserves to be spelt out in detail, for all too often, it seems to us, ethicists, and environmental ethicists in particular, forget that ethics is a matter primarily of *practical* reason, not theoretical or speculative reason (our initial example and our reading of it is meant, from the start, to remind us of the essential practicality of ethics). The mistake takes a Hareian form.⁶ It involves the view that one cannot be pointing to genuinely moral truths unless one is able to wield an argument in theoretical reflection which utterly destroys the opposing claims of others. Thus Hare worried endlessly about the 'fanatic' whose 'moral intuitions' clash irrevocably with those of the rest of us. It seemed to Hare that he has not shown us anything morally when, for example, he points out that certain putatively moral views lead to (say) genocide, so long as there is at least one person who is willing to say 'So what? I'm all for genocide!', and who cannot be shown in this appalling assertion to be engaged in logical or factual error.

This desire for what Williams has aptly termed a 'super-power defence' of moral claims⁷ has the effect of ushering in moral nihilism; that is, it dissolves ethics away altogether, for in truth moral viciousness is not a sin against Reason, even if it is such against its victims. The mere fact that someone with a grasp of the (non-moral) facts may be willing to assert as logically coherent that they for one prefer to kill humans to (other) animals when faced with a choice of the kind we discuss does not impugn our moral hostility, for our objection is not theoretical, but practical in nature. That is to say we assess it as an answer to the (practical) question 'What shall I do?', and so condemn it as morally repugnant.

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(One hopes that we do not encounter the objection that there may be some – later we call such possible people ‘ecopaths’ – who would answer in the repugnant way, and so the repugnance is misplaced. If the fact that someone may do the morally repugnant is to mean that the very judgement of repugnance is out of place, then we have the absurd result that morality is destroyed by the sheer possibility of immoral choices!)

On the appropriate reading our argument is Aristotelian in intention. Just as Aristotle repeatedly makes arguments of the form ‘everyone would say’ and ‘no one would choose’ (‘the whole world on the condition of being alone’, etc.) without meaning to imply that we must simply wait and see if the multitude agree; so too we appeal to what ‘everyone would think’ (faced with our example) without such a statistical implication. The point of such an appeal is not to numbers, but ‘to *prompt* and *remind* us (the present participants in the enquiry) firstly, of our own and others’ pre-philosophical experience, and secondly, of our own and others’ practical and pre-philosophical grasp of good(s)’.⁸ This is why Aristotle wrote that ‘we ought to attend to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced and older people not less than to demonstrations; for because experience has given them an eye they see aright.’⁹

II.

With this established, consider the position of someone placed in the situation described at the beginning of this paper who has thoroughly digested and accepted Naess’s views. How should they act? One clear answer is that they should do nothing. After all, *their* ‘vital needs’ have not been threatened in any significant way. It is not to the point that what is being observed may be a clash in the ‘vital needs’ of two organisms which are ‘equal in intrinsic worth’, it is simply that the vital needs of *other* organisms are in question, and not, it would seem, one’s *own* vital interests.

It follows that if we draw on a notion of ‘vital needs’ to provide a basis for moral action in the kind of case we describe at the start of this paper, then those ‘vital needs’ must include a constitutive communalist element which links the individual with a wider community of concern. The motivation cannot be purely egocentric, otherwise there would be no reason for the agent to act (except selfishly) in cases in which they are not directly and materially involved. For the environmental ethicist the communalist element can only be understood in terms of (our commitment to) the community of the natural world, rather than any special attachment to the human. But this leads to equally unacceptable consequences.

In particular such a person would find little in such an ethic to stand in the way of what might be called ‘*ecopathy*’. True, our man will not be simply self-

obsessed, for he has a commitment to the preservation of the richness and diversity of life in general, but in practice there are very few situations where an individual's actions are likely to have any significant effect on the ecosphere as a whole, while they can certainly have a significant effect in any particular action context on the their own 'vital needs'. In effect, our man could seek to satisfy his needs, not only for the requirements for survival but for those things which (as he takes it) best allow him to 'live and blossom', with basically no moral restraints on his actions towards other humans. If anything (and assuming that we can move past the first stage of legitimated selfishness), given the abundance of humans, the extent of their impact on the environment, and the relative paucity of large predators, the proper action for someone in the situation described might well be to shoot the human, providing the predator with an easy meal and helping to overcome, if only to a small extent, the problems of world overpopulation.

We are not suggesting that this ecopathology is what Naess *meant* to imply, only that such a reading is, as a matter of moral seriousness, perfectly consistent with his expressed views.

Take Naess's '*principles of diversity and of symbiosis*',¹⁰ which he deploys to argue that 'the so-called struggle of life, and survival of the fittest, should be interpreted in the sense of ability to coexist and cooperate in complex relationships, rather than ability to kill, exploit, and suppress'. "Live and let live", he writes, 'is a more powerful ecological principle than "Either you or me"'.¹¹ But while the *sentiments* expressed indicate that Naess would find the kind of ecopathology we have described repugnant, this does not deny that the *logic* of his arguments leads in such directions. For even the great defender of the cooperative elements of Darwinian 'natural selection', Prince Petr Kropotkin, was well aware that 'mutual aid' was only one aspect of nature, competition and the direct struggle for dominance could not be denied. Given that direct clashes of interest do occur – as between predator and prey – and that equally worthy organisms have conflicting 'vital needs', then the logic of the argument does not change. Naess might call for cooperation, but this would only have force when it suits.

III.

To deflect the possibility of ecopathology requires significant modifications to the original position; modifications which ultimately fail to solve the problem. One of the most significant of such modified positions can be found in the 'transpersonal ecology' developed by Warwick Fox.¹² Here what is stressed is what is taken to be 'the central intuition of deep ecology ... the idea that there is no firm ontological divide in the field of existence ... the world is simply not divided up into independently existing subjects and objects ... [rather] ... all

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entities are constituted by their relationships'.¹³ Rather than perceiving ourselves as separate and distinct from the rest of the world we should recognise that individual humans (and other organisms) are simply 'knots in the biospherical net'.¹⁴

However we might react to such a position on our connection with the rest of the world¹⁵, by itself it does nothing to solve the problem. Both the threatened human and the predator in the original example are equally 'knots' in the 'biospherical net' to which we, the armed observer, are connected either directly or indirectly in a web of relationships. Why, independently of an egocentric or 'speciesist' bias, we should favour one knot over another is not apparent. Indeed, we might conclude that the attack upon the human is merely another kind of relationship with which we could identify. To interfere in any particular way would be either inappropriate or morally arbitrary. To the extent that we are 'constituted by our relationships' (and, by implication, *nothing else*), and yet these relationships make differing, and often directly conflicting demands upon us, then the upshot in such a situation is to undermine our very identity, and so any possibility of genuine (let alone moral) agency. This disintegrative logic of moral identity is not a recipe for mental health, or for any kind of well-being, and it provides no basis for moral choice.

This conclusion would have full force if all 'knots in the biospherical net' were taken to have equal worth and an equal call upon us. Fox seeks to avoid this justifiably disquieting result by arguing that in the field of (potential) moral action equality does not mean equal treatment, just as, in a different way, Naess attempts the same by using the notion of 'vital needs' to separate of the world of in-principle rightness, and the sphere of real activity. It is the 'complexity of relations' that counts, 'and to the extent that complexity of relations is evidenced in the degree of an organism's central organisation (and therefore capacity for richness of experience), then organisms are entitled to moral consideration commensurate with their degree of central organisation'.¹⁶ But even with this addition, and even if it escapes the charge of presupposing an anthropocentrically biased scale of judgement, the problems of moral seriousness remain.

If, on the one hand, we argue that a high 'capacity for richness of experience' is something inherent in *all* human beings (and *equally* inherent), and that this capacity is significantly greater than the potential of any other species that we are presently acquainted with, then we might avoid some of the moral dilemmas implied in this formulation of an environmental ethic, but only at the expense of restoring its anthropocentric character. If, on the other hand, we accept that there are differing capacities for richness of experience between people, and that some non-humans might have greater capacities for this than some humans, we have opened an ethical Pandora's Box.

It would appear to imply that it would be ethical to shoot the animal and protect the human *only if* (and only if one knew) the human had a greater

‘capacity for richness of experience’ than the animal. This would mean that we would either have to find out more about the human and the animal before we made any decision – not only involving us in ‘one thought too many’, but creating a delay which might well be tragic – or we have to act on some balance of probabilities which suggests that humans are more likely to have such capacities. While we have doubts about probabilistic approaches to ethical decision-making, the situation can be clarified to remove such difficulties. Imagine that we *do* have more information: that we can see both the animal and the human clearly and that, more than this, we know a great deal about both of them. Imagine that the animal is a prime specimen of a highly intelligent and socially complex species (a wolf perhaps), while the human is ancient, or badly crippled, or particularly unintelligent (or all of the above) – someone we would judge to be without a great capacity (or even potential) for richness of experience. In such a case would it be ethical to stand back and allow the human to be killed?

There is something particularly horrifying about the kind of ethic which would deny protection to the weakest members of a community, particularly when, on any ordinary understanding, the community is one’s own. Even worse it is not an unfamiliar ethic but one with which we are all too familiar: a variation of the view was at work in the eugenic fantasies and concentration camps of Nazi Germany. After all, if there is some kind of hierarchy of moral worth attached to humans,¹⁷ and if some humans are so low on the scale that they are less worthy of moral consideration than some animals, it is only a short step to the proposition that, particularly in an over-populated world, short on universal *lebensraum*, those who have a limited ‘capacity for richness of experience’, whether because of some physical or mental disability, should be refused the kind of support which allows them to live, or even positively eliminated, for the greater good of the biospherical net.¹⁸

Again, we are not suggesting that this was the intention of those who put forward this kind of view, merely that it is a morally serious reading of the arguments they put forward. Unless such a view is modified by a commitment giving primary moral consideration to humans – simply because they *are* humans – then such consequences will always follow, whether or not the ‘capacity for richness of experience’ is our moral yardstick or we attempt to develop other criteria. We stress that it is plain *humanity* which counts (or should count) in such equations, not any quality or ability usually associated with humanity.¹⁹ Such a position, however, opens us to the charge of that which the Routleys have identified as ‘human chauvinism’: the apparently arbitrary favouring of humans over others ‘for which there is not sufficient justification’.²⁰ The question is not so much whether we deserve to be convicted as whether such a charge has moral force.

IV.

Two forms of ‘human chauvinism’ are identified by the Routleys: a ‘weaker form is the Greater Value Thesis, the invariable allocation of greater value or preference, on the basis of species, to humans, while not however entirely excluding non-humans from moral consideration and claims’, and ‘strong forms ... which see value and morality as ultimately concerned entirely with humans, and non-human items as having value or creating constraints on human action only insofar as these items serve human interests or purposes’.²¹ It is only the weaker version we need to defend here. We do not have to exclude other animals or other organisms from any kind of moral consideration in order to suggest that it would still be right to shoot the animal, and to do so without reflection. There are many cases (for instance those which involve or threaten needless suffering) where we accept that we have moral obligations to other animals. Thus many of the Routleys’ arguments are irrelevant, dealing, as they do, with the case against ‘strong’ human chauvinism. Nevertheless, the Routleys oppose human chauvinism in any form, and direct their key argument to this end.

The argument is that there is no set of morally relevant and sufficient characteristics which are ‘possessed by ... all properly functioning humans’ and which are ‘not ... possessed by any non-human’.²² They list a variety of ‘suggested characteristics supposedly justifying human chauvinism’ and conclude that ‘none of these criteria meets the conditions of adequacy ... (and) ... it seems most unlikely that any other characteristic or any combination of characteristics does so’. Thus human chauvinism ‘rests on a shaky base and ... lacks a coherent theoretical justification’. It is arbitrary and unjustifiable to divide the world of moral concern between humans and non-humans.

The argument looks convincing only in so far as it begs the question at issue. It depends on our moral concern for our fellow humans being anchored to a scientific classification – the ‘human species’ – which classification is exclusively and exhaustively marked out by some distinctive (and morally relevant) property. But it is more plausible to think that the relevant notion of humanity is rather a fundamental modality of moral concern. The Routleys’ refusal to accept as a justification for our shooting the attacking animal ‘that it was attacking a *human being*’, strikes us as analogous to the following. You are my sister, and you have done something wrong. I understand this, and I understand that other people have no reason to excuse, but rather to punish this wrong, yet I find that I must help you, and that this necessity presents itself as a moral obligation. When others question my action I say, ‘She is my sister!’ The Routleys must refuse to accept this explanation as morally relevant to my actions unless I can show what it was about being a sister, *apart from the sibling relationship*, which might justify such actions.²³ Clearly, if this is the game, the Routleys must win, just as they must win if they refuse to accept ‘But it is a human being!’ as relevant to

justifying our action in shooting the attacking predator. But what kind of game is this? It does not seem to be a *moral* game. The refusal to accept as morally relevant justifying reasons for actions which specify some special relationship in explanation would seem to mark an initial refusal of the moral, rather than a demand for its purification.

Leaving aside philosophical issues, the moral seriousness recommended by the Routleys leaves open the gate to conclusions which not only we but, we trust, the Routleys would find unacceptable, outside the office anyway. This would not only follow from our example – for there would be some situations where the human did not possess the necessary characteristics which would justify our defence of them – but also from an example the Routleys provide. They argue that one of the ‘unacceptable outcomes’ of even ‘soft’ forms of human chauvinism is that ‘if there is only room in one’s boat for one and one must choose between saving Adolf Hitler and a wombat which has lived a decent and kindly life and never harmed a living creature, one is morally obligated to choose the former’.²⁴

Why this should be so is not at all clear. We may well be willing to consign Hitler to a watery doom, even though he is a human being, but this would be precisely because of the *inhumanity* of his actions or character.²⁵ What is particularly bizarre in this example is the suggestion that the presence or not of the wombat would make any *difference* to our decision. Unless it is being suggested that we would be morally obligated to rescue Hitler if there were not a wombat (and a ‘blameless’ one at that), but not if there were, then the example is pointless.

The Routleys may be under the control of the following understandable, but still rather hysterical, thought: Adolf Hitler is a moral agent, the wombat is not (it is at best a moral patient), this means not that Adolf is worth more than Wombat – for on the Routleys’ ethic, all living creatures have Naess’s equality-in-principle – but rather that Adolf can compromise his moral value as an individual through his capacity for immoral action. It does matter that there is a wombat in the boat, and that this wombat has lived ‘a decent and kindly’ life. It matters because the wombat’s moral value or standing is in-principle equal with that of any human, and is, in practice, of higher value than that of Adolf Hitler. For Hitler has, through his capacity for immorality, reduced his moral value below that of the blameless wombat, and so in the circumstances where only one centre of value can be rescued, Hitler loses out.

This argument is intelligible, but on reflection it is unsustainable. It cannot be that (the possibility of) immoral actions reduces the moral standing of an agent, and certainly not to a level less than that of a simple moral patient. Immoral actions certainly do affect what actions and sanctions we consider appropriate with regards the agent, but they should not be understood as lessening their moral value. If this were the case, then each time any of us does something he or she ought not to we would step by step be involved in driving our moral standing

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downwards towards the nothingness the Routleys cheerfully attribute Hitler – something, of course, which a wombat simply *could not* do. It is not that immoral action diminishes moral standing, but that such actions open up moral agents to forms of treatment – *deserved* treatment – which otherwise would not be appropriate. Such a form of treatment, and without diminishing, but depending on, the agent’s moral standing, may indeed include something along the lines of capital punishment, and it may be that Hitler’s actions were such that he deserves something like this, but the presence or absence of a wombat is beside the point. If Hitler deserves to die, and as a result of the decision of another, then this is because of what he has done, not because a wombat has a greater claim to moral consideration.

To return to the example: let us say that, after shooting the animal, we discover that the human was Adolf Hitler, should we feel that we have acted unethically? Of course not. We may well feel regretful (why, of all people we are obliged to save, did we have to find ourselves saving Adolf Hitler!), but there is no guarantee in this less than perfect world that acting ethically will not lead to regret.²⁶

V.

Our theorists have no wish to establish an ethic which would lead to the shooting of the person on the jungle track. While they begin from a claim of equal moral worth for all living things, which opens up just this possibility, they soon bring in ‘vital needs’, ‘capacity for richness of experience’ or the possession of a particular set of ‘morally relevant characteristics’ so that human beings may pay due regard to their fellows free from the suspicion of speciesism. This means that rather than the axiological claim of equal value determining the structure of practical demands and decisions we must make as we move through life, all the real work is done by the notion of vital needs or whatever. In effect, this is where all the morality goes on (and in), which suggests that the axiological claim is motivationally empty, so empty of value. Even so, this is not yet to say that the impetus behind this mistake is itself mistaken.

Much of environmentalism may be encompassed by positions which do not involve repudiating moral humanism (for example, what has been called Human Welfare Ecology), but the call by deep ecologists and others for a non-anthropocentric natural ethic does express something important for environmentalism. Behind the flawed moral seriousness we have found in a non-anthropocentric natural ethic there is the worthy and important insistence that worth be attributed to, and can be found in, Wild Nature, be it wilderness, or a naturally evolved species. Worth is attributed to that which is precisely outside the cultural realm and separate from any instrumental, or moral, value which we may be tempted to place on it. This is a command and need which, by valuing the other

than, or separate from, the human, is hardly to be expected able to found a system of practical moral imperatives – and if anything must concern itself with the human, it is morality – but there are other ways of finding value in the natural world.

For our purposes, and without any claim of exhaustivity, we can distinguish between two kinds of value, two kinds of valuing. Both kinds of value can be usefully grouped because both can be seen as forms of (or ways of expressing) *reverence* for an object, but in one kind – the kind exemplified in morality – such value founds in receptive subjects immediate duties of care and concern for the relevant object (human or not), while in the other – the kind exemplified in aesthetics – such value demands from receptive subjects, as it were, a certain quiet attention in which the will is silent or still. Our thought is this: cases like that described at the start of this paper demand immediate and decisive action from us on the basis of our fundamental attachments of care and concern for our fellow human beings. However there is a different kind of concern for things. Expressing a relationship of aesthetic reverence to something, is not a matter of immediate action and decision premised on an underlying community of care and concern. Aesthetic reverence repudiates the active motivations of immediate action, be they of a moral or an instrumental nature. It involves rather a structure of second-order motivations: for instance that the object be preserved and protected from the ravages of unregulated contingency. Such protective motivations are second-order in the sense that, *all things being equal*, they place limits on the expression of first-order motives, moral or instrumentally founded, towards the object.

The rider is important, for there are occasions in which such second-order, aesthetically based, motivations must give way. We have described such a case in this paper, and the lesson is that there are situations, centrally those concerned with human survival, in which it is wrong to insist that morality, with its duties of care and concern for others, be tested for its validity against the demands of aesthetic reverence. Not all cases will be like this, of course. Not all cases are emergencies, with potentially disastrous outcomes. Sometimes morality will – and should – give way, for morality is far from all our lives, or all of what is important to our lives. It might, for instance, be deeply inconvenient for four wheel drivers when a newly declared national park forbids their usual activities, but their offence, even if justified, may not be sufficient to override the aesthetic values at issue. We can give no algorithm here for weighing up moral and aesthetic considerations when they come into conflict. There is no such algorithm, and nor could there be. For what we discover when these modes of evaluation conflict is something about ourselves, and about the kind of people and kind of world we value. We think there are those, including environmental ethicists, who are unduly pessimistic about the value of anything outside the moral brutalities of duty and obligation. There is a world of beauty out there, and we need it today more than ever. On this environmentalism should build.²⁷

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NOTES

¹The refusal to distinguish between (the moral import of) *regret* and *remorse* is a common mistake, particularly in the case of environmental ethics. Prior to publication we have had critical responses to this article from a number of well-known environmental theorists which begin, 'But surely there is *something* to feel bad about in killing the animal!' To which the appropriate reply is, 'Yes, there is, but this feeling bad is not something that impacts on the *rightness* of the action'.

²Bernard Williams (1981) illustrates this moral fault with an example directed against the impartiality demanded by Kantian moral tradition, an impartiality even more prominent in much environmental ethics, where the point is not merely that we must not discriminate between persons on the basis of contingent (including relational) properties, but that we must not discriminate in a like fashion against any functional element of an ecosystem. This attempt to avoid the supposed biases of partiality comes out for the Kantian in the following example. One is standing on a beach alone, and there in the water in front of one are two people drowning, one a stranger, the other one's spouse. Conditions are such that it is apparent that one will only be able to make one rescue attempt. For the Kantian the appropriate decision-procedure is to curb one's initial ('biased') desire to save one's spouse, to step back, perhaps take out a coin, assign sides to the parties in the water, and flip it. Whichever side comes up determines without partiality who is to be rescued. This is not the practice of someone who is morally admirable, and one way of putting the reason for this is to say, as Williams does, that here there has been a thought *too many*. It should have been enough that it was one's spouse. But there has been the thought: Why should *that* make any difference? And the case is analogous for our example: It should have been enough for the agent that it is a human being in mortal danger. There is something bloodless and inhuman about the thought too many (at least, thought too many in these pressing circumstances) – Why should the fact that a *human being* is threatened with a bloody death make any difference?

³Naess 1972, p. 96.

⁴Ibid., p. 95.

⁵Naess 1984, p. 266.

⁶Cf. R.M. Hare, 1952 and 1965. Hare thinks he has solved the problem of the fanatic in his *Moral Thinking*, (1981). For a cogent discussion of why he has not done this, see Williams 1985, pp. 84-86.

⁷Ibid., p. 84.

⁸Finnis 1983, p. 18.

⁹Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 11: 1143b, 12-14.

¹⁰Naess 1972, p. 96.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Fox 1990.

¹³Fox 1984, p. 196.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁵And even on its own 'naturalistic' terms it has problems. After all evolution involves the continuing pressure of the world, so that if we are 'knots', then we are 'knots' in a network which has a continuing abrasive impact. This thought might well put pressure on our communitarian and cooperativist aspirations.

¹⁶Fox 1984, pp. 199-200. Although the positions are meant to be radically distinct, it is not easy to see how this kind of emphasis on the part of transpersonal ecologists really distinguishes itself from the 'central nervous system chauvinism' of an animal liberationist theorist like Peter Singer. Cf. Singer 1986, and 1991, ch. 4.

¹⁷We are assuming that the criteria Fox alights on are sufficiently 'objective' for the relevant practices of classification to be more than self-serving or political projections. However it is not at all clear to us that the intermixture of behavioural, psychological and physiological factors genuinely lends itself to such objectivity.

¹⁸Cf. Goldsmith, 1988.

¹⁹Given that we go on to argue that it is not some non-moral feature normally associated with humanity, nor the (scientific) fact of species membership which 'counts', it may seem that more needs to be said about why being human is so important. One suggestion is that what matters, what counts, is that they are our *fellow* humans, and that their fellowship evokes a certain *attitude* in us; in particular an attitude of shared community. There is nothing wrong in saying this, but we should not mistake what it is we have said. The notions of 'fellow human' and 'human fellowship' are themselves already moralised, and the idea that such 'fellowship' might evoke an attitude of shared community is equally the idea that it *should* evoke such an attitude (only thus have we a *moral* community). What we have said here then, in further elaboration of the claim that 'it is plain *humanity* that counts', comes to no more than a reiteration: morally speaking, it *is* humanity that counts (and should count). Any effort at reduction on this point means abandoning morality itself.

²⁰R. and V. Routley, 1979, p.36.

²¹Ibid.

²²R. and V. Routley, 1979, pp. 39-42.

²³A small irony. Our approach, but not the Routleys', makes room for moral claims of the kind, 'But it is my pet', or 'my wombat' (even 'my planet'). The Routleys will want to know more than this, *viz.*, 'But what is it, apart from that relationship, which justifies your moral concern?' We, on the other hand, find nothing amiss with such claims, though we do insist that in these cases the audience gives the claim moral standing not because of the 'intrinsic value' of the pet or wombat or whatever, but because of the way the object figures in that person's life.

It may be said that this analysis holds equally for the 'she is my sister' example, so that it is only the 'mine' that morally counts there too. But it is because my sister *is* of 'intrinsic value', that she has her (shared) humanity, that '*sister*' here takes the moral emphasis, not '*mine*'.

How do we know this? How do we draw the line between these cases? Our answer is that rather than look for some algorithm, we look instead, and with a practical focus, on such situations as we describe at the start of the paper.

²⁴R and V Routley, 1979, p. 105, n1.

²⁵It may seem strange to speak of the 'inhumanity' of Hitler at the same time as insisting he possesses humanity, but this is a superficial misunderstanding. Only those who possess humanity can be inhumane. This is not to say that everyone is clear on this, though as the following quote taken from the relative of the Okalahoma bombing victim on hearing Timothy McVeigh had been sentenced to death shows, this is often the result of precisely that 'moral hysteria' the Routleys exhibit, though in a form here (merely) inverted.

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I look at him as less than a human. When he made the conscious decision to kill these people and to maim and destroy others, he ceased being human. He became an animal and, in my opinion, when an animal kills a human being, they deserve death. So he got what he justly deserved. (McAllister 1997).

²⁶ Just this case is discussed in Vonnegut 1983.

²⁷ Cf. Lynch 1996.

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