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Module title: Environmental Philosophy		
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Assignment title: Final Essay		
Assignment due date: 10 Sept, 2021		
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1 st Marker's Provisional mark	64
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This is an ambitious piece of work that is very well written and researched. You tackle difficult issues in the topic, but I think that, in places, further counter-argument & an assessment of such argument would be helpful. This would either bolster your conclusion, or could well lead to a different

For completion by Marker 1: Conclusion. That said, overall, you present relatively well sustained arguments

Comments: & an interesting thesis that could be

Marker 1 signature:

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Date:

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Comments:

64 ~~64~~

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A very interesting piece of work. Your writing is incredibly fluid & accessible, making this work an enjoyable read, too.

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Excavating an Adequate Environmental Ethic: Assessing Biocentrism, Ecocentrism, and Their Collective Potential

THE ISSUE

One of the most pressing debates within environmental philosophy seeks to define humanity's ethical responsibilities to the other-than-human world. To contribute to this ongoing conversation, this paper considers whether biocentrism or ecocentrism offers the more generative approach to establish how humans ought to ethically engage our environment(s). To do so, I will first assess the merits, distinctions, and similarities of both philosophical frameworks. From this comparison, I will then consider the argument that, despite popular belief, biocentrism and ecocentrism are not only compatible, but complementary ethical systems. Building on this hypothesis, I will blur the boundaries further by highlighting foundational oversights shared by biocentrists and ecocentrists, which indicate that the two moral frameworks are, in fact, one. Finally, I will offer what I call *inclusive biocentrism* as a common, cohesive moral system that effectively underlies and unifies both frameworks for a more adequate ecological ethic.

V. good intro.

TWO APPROACHES TO THE SAME PROBLEM

Biocentrism and ecocentrism both emerged within an ongoing effort to expand the scope of moral consideration to include the other-than-human world. As such, both ethical systems share a keen interest in evolving beyond normative anthropocentrism, which according to Robin Attfield, "limits moral standing to human beings, confines the scope of morality and moral concern to human interests, and regards nothing but human well-being as [intrinsically] valuable".¹ Biocentrists and ecocentrists alike recognize that such a human-centred worldview

¹ Attfield, Robin, *Environmental Ethics*, second edition. (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, MA: Polity, 2014), p. 221

is a dangerously deficient philosophical framework that unjustifiably privileges short-sighted human interests at the expense of other life forms and environmental integrity.² Yet, despite their shared critique of anthropocentric worldviews, normative biocentrist and ecocentrist systems offer differing solutions for locating intrinsic value in order to clarify what (or who) merits moral consideration.

Broadly speaking, ecocentrists prioritize the well-being of the community (e.g., ecologies, species, etc.) over that of its individual members, thereby granting moral standing to an overarching whole in lieu of its constituents.³ Ecocentrism's origin within Western philosophical thought is often attributed to Aldo Leopold's *The Land Ethic*, in which he challenges anthropocentrism by introducing a radically more inclusive moral framework that extends the "boundaries of the [ethical] community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals".⁴ Whereas the incumbent philosophical tradition of his time focused on the purportedly isolated interactions between individual agents (which is to say humans), Leopold's *Land Ethic* acknowledges the inescapable realities of ecological interdependence to prioritize the well-being of interconnected communities. In clarifying his proposed ethical framework, Leopold clearly grants moral standing to ecosystems themselves, stating that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise".⁵ According to ecocentrism, individuals and communities are inextricably linked, but the priority is to maintain the good of the collective. This hierarchical tension between individuals and groups forms the basis of a key critique of ecocentric ethics, namely that it can be blind to—or even require—individual suffering to maintain the net positive well-being of the whole, however miniscule that margin may be.⁶ By extension, this provides little recourse to ensure the ethical treatment of individuals, such as factory farm animals, if their suffering doesn't adversely impact the stability of the entire species or

² Curry, Patrick, *Ecological Ethics: An Introduction*, second edition. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), pp. 54–60.

³ Attfield, *Environmental Ethics*, p. 11

⁴ Leopold, Aldo, *The Land Ethic* [originally appeared in Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949], in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, eds. Zimmerman et al (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), p. 103

⁵ Leopold, *The Land Ethic*, p. 114

⁶ Regan, Tom, *Does Environmental Ethics Rest on A Mistake?*, in *The Monist*, Vol. 75, No. 2, *The Intrinsic Value of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 177–179

overarching system.

In the subsequent and ongoing development of ecocentrist thought, Patrick Curry attempts to address the perceived friction between holistic entities and their component individuals in defining his *Dark Green (Ecocentric) Ethics*.⁷ In particular, Curry states that it's necessary that a properly articulated ecocentrism be "holistic, but not in the sense of excluding considerations of individual value," which he further clarifies as "the idea that some or all natural beings, in the broadest sense, have independent moral status".⁸ It's worth noting that 'natural beings,' in the way Curry uses and intends the phrase, is not limited to the living. Instead, Curry's elegant explanation of ecocentrist philosophy refines and further articulates an implicit tenet of Leopold's *Land Ethic*—specifically that ecocentrists recognize the moral worth of the animate and what they view as non-living components within an environment (e.g., stones or rivers).⁹

Whereas ecocentrism leans towards a more holistic value-theory, biocentrism holds that all individual living beings, rather than collectives, have intrinsic value and are therefore worthy of moral standing.¹⁰ The unfolding legacy of biocentrist thought reaches back to Paul Taylor's *The Ethics of Respect for Nature*, in which he argues that because all life has inherent value, humans are morally bound to protect and promote the good of all living creatures for their sake—not simply to satisfy our own interests.¹¹ Taylor elaborates this view that while every individual organism is a "teleological center of life [...] pursuing its own good in its own way," this by no means negates the importance of healthy, functioning ecosystems.¹² Attfield further clarifies this nuance, noting that:

biocentrists do not deny that ecosystems have great value; but this value arises (according to biocentrism) from the way that

⁷ Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, p. 92.

⁸ Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, pp. 92–93.

⁹ Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, p. 92.

¹⁰ Attfield, *Environmental Ethics*, p. 10

¹¹ Taylor, Paul, *The Ethics of Respect for Nature*, in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, eds. Michael E. Zimmerman et al (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 67–69

¹² Taylor, *Ethics of Respect for Nature*, p. 70

ecosystems facilitate the lives and flourishing of the numerous individual creatures that comprise them.¹³

In other words, biocentrism recognizes the *instrumental* value of the ^eEcosphere. But unlike ecocentrists, biocentrists categorically deny the possibility that subjects often characterized as inanimate (e.g., ecosystems, rivers, species, etc.) are worthy of moral standing.¹⁴

BLURRING THE 'BOUNDARIES'

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commas
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articles.

Despite their differences, it's not necessarily the case that biocentrism and ecocentrism are entirely at odds with one another. This is the position put forth by Mary Midgley in her *Beasts Versus the Biosphere?*, in which she focuses on the perceived tensions between the deep ecology and animal liberation movements, arguing that these frameworks are neither incompatible nor mutually exclusive. Instead, Midgley recognizes that ecocentrism and biocentrism are "inseparable aspects of a decent moral problem," serving as complementary ethical theories along a shared spectrum, just with different emphases.¹⁵ To galvanize this point, she creates a conceptual Venn Diagram—albeit one without distinct edges—to illustrate the ways in which ecocentrism and biocentrism cannot be separated from one another. Instead, according to Midgley, both ethical systems share a fundamental gravity of mutual influence and interdependence, due in large part to the shared understanding that individuals and the overarching environment need one another.¹⁶ As she deftly points out, nuance between philosophical frameworks is not sufficient grounds for one to negate the other. Instead, she writes:

¹³ Attfield, *Environmental Ethics*, p. 10

¹⁴ Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, p. 92

Taylor, *Ethics of Respect for Nature*, p. 80

¹⁵ Midgley, Mary, *Beasts Versus the Biosphere?*, *Environmental Values*, Vol.1, No.2, 1992, p. 117

¹⁶ Midgley, *Beasts Versus the Biosphere?*, p. 114

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any sane and workable approach to life has to contain both an attitude to individuals and an attitude to larger wholes. Neither of them is reducible to the other. It is always possible for the two to conflict, but it is always necessary to try to bring them into harmony.¹⁷

Put another way, morality cannot exist or function in a philosophical vacuum solely devoted to individuals or ecosystems at the expense of the other. Rather, a moral framework needs to fit into and evolve within a dynamic and inclusive matrix of real-world relations, interactions, and conflicts.¹⁸

Ecocentrism & biocentrists could agree.

Midgley's insights suggest that an 'either/or' approach to ecological ethics is inherently self-defeating—the real work requires a 'yes, and.' As such, she champions a philosophical landscape of abundance, where even conflicting worldviews cooperate to create a rich and generative tapestry of ethical possibility, stating that "one great philosopher doesn't displace another; . . . there is room for all of them and a great many more".¹⁹ However, despite lauding the power and potential of philosophical pluralism, Midgley ultimately stops short of providing a workable blueprint to reconcile conflicts between biocentrism and ecocentrism—if there are conflicts at all.

STRAW MEN BUILT UP TO BURN

Midgley attributes much of the alleged tension between biocentrists and ecocentrists to the urgency by which both groups worked to establish themselves in the new and emerging field of environmental philosophy in the 1970s.²⁰ In all the hubbub, Midgley grants that it's unfortunate, but understandable how these two emerging approaches could be seen to

¹⁷ Midgley, *Beasts Versus the Biosphere?*, p. 116

¹⁸ Midgley, *Beasts Versus the Biosphere?*, p. 116

¹⁹ Midgley, *Beasts Versus the Biosphere?*, p. 117

²⁰ Midgley, *Beasts Versus the Biosphere?*, p. 113

conflict, especially when passions from both camps fuelled unnecessary infighting as everyone involved ultimately pursued the same, or similar, outcomes.²¹ However, with hindsight and upon closer inspection, it's clear that the disagreements between biocentrists and ecocentrists run deeper than a long overdue struggle for attention and legitimacy. In addition, these conflicts also hinge on differing interpretations of two problematic principles that plague both frameworks: the nature of individuality and the dubious definition(s) of 'life'. I argue that because biocentrists and ecocentrists misinterpret these shared criteria (albeit in different ways), the resulting 'conflict' they create is neither valid, sound, nor even necessary. Instead, by dismantling the phantom causes of these disagreements, one can establish that biocentrism and ecocentrism need not disagree at all and are in fact needlessly partitioned expressions of the same ethic.

Okay. Will you say
how each might respond to this
claim?

The Nature of Individuality

Both biocentrists and ecocentrists identify a sense of distinction between individuals and systems, but both remain regrettably unclear as to where those boundaries begin and end. In articulating her *Ideology of Isolation*, Rebecca Solnit problematizes this fraught impulse to delineate an individual, arguing that if only just on a physiological level, a complex organism is *also* an amalgam of countless numbers and species of bacteria, archaea, viruses, and other microorganisms who necessarily work together to digest food and harness nutrients that would otherwise remain inaccessible.²² More broadly, advancements in gastroenterology have firmly established that an organism's microbiota conducts vital biological tasks, including protecting against pathogens, educating the overarching immune system, and ensuring the body's metabolic function to support the health of the whole.²³ Far from passive 'helpers,' microorganisms in the gut have also been shown to actively influence one's brain function, decision-making, mental health, and behaviour.²⁴ What follows is the irrefutable realization

²¹ Midgley, *Beasts Versus the Biosphere?*, p. 113

²² Solnit, Rebecca, *The Ideology of Isolation*, in Harper's Magazine, 2016. <<https://harpers.org/archive/2016/07/the-ideology-of-isolation/>> [accessed 23 August, 2021].

²³ Shreiner, Andrew B, et al., *The Gut Microbiome in Health and in Disease*, in Current Opinion in Gastroenterology, Vol. 31,1 (2015): pp. 69-75

²⁴ Yang, Beibei, et al. *Effects of Regulating Intestinal Microbiota on Anxiety Symptoms: A Systematic Review*, General Psychiatry, Vol. 32, 2. 2019

Yes, taken together. But are they
the same?

that individuals can be (eco)systems too. This of course presents a considerable conundrum for some ecocentrists, who are therefore obliged by their own terms to grant moral standing to systems of all sizes, from individual organisms to galaxy clusters—and beyond. Conversely for biocentrists, the paradox of individuality must also then accommodate key considerations for the moral standing of systems. Taking the human body as an example: what's good for the whole may not be ideal for an individual microorganism in the digestive tract. So, who is the individual here? It depends on where one sets their blinders. ^{Reward} Regardless, Calvin Luther Martin sums it up rather succinctly, stating that "only a fool would imagine himself as somehow exclusively a human being".²⁵ Looking past his gendered and human-centred phraseology, it nonetheless stands that this insight applies just as easily to any 'individual', *Homo sapiens* or otherwise.

The Limits of 'Life'

✓ Biocentrism (literally meaning 'life-centred') holds that life is requisite for having moral standing. But what *is* life exactly? The short answer is that no one really knows, thus rendering biocentrism decidedly malleable and vulnerable to interpretation depending on what one views as 'living'.²⁶ It's important to consider that humans have continually reshaped our understanding of life throughout history, in large part due to ongoing cultural and scientific revolutions.²⁷ Considering the ever-accelerating advancements in the fields of genetic engineering and artificial life, Eugene Thacker argues that biometric and philosophical breakthroughs have "in different ways, deconstructed the idea that life is exclusively natural or biological".²⁸ Building on the same and similar precedents, Carol Cleland adds that our current "understanding of life is too limited to support a theoretically useful, tentative generalization about *all* life".²⁹ Furthermore, she states that any "definitional approaches to understanding life

²⁵ Martin, Calvin Luther, *In the Spirit of the Earth*, in *Rethinking History and Time* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1992

²⁶ Cleland, Carol E., *Life Without Definitions*, in *Synthese*, Vol. 185, No. 1, Philosophical Problems About Life, 2021, pp. 125–144

²⁷ Lange, M. *Life, 'Artificial Life,' and Scientific Explanation*, in *Philosophy of Science*, 63, 1995, pp. 223–224

²⁸ Thacker, Eugene, *After Life*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. ix

²⁹ Cleland, Carol E., *Life Without Definitions*, p. 126

... are all deeply problematic from both a philosophical and scientific perspective".³⁰ For Cleland, this is twofold. Firstly, at very least, our "biological concept of life will almost certainly continue to change in unanticipated ways" due to ongoing and immanent developments in scientific and philosophical thought.³¹ Additionally, she argues, humans simply cannot know what life is, given that our experience of life may be just a single, unrepresentative, inaccurate, and/or woefully incomplete expression thereof.³² Without the conceptual cornerstone of a neatly defined concept of life, how can one then possibly assess the suggestion that biosystems are 'alive' or that 'inanimate objects' are unworthy of moral consideration?³³ One might start by making peace with the reality that the human capacity for imagination is just as vital and productive as our ability to uncover knowledge. We *know* life exists, but since we are blind to its nature, we are nonetheless privileged to imagine a real and magnificent possibility that everything is imbued with an animating force of some kind.

But -
not
knowing
exactly
where
to
draw
the line
does not
refute
biocentrism

THE BALLAST BENEATH BOTH WORLDS

Taking the point that individuality is a slippery construct with non-existent edges and that our concept of life is inherently elusive, normative biocentrist and ecocentrist ideologies have little left to argue about. This of course reveals the plausibility of a vastly more generative, inclusive, and pluralistic moral framework—which I call *inclusive biocentrism*—to discern our ecological and environmental responsibilities. Rather than a decidedly new ethic, *inclusive biocentrism* is better understood as an unadulterated expression of the shared and underlying tenets held by both biocentrists and ecocentrists. In fact, this framework has already been distilled—at least implicitly—throughout the development of normative biocentrist and ecocentrist thought.

could you
show
awareness
of this,
perhaps?
Is a
counter-claim?
perhaps?

Interesting -

³⁰ Cleland, Carol E., *Life Without Definitions*, p. 126

³¹ Cleland, Carol E., *Life Without Definitions*, p. 137

³² Cleland, Carol E., *Life Without Definitions*, p. 130

³³ Goodpaster, Kenneth. *On Being Morally Considerable*, *The Journal of Philosophy* 75,6 (1978): 308-325; G. Varner, *In Nature's Interests? Interests, Animal Rights, and Environmental Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 310

Raffaele Rodogno has done considerable work to highlight an opening through which one can recognize the stirrings of *inclusive biocentrism*. In his *Sentientism, Wellbeing, and Environmentalism*, he seeks to establish an alternative moral system that satisfies what he considers to be significant oversights in sentientist and holistic environmental ethics.³⁴ From one angle, he argues that sentience itself is an insufficient criterion for an adequate ethic because it excludes many beings who are nonetheless worthy of moral standing—instead offering well-being and interests as more accurate indicators thereof.³⁵ Whereas sentientists tend to preclude plants from having moral significance due to the idea that they lack the capacity for pain, pleasure, interests, or consciousness, Rodogno argues otherwise. He adds that even if a being such as a plant lacks consciousness, well-being, or interests *in the way we understand and experience them*, we cannot therefore conclude that the individual lacks these capacities.³⁶ Put plainly, humans can't judge other-than-human beings using human criteria. But doesn't this refreshing humility open the floodgates to furnish anyone (*everyone?*)—and anything (*everything?!*)—with moral significance? Rodogno offers a resounding 'no', arguing that inanimate objects such as cars and stones are incapable of well-being.³⁷ However, this example precipitates a considerable problem: his presupposition that rocks, rivers, sunlight, or any other so-called 'objects' are, in fact, inanimate.³⁸ Graham Harvey's research complicates this position, citing the Ojibwe people's understanding that, at very least, some stones are animate (i.e., alive).³⁹ Coupled with Cleland's wholesale rejection that humans are qualified to define the limits and expressions of life in the first place,⁴⁰ this divergence in cultural cosmology reveals a fraught attempt by Rodogno to limit the scope of his moral theory solely to animate beings, for it all depends on where one draws that distinction—if at all. Therefore, depending on the biocentrist's worldview, minerals, storms, and even the land itself can be alive, and are therefore worthy of moral consideration.

But - as if complex interests arise. Surely there is a sense in which being alive counts for something?

³⁴ Rodogno, Raffaele. *Sentientism, Wellbeing, and Environmentalism*. Journal of Applied Philosophy, 27 (1), 2010, pp. 84–97.

³⁵ Rodogno, *Sentientism, Wellbeing, and Environmentalism*, pp. 84–97.

³⁶ Rodogno, *Sentientism, Wellbeing, and Environmentalism*, pp. 93–95.

³⁷ Rodogno, *Sentientism, Wellbeing, and Environmentalism*, p. 94.

³⁸ Rodogno, *Sentientism, Wellbeing, and Environmentalism*, p. 95.

³⁹ Harvey, Graham. *Animism: Respecting the Living World*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), pp. 31–38.

⁴⁰ Cleland, Carol E., *Life Without Definitions*, p. 130.

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The suggestion that land lives is a pointed one, specifically for identifying the undercurrent of *inclusive biocentrism* throughout the evolution of normative ecocentrism. In the nascent stirrings of what would gradually evolve into ecocentrist ethics, Aldo Leopold's Biotic Pyramid overtly suggests an understanding and accommodation for the idea that land has a life of its own. After thoroughly criticizing a mechanistic conception of nature, Leopold then sets out to reshape how we view and understand the environment—not as an inert context in which life can flourish, but as a dynamic "fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals".⁴¹ Land, in Leopold's Biotic Pyramid, is pluralistic. However, this brings up an interesting possibility: though he specifically describes the land as "biota," at what point might the land *itself* be alive?⁴² While Leopold doesn't explicitly articulate this point, his characterization of food chains as "living channels" through which ecologies operate suggests the belief—or the conceptual inconsistency—that systems (including the land itself) *can* live in at least some capacity.⁴³

It's an exciting possibility, particularly for animists seeking allies in philosophical circles, but it's also one that benefits from additional explanation offered by Leopold's disciple, Arne Næss. Due in large part to his development of the *Deep Ecology* movement, Arne Næss is often viewed as a foundational figure in the gradual evolution of ecocentrism. However, this ascription isn't as clear cut as environmental philosophers like to believe. In developing his *Deep Ecology*, Næss argues that all life on Earth holds intrinsic value regardless of whether it's considered useful to humans.⁴⁴ It's important however to note that in this context, Næss defines 'life' in a "more comprehensive nontechnical way to also refer to what biologists classify as 'nonliving': rivers (watersheds), landscapes, ecosystems".⁴⁵ This expansion of language indicates that there's more underlying Næss's *Deep Ecology* than a purely ecocentric approach. In fact, Curry reinforces this conclusion by acknowledging that the *Deep Ecology* movement used the terms 'biocentric' and 'ecocentric' interchangeably.⁴⁶ Rather than

⁴¹ Leopold, *The Land Ethic*, p. 109

⁴² Leopold, *The Land Ethic*, p. 112

⁴³ Leopold, *The Land Ethic*, pp. 109–110

⁴⁴ Næss, Arne, *The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects*, in *Philosophical Inquiry*, Vol. VIII, No. 1–2, 1986, p. 405.

⁴⁵ Næss, Arne, *Deep Ecology Movement*, p. 405

⁴⁶ Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, p. 102

indicating a careless lack of specificity, it's more plausible that this conceptual nuance intentionally acknowledges a continuity of thought between biocentrist and ecocentrist ideology. For Næss, the environment itself—as simultaneously living and non-living—is worthy of intrinsic value, therefore revealing a powerful ley line that links the ostensibly distinct purviews of ecocentrist and biocentrist ethics into a cohesive moral framework.

Since traces of *inclusive biocentrism* are evident throughout the development of environmental philosophy, it follows that various critiques may also warrant discussion. In particular, one of Patrick Curry's most salient critiques of biocentrism centres on its individualism, specifically his perception that "individuals always trump the interests of ecosystems, because the latter are not morally considerable".⁴⁷ Yet within the *inclusive biocentrist* framework, this is impossible given that individuals and ecosystems are ontologically identical, just on different scales. Turning to the question of life, Curry also criticizes normative biocentrism on the basis that it myopically prioritizes the living to effectively obstruct ethical consideration of the non-living.⁴⁸ However, because *inclusive biocentrism* holds that everything (or rather, everyone) has the scientific and/or philosophical potential for life—and the ethical weight that comes with it—this framework more than satisfies these perceived shortcomings. Furthermore, the philosophical, etymological, and rhetorical structure of *inclusive biocentrism* actively complements Curry's *Deep Green Ethics* in furnishing the other-than-human world—in its endless expressions—with moral standing.

How might one counter-argue this point?

It's worth considering why *inclusive biocentrism* isn't instead called 'inclusive ecocentrism'. Simply because, despite the arbitrary nature of such an association, humans tend to respond to and prioritize that which we understand to have an animating force. For those who make the distinction, life systems are important, but they aren't generally as cuddly as a life itself. By including systems within a life-oriented outlook, *inclusive biocentrism* acknowledges the possibility that systems themselves can be alive, making it more likely for humans to thoroughly consider and respect them due to our groundless, but nonetheless inherent, bias towards the living, so to speak.

Paradox

What are the implications of this?

⁴⁷ Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, pp. 76–77
⁴⁸ Curry, *Ecological Ethics*, p. 92

So should they be treated the same? Surely 'being alive' in a clear sense (as distinct from being dead) is imp. The fact that a cat is alive makes it worthy of consideration, it has inherent existence. A dead cat doesn't.

Granted, there's a legitimate argument to be made that biocentrism, when properly understood, doesn't need a qualifier in order to be more inclusive and representative of a broader spectrum of experience than life with a lowercase 'l'. This is absolutely valid given that normative biocentrism can be rather chauvinistic in clutching to narrow conceptions of life. It may have been more fruitful to qualify the normative stance as "limited" biocentrism, but this risks prolonged confusion and misunderstanding given that normative biocentrism itself is well established and understood as an ethical tradition. Alas, precedent has more momentum behind it. Additionally, the difference between "inclusive" and what one might otherwise call "limited" biocentrism is not a disagreement in philosophy, but one of scope.

So, if *inclusive biocentrism* is a cohesive whole that synthesizes core tenets of normative biocentrism and ecocentrism by subverting their respective, self-sabotaging limitations surrounding individuality and life itself, how might one then *define* such an ethic? Faced with a similar challenge, Arne Næss finds merit not in dogma, but in dynamism:

One should not expect too much from definitions of movements
... And there is no reason why supporters of any movement
should adhere exactly to the same definition, or to any definition,
for that matter.⁴⁹

There is multiplicity in every message. And yet, it's nonetheless valuable—indeed necessary—to express the principles of one's thinking so it can be witnessed, interpreted, and, most importantly, built upon by others. As such, I offer the following principles as the foundational, yet perpetually nascent tenets of *inclusive biocentrism*:

1. *'Life' exists, but because humans cannot judge the other-than-human world based on human criteria, we therefore cannot effectively decide what—or who—is not 'alive'.* As such, people must consider the distinct possibility (probability) that there's no such thing as the inanimate and that everything (i.e. everyone) has an undeniable potential

⁴⁹ Næss, Arne, *Deep Ecology Movement*, p. 404

for life—including nonmaterial beings such as species, ecosystems, *genii locorum*, the Sidhe, etc.

2. *All who live—or can live—are worthy of respect and moral standing.*
3. *Life is relational—and altercations are inevitable.* Ethics cannot prevent conflict from arising. Rather, it should seek to imbue all interactions—combative and otherwise—with due respect and consideration for others.

BIOCENTRISM OR ECOCENTRISM? YES.

In appraising the respective values of normative biocentrism and ecocentrism, it becomes increasingly clear that neither framework, *in isolation*, offers an adequately functional ethical theory to thoroughly address our environmental responsibilities. Furthermore, ethicists have little to gain by coercing these moral systems into a zero-sum game that fuels arbitrary disagreements over inherently problematic criteria. Taken together, the myth of individuality and the quandary of 'life' effectively thwart any attempt to limit—or even delineate—the boundaries of moral standing in either moral system. However, this does not suggest that biocentrism or ecocentrism are invalid ethical frameworks. Rather, it simply indicates that they can be prone to distraction. In that manner, *inclusive biocentrism* is not a negation of normative biocentrist or ecocentrist thought; it is an expansion thereof. It distills and synthesizes both frameworks into their more unadulterated form, which grants moral consideration simply to others—the 'individuals,' the systems, the non-bodied, and those who 'live' differently than humans do.

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