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Student Name:

Module code: HPPH7009

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Module title: Environmental Philosophy

Module tutor: Dr Rebekah Humphreys

Assignment title: Do species have a good of their own, and do they have moral standing as such?

Assignment due date: 19 AUG 2022

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Name Dr Richard Stunt.....

Assignment Mark

1st Marker's Provisional mark

72

2nd Marker's/Moderator's provisional mark

External Examiner mark (if relevant)

Richard Stunt, 72%, essay (KSS-2)

Richard Stunt - 2

Final Mark	
NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the Final Examination Board This is a well-thought out piece of work that displays an excellent grasp of the topic & a clear presentation of the arguments at stake. You have made the arguments 'your own', so to speak, by applying the interests argument to species, & this is a very interesting way of answering the question/developing your position. It would be beneficial to 'draw out' (a little more) the implications of species have their own good, and For completion by Marker 1: I think the vanishing species example could be used a lot more - this would make your conclusion stronger. But it is Comments: excellent that you have identified this as something which could Marker 1 signature: enable you to address the essay question. But, overall, arguments are evaluated throughout in a logical manner. This is an excellent piece of work, & enjoyable to read, too. Date: For completion by Marker 2 / Moderator: Comments: Marker 2 / Moderator signature: Date: External Examiner's comments (if relevant): External Examiner signature: Date:	

Environmental Philosophy – HPPH7009

Assignment 2

Do species have a good of their own, and do they have moral standing as such?

Introduction

Environmental philosophy is, in its most basic form, a debate about which things (beings) in our surroundings or environment have value, and having ^{recognised} assigned value, whether human beings as moral agents should take into consideration that value, and whether those beings can make moral claims on human beings based on that value. In short, what beings, and what categories of beings, have value and why?

This debate has largely been centred around how we, as individual human beings, should relate morally to other beings (of whatever sort). Thus, those taking a human centred, anthropocentric stance (e.g., John Benson¹ and John Passmore) say that an action is only morally wrong if it harms a human. Sentientists (e.g., Peter Singer and Tom Regan) expand their stance to include all beings that can perceive and feel, and which are thus able to experience pain and suffering. As such if an action causes pain and suffering, then for a sentientist it is morally wrong. Biocentrists (e.g., Kenneth Goodpaster, Robin Attfield) go even further, embracing in their stance all living things, claiming that the characteristic of life is the basis for moral considerability, and as such any action that harms any living thing's interests or capacity to grow, and flourish is morally wrong. Finally, ecocentrists (e.g., Arne Naess, Aldo Leopold) claim that value is not located in the various biological individuals that are part of the environment, rather it is located in the systems made up and formed by these individuals. Therefore, for an ecocentrist, behaviour that might harm one or even many individuals (e.g., culling deer to protect habitats) within a system, but would cause it to flourish more strongly as a result, is morally a good thing.

Ecocentrism then, might be distinguished from biocentrism by its insistence on ascribing a good and a moral standing to populations, not just given individuals, be they human, sentient, or simply alive. One such population of which to ask this question is that made up by a species, defined as 'a group of organisms generally resembling each other and capable of reproduction.'² This essay asks if such a group can be described as having a 'good of their own' or a 'moral standing'.

A Good of its Own

For something to "have a good of its own" it must have some intrinsic value, a value in its own right, that is not based on any useful purpose it might serve. Paul Taylor says, "To say that an entity has a good of its own is simply to say that, without reference to any other entity, it can be benefited or harmed.", and "we can think of the good of an individual nonhuman organism as consisting in the full development of its biological powers."⁴ The good of an organism, be it a human or nonhuman being is then to be found in its wellbeing, in how well it flourishes and attains its genetic potentials. Thus, an animal (human or otherwise) or any other organism who's 'good' can be affected for better (benefited) or worse (harmed) by changes brought about by an external agent, must have "interests". These interests being jointly located, as Robin Attfield says in 'The Good of Trees', in their 'latent tendencies, direction of growth, and natural fulfilments'⁵. Feinberg agrees saying that 'a being without interests is a being that is incapable of being harmed or benefited, having no good or "sake" of its own.'⁶ This being the case, for the purposes of this essay:

- "a good of its own" will be taken as meaning the capacity of a being in its own right to be benefited or harmed by the action of a third-party agent.
- "interests" will be taken as meaning the capacity of a being to flourish, in and of itself, as a result of the action of a third-party agent.

¹ At the end of Ch. 1 of *Environments and Environmental Ethics* Benson says, 'I am proposing that in view of the problems involved in establishing new principles it is worthwhile questioning the view that a human centred ethics is incapable of recognising environmental values and prescribing appropriate behaviour towards natural objects.' Benson, J. (2000). *Environments and Environmental Ethics*. London: Routledge.

² Cassell Concise English Dictionary: Plus Atlas and Gazetteer (5th ed.). (1995). London: Orion Publishing Co.

³ Taylor, P. W. (1981). *The Ethics of Respect for Nature*. *Environmental Ethics*, 3(3), 197-218.

⁴ Ibid. p. 199

⁵ Attfield, R. (2001). *The Good of Trees*. In J. T. O'Neil, *Environmental Ethics and Philosophy* (pp. 328-347). Northampton: Edward Elgar. p. 332

⁶ Feinberg, J. (1974). *The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations*. In W. T. Blackstone (Ed.), *Philosophy & Environmental Crisis* (pp. 43-68). Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press. p. 51

Characteristics Required for Moral Considerability

The next question to answer is, what characteristics are required for a being to be considered as morally important, to be able, so to speak, to press its claims on a moral agent? In his essay, "On Being Morally Considerable"⁷, Kenneth Goodpaster carefully explores what 'moral considerability' is. He starts by quoting G. J. Warnock:

Let us consider the question to whom principles of morality apply from, so to speak, the other end – from the standpoint not of the agent, but of the "patient." What, we may ask here, is the condition of moral *relevance*? What is the condition of having a claim to be *considered*, by rational agents to whom moral principles apply?⁸

As might be expected different philosophers draw different conclusions. Goodpaster says that Warnock locates moral considerability 'in the *capacity to suffer*', and as such implies that non-sentient beings cannot be proper beneficiaries of moral action. Goodpaster also cites Peter Singer and W. K. Frankena as writers who advocate similar views, and who together with Warnock, 'draw up the wagons around the notion of sentience'⁹ as a definitive criterion for moral consideration.

Goodpaster moves on to consider the work of Joel Feinberg, saying that it 'offers what may be the clearest and most explicit case for a restrictive criterion on moral considerability (restrictive with respect to life)'.¹⁰ Goodpaster's summary of Feinberg's work is as follows¹¹:

- (A1) Only beings who can be represented can deserve moral consideration.
Only beings who have (or can have) interests can be represented.
Therefore, only beings who have (or can have) interests can deserve moral consideration.
- (A2) Only beings capable of being beneficiaries can deserve moral consideration.
Only beings who have (or can have) interests are capable of being beneficiaries.
Therefore, only beings who have (or can have) interests can deserve moral consideration.

In dissecting these axioms Goodpaster concludes that whilst Feinberg may be right to exclude 'mere things' from the debate as they cannot have 'interests' or 'well-being', Feinberg's logic takes him in the direction of 'allowing any *living* thing the status of moral considerability'.¹²

✓ Feinberg, as a sentientist, disagrees with this ultimate conclusion. He says that 'interests' indicate desires or wants or aims that plants lack the capacity to demonstrate and so limits interests to organisms that are not 'mindless creatures'.¹³ And this is where the differences between the sentientist and biocentrist/ecocentrist positions begin to crystallise. Feinberg limits interests, Goodpaster says, by presupposing that in this context 'interest' can only mean *desire* or *wants* or *aims*, all characteristics that plants, from our human viewpoint, clearly lack. Goodpaster here shows that he believes Feinberg is moving the goal posts with this characterisation, and that it is clear that plants can be both harmed and benefitted by the actions of moral agents upon them. In the 'The Good of Trees'¹⁴ Robin Attfield expresses this well, saying that trees can

Grow, blossom, and decay: they can thrive and wither, be endangered by fire and be protected from commercial pillage. Now what can thrive, reach maturity, be endangered and be protected itself, I contend has a good. How else could we know that it was thriving?¹⁵

Given that trees and other plants also have the capacity to heal themselves, to some degree they must clearly have 'aims' such as flourishing or, as Paul Taylor says, fully developing their 'biological powers'¹⁶. Given this propensity to flourish and to 'fight back' against harms, it is clear that interests need not be limited simply to animals that can suffer and feel pleasure. Plants and many other non-sentient organisms share these characteristics too, with Goodpaster concluding,

⁷ Goodpaster, K. E. (1978, June). On Being Morally Considerable. The Journal of Philosophy, 75(6), 308-25.

⁸ Ibid, p. 308. *Warnock, cited by Goodpaster...*

⁹ Ibid, p. 317

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 317

¹¹ Ibid, p. 318

¹² Ibid, p. 319

¹³ Ibid, p. 319 - Here Goodpaster is referencing Feinberg's argument from 'The rights of Animals and Unborn Generations' p. 52.

¹⁴ Attfield, (2001) p. 330

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 37

¹⁶ Taylor, P. W. (1981). The Ethics of Respect for Nature. Environmental Ethics, 3(3), 197-218. ✓

that the interests that non-sentient beings share with sentient beings (over and against 'mere things') are far more plausible as criteria of *considerability* than the 'interests' that sentient beings share (over and against 'mindless creatures').¹⁷

For Goodpaster, at least, it is clear that the leading characteristic for moral considerability is not sentience, or even potential sentience, but the quality of *life* itself which qualifies a being as deserving of moral considerability. This view is at the root of both the biocentrist and the ecocentrist stances and is the definition of moral considerability that this essay will use to develop its arguments: **All living things can have a good of their own and have a moral standing as such.**

Ecocentrism

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The ecocentric view was first articulated in the modern sense through the writings of Aldo Leopold in his book, published posthumously, *The Sand Country Almanac*.¹⁸ It has gone on to be a key text influencing the development of ecophilosophy and, in particular, the ecocentric standpoint that this essay is examining today. Leopold's book is a clarion call to consider a new way of viewing human being's relationship with our planet. He states;

All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate (perhaps in order that there may be a place to compete for).

The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively: the land.¹⁹

For Leopold it was obvious that the human relationship with the earth and its inhabitants, separately and together, needed to change, that whilst we do, of course, express many of our ecological relationships with individuals, we all come together in a single whole namely, the Land. Leopold's views gained a greater audience in the 1960's and found their focus again in the early 1970s with the publication of Arne Naess' 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary'²⁰ and Richard Routley's 'Is there a need for a new, an environmental, ethic'²¹.

Whilst Naess' work came out of his own ecological observations and philosophical thinking, and doesn't seem to reference Leopold's Land Ethic, his work captures a similar reverence for the complexity and interconnectedness of life, clearly taking aim at the idea of value and considerability being located in one organism at a time, even if he doesn't use exactly that language. He says,

Organisms [are] knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations. An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things. The total-field model dissolves not only the man-in-environment concept, but every compact thing-in-milieu concept.²²

And,

Complexity makes thinking in terms of vast systems inevitable. It also makes for a keen, steady perception of the profound *human ignorance* of biospherical relationships and therefore of the effect of disturbances.²³

For Naess then, it seems that the idea of the being-in-environment was at best an ephemeral one, beings being so connected and interconnected with their surrounding biosphere that to describe them as individuals was virtually meaningless. To Naess the implications were obvious, it meant a redefining of ethics away from a human-centred approach to an 'ecosophy' that was firmly biosphere-centred, stating that, 'by an ecosophy I mean a philosophy of

¹⁷ Goodpaster, p 320

¹⁸ Leopold, A. (2005). *The Land Ethic*. In M. E. Zimmerman, *Environmental Philosophy: from animal rights to radical ecology* (4th ed., pp. 102-115). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education. Leopold, A. (1949). *The Land Ethic*. The Land Ethic was first published in 1949 as part of Leopold's posthumous *A Sand Country Almanac: And Sketches Here and There*.¹⁹ Page numbers here refer to Zimmerman's volume of collected essays.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 103

²⁰ Naess, A. (1973). *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary*. *Inquiry*, 16, 95-100.

²¹ Routley, R. (1973). *Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic*. *Proceedings of the XVth World Congress of Philosophy 17th to 22nd September* (pp. 205-210). Varna, Bulgaria: Sofia Press.

²² Naess, A. (1973). p. 95

²³ Ibid. p. 99

ecological harmony or equilibrium' that encompasses all human relations with other humans, as well as all human relations with the biosphere that we are inextricably part of.

In contrast to Naess, Richard Routley's work was inspired by Leopold's. Routley's 1973 paper begins by quoting and referencing Leopold in the first sentence²⁴. The paper explores the ethical implications of Leopold's critique of chauvinistic, anthropocentric, human-centred ethics ('if Leopold is right in his criticism of prevailing conduct what is required is a *change* in the ethics, in attitudes, values and evaluations.'²⁵) and explores various approaches to how our ethics might be changed. In the first part of the paper, he imagines what it might look like to bolt, so to speak, an environmental ethic on to the various anthropocentric ethical frameworks, before eventually discarding them saying that 'neither the modified dominant position nor its Western variants, obtained by combining it with the lesser traditions, is adequate as an environmental ethic, as I shall try to show. A new ethic is wanted.'²⁶ Routley then outlines his, now famous, 'Last Man' thought experiment²⁷ in which our eponymous last man, in the face of his own imminent demise, 'lays about him, eliminating every living thing, animal or plant.' By using this example Routley highlights that according to a human-centric ethic, in which *intrinsic* value is placed only on humans, the destruction of non-human life is perfectly permissible. Routley's bet here is that when faced with this example, most people cannot countenance the possibility that Mr Last Man's behaviour is morally acceptable, and that this being the case, there must be some intrinsic value in the living things that he eliminates, and as such is a compelling argument for the consideration of the biocentric viewpoint.

✓ But Routley doesn't stop here, he layers up the Last Man experiment to include the 'Last People', and finally the 'vanishing species'. With the last people, Routley characterises them as humanely exterminating animals and fish, and intensively farming the land, all maybe for very 'good' anthropocentric reasons, but with disastrous ecological results which again, most people find objectionable.

On an environmental ethic the last people have behaved badly; they have simplified and largely destroyed all the natural ecosystems, and with their demise the world will soon be an ugly and largely wrecked place.²⁸

In this example, Routley has moved from an individual destroying (possibly multiple) individuals, to a community destroying communities of life. His last vanishing species example explores this specifically, concluding that, 'the behaviour of the whalers in eliminating this magnificent species of whale is accordingly quite permissible – at least according to basic chauvinism. But on an environmental ethic it is not.'²⁹

Routley is quite clear that it is not only individuals that have value, but the communities and systems of life that they are part of that have value too. That the purposeless destruction of both individuals and populations is so objectionable gives weight to the idea that both individuals and populations have intrinsic value, and as such have moral considerability. Routley concludes that, 'persons can relate morally, through obligations, prohibitions and so forth, to practically anything at all.'³⁰

Good. Could you relate this example more directly to the Question?

Interestingly, whilst Naess and Routley may have been the first to build on Leopold's Land ethic, others soon joined the chorus, coming to similar conclusions. Holmes Rolston III writes³¹ lyrically and persuasively on the radical 'claim that morality is a derivative of the holistic character of the ecosystem' saying, 'Construct values though man may, he operates in an environmental context where he must ground his values in ecosystemic obedience.'³² 'In this environmental encounter, he finds homeostasis a key to all values...'³³ J. Baird Callicott also joins the chorus of approval³⁴, building on Leopold's thesis and concludes that,

the land ethic is eminently practicable, since, by reference to a single good, competing individual claims may be adjudicated and relative values and priorities assigned to the myriad components of the biotic community.

²⁴ Routley, R. (1973). p. 205

²⁵ Ibid. p. 205

²⁶ Ibid. p. 206.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 207

²⁸ Ibid. p. 208

²⁹ Ibid. p. 208

³⁰ Ibid. p. 209

³¹ Rolston, H. (1975). Is There an Ecological Ethic? Ethics, 85(2), 93-109.

³² Ibid. p. 98

³³ Ibid. p. 99

³⁴ Callicott, J. B. (1980). Animal Liberation: A triangular affair. Environmental Ethics, 2(4), 311-338.

For ecocentrists then, not only species, but all the components of biospheric ecosystems have a good of their own and have moral standing in and of themselves.

Critiques of ecocentrism

For many assigning value to non-living components of these systems (species, rivers, mountains, the atmosphere, etc.) is going too far.

Objection: Joel Feinberg says that 'The topic of whole species can be treated in much the same way as that of individual plants.', because neither can 'have beliefs, expectations, wants, or desires, and can flourish or languish only in the human interest-related sense in which individual plants thrive and decay.'³⁵ He goes on to assert that individual organisms can have interests, but as a group or species they cannot, something that Robin Attfield amongst others specifically agrees with.³⁶

Reply - 1: Feinberg's standpoint on species seems to stem from his assumption that non-sentient living things cannot have interests, and, as quoted previously, specifically massages the meaning of our understanding of 'interests' in order to justify it³⁷. Goodpaster objects to Feinberg's redefinition on the basis that it cuts out plant life. Quoting Feinberg, Goodpaster says,

'Plants may need things in order to discharge their functions, but their functions are assigned by human interests, not their own.' As if it were human interests that assigned to the trees the tasks of growth or maintenance! The interests at stake are clearly those of the living things themselves, not simply those of the owners or users or other human persons involved.³⁸

Goodpaster's logic here is sound in justifying the inclusion of plant life as morally considerable because it conforms to his A1 and A2 arguments³⁹, but does not extend far enough. The same conclusions could be drawn when applied to both an individual and its species as a whole. Using Goodpaster's arguments then you could say of an individual elephant that,

- A1 An Elephant can be represented so deserves moral consideration.
 An elephant has interests so can be represented.
 Therefore an elephant that has interests is deserving of moral consideration.
- A2 An Elephant can be a beneficiary and so deserves moral consideration.
 An elephant has interests and so is capable of being a beneficiary.
 Therefore, an elephant with interests can deserve moral consideration.

And as Goodpaster uses this framework to include plants, why does it not justify the inclusion of species and, for that matter, ecosystems? Equally you could use this formula to say the same of the elephant species,

- A1 The elephant species can be represented so deserves moral consideration.
 The elephant species has interests so can be represented.
 Therefore the elephant species that has interests is deserving of moral consideration.
- A2 The elephant species can be a beneficiary and so deserves moral consideration.
 The elephant species has interests and so is capable of being a beneficiary.
 Therefore, the elephant species with interests can deserve moral consideration.

Very Good.

Since species can be included in this argument, it is fair to say that species have a good in themselves, can be represented, so must have interests too.

Reply - 2: In his attempts to define plants and populations as being undeserving of moral considerability, Feinberg tries to rationalise it by comparing species to corporate entities (his paper is, after all, about rights). He believes that this comparison serves to undermine the claims that species might have to moral considerability. 'A corporate entity,' he contends, 'is more than a mere collection of things,' and 'unlike a biological species, an institution has ... a constitution, ... with rules defining procedures, and ... human beings [who] administer the rules and procedures.' Except that this rather undermines his case. Ecosystems and species are groups with fundamental principles and established mechanisms that form the physical basis of a population and commonly determine how that population functions. That they can be harmed,

³⁵ Feinberg, (1974) pp. 55-56

³⁶ Attfield, R. (2014). *Environmental Ethics* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

³⁷ Feinberg. (1974) pp. 52-53

³⁸ Goodpaster. (1978) p. 319

³⁹ Ibid. p. 318

benefitted, have interests and be represented is beyond question. In India the concept of Juridical Personhood has been applied to the 'rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and their tributaries and glaciers as juristic persons.'⁴⁰ If this is the case then they must have moral considerability, and therefore, so too must species.

Objection: Attfield, in 'Environmental Ethics', specifically says that 'Species and ecosystems are not living organisms and lack a good of their own.'⁴¹

Reply: Attfield's statement, mirrored in different ways by others, betrays a deeply atomistic approach to both the natural world, science and the ethical world around us. This desire to understand and break down our systems and processes to the smallest constituent parts, assigns value and worth to the various components, but often does so without seeing the value and worth in the whole. By smashing the picture to see what it's made of, we lose the larger good of the whole. This idea that 'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts' is an idea that has been attributed to Aristotle and is a key component of the theory of 'Emergence'. In the first issue of the journal 'Emergence', Jeffrey Goldstein says,

Emergence refers to the arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns, and properties during the process of self-organisation in complex systems. Emergent phenomena are conceptualized as occurring on the macro-level, in contrast to the micro-level components and processes out of which they arise.⁴²

Elsewhere Jørgensen et al. say

The present theory of ecology is only partial because it is not a systems theory.

.... A fundamental precept of the new ecosystem ecology must be that complex systems are not reducible, that from cell to biosphere the essence of systemness is interconnection—all things acting together in a tangle of complexity.

..... If we cannot understand systems except by separating them into parts, and if by doing this we sacrifice important properties of the whole, then we cannot understand systems.⁴³

An ecosystem is a self-organised system of living and non-living components that live, and function together supported in and by solid, fluid and gaseous matrices. This as easily describes the human body as it does Yellowstone National Park. The point here is that life is everywhere, and the idea that an organism is one organism alone is a falsehood. No individual animal is made up only of the cells that code their DNA but carry around similar (and sometimes greater) numbers of bacterial and other cells in relationships that we are only now beginning to understand. They have a massive effect on who beings are and how they interact with the world. Indeed, gut microbiota are increasingly studied⁴⁴ for their role in digestion, obesity, and both physical and mental ill-health. Given that the gut microbiome has been shown to have impacts on human thought processes and mental health⁴⁵, can it be true that 'I think, therefore I am'? In the 'natural world' ecologists are recognising that ecosystems slowly die without key species⁴⁶. Wolves and cougars, for so long hunted to non-existence in America's national parks, when allowed to resettle, have resulted in massive explosions of biodiversity, transforming landscapes that had become little more than degraded ecological deserts. In exploring these systems, we see that ecosystems can die, we see that they can thrive, we can see that they can be harmed, and they can be benefitted. We can see that the systems have a good of their own, as do the constituent species components

Conclusions

It is clear that there is significant divergence amongst philosophers as to what it means for different beings to have a good and have moral standing as such. In the first instance there is the debate between those limiting these characteristics to human beings and those who want to extend them to other beings, sentient or otherwise. As a starting point this essay has assumed that all living things can have a good of their own, and moral standing as such.

⁴⁰ Alley, K. D. (2019). River Goddesses, Personhood and Rights of Nature: Implications for Spiritual Ecology. *Religions*, 10, 502-518.

⁴¹ Attfield. (2014) p. 39

⁴² Goldstein, J. (1999). Emergence as a construct: History and Issues. *Emergence*, 1(1), 49-72.

⁴³ Jørgensen, S. E., Patten, B. C., & Straškraba, M. (1992). Ecosystems emerging: toward an ecology of complex systems in a complex future. *Ecological Modelling*, 62(1-3), 1-27.

⁴⁴ Valdes, A. M., Walter, J., Segal, E., & Spector, T. D. (2018). Role of the gut microbiota in nutrition and health. *BMJ* (Online), k2179

⁴⁵ Lucas, G. (2018). Gut thinking: the gut microbiome and mental. *Microbial Ecology in Health and Disease*, 29(2), 1548250. doi:10.1080/16512235.2018.1548250

⁴⁶ Anspacher-Meyer, K. (Director). (2009). *Lords of Nature : Life in a Land of Great Predators* [Motion Picture]. San Francisco, CA: The Video Project.

Secondly, we come to the debate between those who say that only individual beings can have a good of their own, and moral standing as such, and those who propose to extend that capacity to populations and systems of living organisms and physical non-living components too, which includes those populations we call species.

For Aldo Leopold, it was quite clear – the good of the health of 'The Land' (that is to say the soils, waters, plants, animals, and of course our own human communities) and its capacity for self-renewal should be our ultimate 'good'. For Arne Naess the idea of an organism considered alone was almost impossible to conceive, viewing relations between different beings as so tight as to render each organism a different thing if the relationship was untangled. And Routley's last man thought experiments throw light on the emotional value that humans place on animals, plants and species showing that for all of them, all but the most hardened of us perceive that there is some 'good' that prevents us from wantonly destroying animals, ecosystems and species. Other writers too, notably Rolston and Callicott, have more explicitly expressed what Leopold implied, that the 'good' of all and each individual's moral standing should be derived from the holistic nature of the ecosystem.

What are the implications of this?

Criticism of these viewpoints comes from Goodpaster and Attfield who defend the good of living things as each exists individually but cannot bring themselves to recognise the 'good' of the living, emergent ecosystem matrices that individuals and populations of different species make up together. Feinberg, in 'The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations' says that 'The whole topic of species, whether plants or animals, can be treated in much the same way as that of individual plants.' And he is right to say so, but whilst his instinct is to deny moral standing to plants and hence to species, when we turn his standpoint on its head by accepting plants as deserving of moral standing, we are all but obliged to grant moral standing to species (both animal and vegetable) too.

Likewise, when Feinberg describes the rights (read 'good') of corporations, non-living entities made up of living components, but which are never-the-less granted juridical personhood, he accepts that populations of living organisms can have a 'good' of their own and so moral standing as such. It is no large jump to apply the same approach to species and ecosystems as has been done in India with the Ganga and Yumuna rivers.

This essay has explored some of the viewpoints and challenges to the *claim* *claim* idea that 'Species have a good of their own, and they have moral standing as such'. It is a *claim* idea fraught with pitfalls and yet for all that deeply compelling. That individual beings can have a good of their own and have moral standing as such is clear to all biocentrists. To say that these individual beings stand aloof from their fellows and that together they cannot have a good of their own or moral standing as such is clearly wrong. The quality of life itself is so compelling and, with emergence theory now demonstrating that ecosystems have a greater good than the goods of their component parts, we must say that individually and together species surely have a good of their own and are deserving of moral standing as such.

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