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This is a very well structured piece of work, with arguments consistently presented, leading to a well-balanced overview of the issues at stake. You do a good job linking the three texts and, overall, display a very good understanding of the arguments. In places, closer attention to presentation would be beneficial, as would further development of some points in order to draw out implications. But, in general, this is a well written piece of work.

72%.

ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY, ASSESSMENT 1

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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Three texts have been chosen primarily for review and analysis of anthropocentric ethical systems in comparison to environmental ethical systems. Focus is given to whether moral consideration should be extended to the environment and, if so, how should environmental concerns be included. We will begin by exploring Goodpaster's '*On Being Morally Considerable*', which provides an introduction to the language and the criteria often specified as necessary for moral consideration. The next paper for consideration is Routley's '*Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic*', chosen as it offers an extremely useful introduction to the issues surrounding the current Western ethical systems (WES) and whether a new environmental ethic is required or can be incorporated into existing systems. Finally, we will move on to Norton's '*Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism*', selected as it provides an alternate view to the issues raised in '*Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic*'. In order to address each text robustly, we will provide a focused summary of particularly arguments, then move towards evaluating the effectiveness of these arguments and any challenges they may face. As a result, we will form a conclusion on their success in achieving their aims.

✓ Good intro

Kenneth Goodpaster, 'On Being Morally Considerable', in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights To Radical Ecology*, ed by Michael E. Zimmermann and others (Pearson, 2005), pp. 53-66.

In order to frame the paper correctly, we must establish the parameters of the article. The hypothesis promoted suggests that the boundaries of current ethical systems are drawn arbitrarily. Goodpaster believes that the current debate suffers from myopia. If the parameters of current positions are challenged, they often fail to provide rational reasoning for the inclusion or exclusion of various beings. These positions predominantly follow ethical egoism, which suggests that the 'promotion of one's own good is in accordance with morality'¹. As we are mainly acquainted with our own good or good of other humans, the consequence are anthropocentric ethical systems, according to which moral concern is limited to humankind. The paper aims to demonstrate that often the conditions advocated by WES are sufficient but not necessary conditions for moral consideration. As a result, there is a need to re-evaluate these necessary conditions, which usually results in the broadening of conditions for moral consideration.

Firstly, it is necessary to define key moral concepts. Moral rights are contrasted to moral consideration. Although Goodpaster is not entirely content with the concept of rights and their application, the concern is not pursued directly. Consequentially, we settle upon the idea of moral rights having a narrower application generally reserved for humankind. Goodpaster suggest that although only humans possess moral rights, all other living beings are still due moral consideration. Moral consideration being applicable to the 'entities that ought to be taken into consideration when decisions are being made'². For example, while a household cat may not possess moral rights, it is deserving of moral consideration for its health and wellbeing. A further distinction is made between moral consideration and moral significance. Moral significance is best understood in cases of comparison, when one living thing may be deserving of more moral consideration than another. For example,

¹ Andrew Mosely, *Egoism* (2017) <<https://iep.utm.edu/egoism/#SH2b>> [accessed 25 July 2021].

² Robin Attfield, *Environmental Ethics*, 2nd ed.n. (Polity Press, 2014), p.230.

Goodpaster³ questions how we would balance our consideration for trees over dogs. Questions often arise on which of the two should we give greater consideration to. The result demonstrates which has a greater moral standing or significance. Having established the definitions, Goodpaster sets about refuting three criteria that are commonly required to be eligible for moral consideration. The first common requirement is rationality, whereby moral consideration is only extended to those who are rational. Of the formulations presented, the most generous example of the proposition is:

For all A, X deserves moral consideration from A if and only if X is a rational human person or is a potential rational human person.⁴

Questions immediately arise as to how we can measure this potential for rationality. The usual threshold being the possession of moral agency, or the ability for the individual to be held responsible for their actions. In order to be held responsible for their actions, the agent must be capable of determining right from wrong. The above formulation of the responsibility criteria allows for the growth of a moral agent, such as young child initially being held unaccountable for their actions until they are a functioning moral agent as they grow older. However, situations are conceivable where those with an incurable mental illness are precluded from moral consideration on the basis that they will never possess rationality. Consequentially, we appear to have reduced some humans to the same moral status as non-humans, excluding them from the anthropocentric ethic.

↑ Okay, but
→ is this why
this boundary
is rejected

With the boundaries of rationality dismissed as a requirement for moral consideration, we then challenge the idea that the ability to suffer is a necessary condition:

³ Kenneth Goodpaster, 'On Being Morally Considerable' in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights To Radical Ecology*, ed by Michael E. Zimmermann and others (Pearson, 2005), pp. 53-66 (p.55).

⁴ Ibid. p. 57.

For all A, X deserves moral consideration from A if and only if X is capable of suffering pain (or experiencing enjoyment).⁵

The above principle appears to be based upon the concept that those who are non-sentient 'could not be proper "beneficiaries" of moral actions'⁶. Unlike humans, non-sentient beings are incapable of experiencing pleasure or pain. The moral agent does not need to account for them in their actions, with the non-sentient being lacking a pleasure or pain response that could be stimulated by the agent. However, Goodpaster counters that sentience is just an evolutionary tool, providing adaptability based upon pleasure and pain responses. A sentient being would seek out pleasure and avoid pain. While a tree may not experience pleasure or pain and adapt accordingly, we can imagine scenarios where adaptability of sentient beings 'did not depend upon mechanisms of pain and pleasure at all'⁷. These sentient beings would be excluded from moral consideration according to the principle. Two responses are possible. Either we must arbitrarily exclude sentient being without a pleasure and pain response or adapt the criterion accordingly. As the criteria can be altered in multiple ways in order to be applied rationally, it seems to indicate that its intended purpose was very restrictive in its application and little forethought beyond humanity was given.

The 'interest principle'⁸ is the last criteria challenged. The first argument relates to the ability to be represented:

- P1) Only beings who can be represented can deserve moral consideration.
- P2) Only beings who have (or can have) interests can be represented.

⁵ Ibid. p. 58.

⁶ Ibid. p. 59.

⁷ Ibid. p. 59.

⁸ Ibid. p. 60.

- C1) Therefore, only beings who have (or can have) interests can deserve moral consideration.

The second argument proposes that in order to benefit from moral consideration one must be capable of being benefited and have the capacity for interests:

- P1) Only beings capable of being beneficiaries can deserve moral consideration.

- P2) Only beings who have (or can have) interests are capable of being beneficiaries.

- C1) Therefore, only beings who have (or can have) interests can deserve moral consideration.

If we grant the first premise of each argument, at its broadest application only inanimate objects would not be represented or benefited. Their interests are allocated by their user or whoever benefits from their use. Consequentially, they have no inherent interests that can be represented or interests that can be benefited by our moral consideration. However, all organic life meets the above criteria. Plant and tree life have interests that can be represented and they will benefit from being represented. Their interests have not been assigned by an outside agent. For example, it is in the interest of plants to receive water. However, if the principle is restricted to exclude 'mindless creatures'⁹, issues again arise as to arbitrary boundaries. For example, by destroying plants and trees or restricting access to the conditions necessary for them to live, their demonstrable interest have been impinged. The proposer must accept they are discriminating against certain beings or accept the broadening of moral consideration beyond humans.

⁹ Ibid. p. 61.

While Goodpaster draws out the apparent inconsistencies with the application of moral consideration, we can question whether Goodpaster is also guilty of drawing arbitrary boundaries. It is suggested that 'the condition of *being alive* seems to me to be a plausible and nonarbitrary criterion'¹⁰. However, if our 'moral concern lies in respect for self-sustaining organisation and integration in the face of pressures towards high entropy'¹¹, then it is conceivable that self-aware computers systems or artificial intelligence (AI) will eventually have intrinsic interests that are independent of a creator. As these machines would not be alive by our current standards, should they be outside of our moral consideration? If Goodpaster were to continually look to expand the boundaries of this criteria to account for the rise of AI or the discovery of extra-terrestrial life that does not meet our standards of being alive, then it appears as though a similar mistake to anthropocentrism has been made in drawing boundaries around living beings.

If they had interests, then they too, could perhaps, be included. (?)

After the reader has grasped the definitions which Goodpaster uses, the paper provides the reader with a focused introduction to ethics as a whole. Considering that the purpose of the paper was to demonstrate the arbitrary nature of drawing 'the boundary of moral considerability around rational human beings'¹², by extending moral consideration to all living beings we may have resolved immediate issues regarding a lack of consistency in the application of moral consideration. However, it is entirely possible that the solution offered will also come under the same pressures that Goodpaster sought to challenge when writing the paper.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 54.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 64.

¹² Ibid. p. 54.

Richard Routley, 'Is There A Need For A New, An Environmental, Ethic' in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights To Radical Ecology*, ed by Michael E. Zimmermann and others (Pearson, 2005), pp 16-24.

It is necessary to begin by qualifying the scope of our analysis of 'Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic'. Our analysis will focus on the reasoning used to reach Routley's conclusion rather than analysis of any solution he reaches. Furthermore, we will not challenge the generalisations which Routley makes regarding WES or a Western super ethic (WSE) unless inconsistencies are identified in the arguments stemming from these generalisations. Unlike Goodpaster, Routley's argument are not aimed at demonstrating inconsistencies with current ethical systems. It is his intention to address whether the WES can accommodate the environment or whether a new and distinct environmental ethic is required. Routley claims that while WES do address humanities relationship with the environment, they are entirely anthropocentric. Any consideration given towards the environment are a consequence of harm that may be caused to humankind through interference or destruction of the environment. As a result, WES cannot be considered an environmental ethic as no consideration is given to harm caused purely to the environment. The intrinsic value of the environment is discounted. Routley¹³ identifies three Western ethical traditions, with 1) being the dominant position and 2) and 3) being subordinate:

- 1) The Despotic Position, with humankind having unaltered power over nature and the ability to dispose of the world as they see fit.
- 2) The Steward Position, where humankind are guardians of the environment.

¹³ Richard Routley, 'Is There A Need For A New, An Environmental, Ethic' in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights To Radical Ecology*, ed by Michael E. Zimmermann and others (Pearson, 2005), pp 16-24 (p. 17).

- 3) The Co-Operative Position, with humankind being responsible for the perfection of nature.

1) is inconsistent with any environmental ethic, as according to 'an environmental ethic man is not so free to do as he pleases'¹⁴. Consequentially, the two positions are contradictory and incompatible. Although positions 2) and 3) appear to be able to incorporate the environment, Routley argues that any 'thoroughgoing environmental ethic'¹⁵ would reject these positions due to the effect that human interferences could have on the environment. Without guidance on how those adopting positions 2) or 3) should behave in relation to the environment, there is a threat of natural resources being exploited for the benefit of humankind in the pursuit of their own interests.

With WES unable to offer an environmental ethic, the question then arises as to what will distinguish a new ethical system from the WES. Routley argues that in a similar way that the various Christian ethics fall under 'an umbrella notion covering a cluster of differing and even competing systems'¹⁶, the various ethics are members of a WSE through sharing core principles. Therefore, differing with an individual WES on a core principle puts the new ethic at odds with the entire WSE. Consequentially, the new ethic and the WSE would be different ethical systems. It is possible to see Routley's¹⁷ argument in the form of modus tollens:

- P1) All members of the WSE have core principle A.
- P2) Ethical system B does not have core principle A.
- C1) Ethical system B is not a member of the WSE.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 17.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 17.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 17.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 19.

Routley¹⁸ identifies the liberal principle as a core principle underlying the WSE,

‘The liberal philosophy of the Western world holds that one should be able to do what he wishes, providing (1) that he does not harm others and (2) that he is not likely to harm himself irreparably’.

The language used in the above principle is ambiguous. At its narrowest interpretation, it could be limited to other humans and our immediate interests. At its broadest reading, we can question the nature of the harm caused to others and harm caused to future interests of the individual. Routley challenges the liberal principle with a series of counter examples. Of these, we will focus our attention on the last person example. The counter example limits the possible scope of the liberal principle to a world where one person remains and there is no possibility of further people coming into existence. The last person systematically goes about destroying everything living in the environment. The broadest possible reading of (2), involving its application to personal interest in future generations, is not possible. The individual cannot be irreparably harming themselves or their interests in future generations. Similarly, with no other people around to harm either directly or indirectly by damaging their interests in the environment, the individual in the example is not violating (1). According to the anthropocentric WSE, the last person has done nothing wrong. However, from the position of an environmental ethic, the last person's actions are wrong. Therefore, the environmental ethic must not have the liberal principle as a core principle. As a result, an environmental ethic must be distinct from the WSE.

The desired result of Routley's thought experiment was demonstrating the existence of a competing environmental ethical system to WES. However, the thought experiment is

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 19.

dependent on intuition on the part of the reader that the actions of the last person are to 'a greater or less extent evil'¹⁹. If we accept the subjective nature morality that allows for the existence of competing ethical systems, then the actions of the last person are correct according to the WSE. Routley states 'ethical principles if correct are universal'²⁰. Consequentially, an environmental ethic will hold the actions of the last person are wrong in every possible world and vice versa according to the WSE. However, we could challenge Routley's argument on how the liberal principle is applied. Often individuals are not free to act according to the liberal principle, with limitations enforced on many acts which do not violate (1) or (2) by modern standards. For example, societal norms and laws have illegalised homosexuality for religious reasons. Often homosexuality is equated to a form of self-harm. Consequentially, we could imagine a situation where respect and care for the environment is a societal norm and acting contrary to this is to harm oneself. Therefore, the last person's actions could be considered wrong according to this WES. As a result, we have accounted for the environment within a WES by demonstrating that the scope of harm in liberal principle is not necessarily uniformly applied. Although Routley could respond to this solution by identifying the societal norms that direct the last person's actions as either an application of the Steward or Co-Operative positions, we have still accounted for a moral aversion to the last person's actions within the WSE.

The current WSE, or a revised form?

Routley provides a succinct and methodical approach, making the text an ideal introduction for those who are unfamiliar with the topic. The text is presented in an easily accessible way, walking the reader through the current predominant ethical system adopted by Western society before slowly challenging these presuppositions through the last person thought experiment. While there are possible responses to the conclusions of the thought experiment, they are based on WES which Routley believes are unreliable at providing any

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 20.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 17.

meaningful environmental ethics. If we accept this position and the reader does feel intuitively that the last person's actions are wrong, then we move to the conclusion that a new environmental ethic is required. However, we could argue that if the reader is inclined to this conclusion, then they were already receptive towards an environmental ethic.

Bryan Norton, 'Environmental Ethics And Weak Anthropocentrism', *Environmental Ethics*, Vol.6, (1984) 131-148.

Where Routley discussed the need for a new environmental ethic due to incompatibility with the current WES, Norton adopts an alternative approach. The paper argues that there is room within the current anthropocentric ethical systems to account for environmental concerns. It is a fallacy that an 'environmental ethic must reject anthropocentrism'²¹ in order to achieve this end. The preoccupation whether humankind is sole possessor of intrinsic moral value has meant that little attention has been given to alternate solutions, which Norton argues can result in the same conclusion as an environmental ethic.

Norton²² attempts to offer his alternate solution to the debate by differentiating between two types of anthropocentrism. Firstly, we must distinguish between strong and weak anthropocentrism. A value theory is strongly anthropocentric when all value is derived by the satisfaction of a person's felt preferences. Norton defines felt preferences as 'any desire or need of a human individual'²³. When considerations are so narrow, the interests of the individual are met when their felt preferences are achieved. For example, if person A desires a cigarette, their desire and interest is met by smoking. However, person A could simultaneously hold the desire to live a healthy life. The desire to smoke is not being

²¹ Bryan Norton, 'Environmental Ethics And Weak Anthropocentrism', *Environmental Ethics*, Vol.6, (1984) pp. 131-148 (p. 132) <DOI:10.5840/enviroethics19846233>.

²² Ibid. p. 133.

²³ Ibid. p. 132.

considered as part of the greater world view for a healthy life. While this appears irrational, any holder of a strong anthropocentric theory is 'insulated from any criticism or objection'²⁴, as they are only seeking to satisfy desires. Alternatively, a value theory is weakly anthropocentric if value is derived by satisfying some felt preferences or a considered preference in accordance within an overarching world view. Considered preferences are desires or needs that are gained through the considered adoption of a world view, with a world view being an overarching position towards the world. While the weak anthropocentrist will still have felt preferences, they will ideally look to consider and align all of their felt preferences in order to meet their overarching world view, avoiding issues with cognitive dissonance. The same method which allows for the introspection of felt preferences mean that they are also able to judge other preferences accordingly. For example, person B will adjust and reject their desire for a cigarette so that it meets their world view for a healthy life. Moreover, they can also judge the felt preference of person A as irrational if they too are looking to be healthy. ✓

The question arises as to how a considered weak anthropocentric world view benefits the environment? Firstly, a world view could be adopted 'that emphasizes the close relationship between the human species and other living species'²⁵. Consequentially, the world view could entail felt preferences being evaluated to support this world view. Similarly, the individual holding this world view is in a position to reject and judge 'preferences that merely exploit nature'²⁶. Secondly, the weak anthropocentric value system is dictated by their world view, which in turn affects the formation of felt preferences. Therefore, it is in the interest of the weak anthropocentrist to preserve the environment as the catalyst of this value formation. For example, if person C wishes to understand more about ocean life, they would

²⁴ Ibid. p. 132.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 133.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 133.

be inclined to protect the ocean. Failure to protect the ocean will have adverse effects on person C's ability to learn. Consequentially, person C should desire to protect the ocean. To hold an indifferent or exploitative attitude towards the ocean would be irrational if they are seeking to learn.

The reliance of the theory on a coherent world view raises concern for an environmental ethic. Norton admits that 'no one has ever completed'²⁷ the process of developing a world view, which would require a thorough and constant review of all values held in order to ensure they are coherent and non-contradictory. Therefore, room exists in the theory for cognitive dissonance to exist in relation to certain values. Moreover, we saw how societal norms can affect the application of the liberal principle in our analysis of Routley. Changes within a world view can affect the value considered preferences place on the environment. Without clear protections beyond humanities fickle desires towards nature and the environment, it would be vulnerable to exploitation. Consequentially, without a complete and fully formed world view that accounts for all interests and preferences, humanities limited world views are 'far too parochial to provide a satisfactory basis for deciding on what is environmentally desirable'²⁸. While Norton offers a formalised argument to the alternative solution offered in response to Routley's demand for a new environmental ethic, we can see that ethical systems based upon informal principles are problematic. Therefore, any meaningful application of the weak anthropocentrism seems unlikely and unstable.

In conclusion, we initially analysed Goodpaster exploration of the topic of moral consideration. 'On Being Morally Considerable' presented a number of criteria that initially appear reasonable, but soon became inconsistent when counter examples were introduced.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 132.

²⁸ Routley, 'Is There A Need For A New, An Environmental, Ethic', p. 17.

By demonstrating these inconsistencies, Goodpaster illustrated how they are often arbitrarily created and as a result are not fit to offer an insight as to what is and is not morally considerable. However, the solution offered by Goodpaster can also be challenged on the same basis that our current understanding of life biases us away from considering alternative things for moral consideration. Routley adopted a similar theme of using counter examples in *'Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic'* to show that the liberal principle, which is claimed underlies anthropocentric attitudes towards the environment, is incompatible with an environmental ethic. Finally, a possible alternative to developing a new environmental ethic was examined in Norton's *'Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism'*. Here we relied on considered preferences to police environmental protections. However, as discussed in response to both Routley and Norton, world views that are influenced by societal norms are not suitable to govern humanities relationship with the environment. Changeability in attitudes leave the environment vulnerable to exploitation and damage. Consequentially, the proposition that 'nonanthropocentrism is not the only adequate basis for a truly environmental ethic'²⁹ is dubious at best. Overall, the annotated bibliography has demonstrated that even at our most generous possible application of an environmental ethic, where all life has moral standing, we remain guilty of being exclusionary.

²⁹ Norton, *'Environmental Ethics And Weak Anthropocentrism'*, p. 132.

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