



Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

Student Name: <u>Kane Alexander</u>	
Module title: <u>Env, Sustainability & Philosophy</u>	Student number:
For completion by marker:	
Comments: This piece of work contains many inaccuracies, conceptual confusions & misinterpretations to the extent that it is not clear that the reading material has been read in sufficient depth. Indeed, when you discuss Taylor's stance it is almost as if you're discussing an author <u>other than</u> Taylor. Further, there are claims made that need to be argued for, & the content of the annotated bibliography reveals many misunderstandings. I advise to read the texts in much more depth, along with consolidation reading material. ☒	
Marker's signature: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date: <u>29/5/19</u>
Provisional mark: <u>35/70</u>	
NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.	

☒ Feel free to pop & see me if you want to discuss your work.
Please see comments in the body of your work too.



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What, if anything, is intrinsically valuable and why?: Annotated bibliography

Is there more to life? ?

To answer the essay question of "what, if anything, is intrinsically valuable and why?", I will use the following four texts: *Environmental Ethics* by Robin Attfield, (*Section 2: Moral standing, value and intrinsic value*, by Kenneth Goodpaster); *Human-centred and life-centred systems of environmental ethics* by Paul Taylor; *The deep ecological movement: some philosophical aspects* by Arne Naess; and *Can consequentialism meet pluralist challenges?* By Robin Attfield.

Ecological philosophy focusses on biology to describe nature in terms of intrinsic value, including life, sentience, and complexity of the organism. Throughout this essay I will address intrinsic value within the terms of naturalness, balance, health, and the intrinsic good within the human, as determinants for human action. This paper will build upon the framework of 20th century environmental philosophy, whilst offering new perspectives relating to the concept of intrinsic value, in search of more undiscovered values within nature.

Text One-Moral Standing, value and intrinsic value

References to Goodpaster needed.

Goodpaster's text outlines the concept of intrinsic value, addressing the values inclusion within the scenario of valuing, as a subjective barrier to determining intrinsic value (Attfield, 2012, pp. 45-49). Goodpaster then reviews the Aristotelian concept of *flourishing*, which I shall contrast with naturalness as an intrinsically valuable quality (Attfield, 2012, pp. 49-51). Goodpaster uses the term *moral considerability*, to mean things which should be taken into moral consideration (Attfield, 2012, p. 45), referring to innate abilities or their absence, including; the abilities to feel pleasure and pain, the ability to rationalize, autonomy and the ability to be benefitted (Attfield, 2012, pp. 45-46). Attfield (2012, pp. 45-46) reaches the consensus that only and all living creatures have moral considerability yet decides that only sentient beings have morally significant status, thus this excludes plants.

Not correct.

I aim to re-address Goodpaster's argument as biologically invalid; the definition of sentient is *the ability to feel or perceive things*. Plants can sense light, water, volume and direction (amongst other factors for survival) through a non-physical sentient awareness of their environment. To argue plants are non-sentient is as irrelevant as to allege that bats are blind. Goodpaster creates a pluralistic hierarchy of value, in which more complex organisms have a greater intrinsic value, rejecting non-pluralistic egalitarian views (Attfield, 2012, pp. 51-52). However, objectively determining complexities, without complete comprehension of nature's abilities, creates difficulties for creating hierarchies for moral consideration.

Within this essay, I will delve deeper into inanimate objects worthiness of moral consideration in search of intrinsic value. Rocks for instance are inanimate, hence it is assumed, only have extrinsic (inherent) value, as of use to organisms, yet are devoid of intrinsic value (Attfield, 2012, p. 46). Thus, we can reason soil has no intrinsic value, nor water, nor oxygen. This suggests the planet as a whole has no intrinsic value. I wish to question this assertion. Whilst we may view the planet itself as inanimate (absent of sentience), it performs more functions than many creatures, thus could in fact be a self-generating entity, having its own consciousness (Attfield, 2003, p. 3). I wish to investigate if the planet could have a life of its own and therefore, harbour intrinsic value. All whi

why?

or 'not living'?

Yes new, or Attfield's?

Why use these as the source of your examination

Does this make a difference to his argument, as he includes plants as capable of self-generating in any case?

DNA is alive. We consider the planet to have no DNA of its own. The requisite of DNA to be recognised as alive, may reflect of a subjective bias of valuing, as the earth still harbours chakra points and lay lines (channels or meridians) comparable to that of humans and may have no DNA itself, as is of a higher value than humans, animals and plants. With DNA being prone to degeneration.

Text Two-The Deep Ecological Movement: Some philosophical Aspects

Arne Naess defines and outlines his concept of *deep ecology*, considering both ecocentrism and governmental anthropocentrism (Naess, 1986, pp. 196-198). Ecocentrism concurs with biocentrism, in placing the value of life, intrinsic to the living organism, irreflective of the benefits to humans. However, ecocentrism considers the wellbeing of whole ecosystems to have intrinsic value (Naess, 1986, pp. 196-198). Whilst I respect biological interconnectivity, what Leopold terms cooperation, I must also acknowledge what Leopold terms competition (Leopold and Meine, 1949). Each organism fills a niche. This is not only a role in nature, but also a vibration of frequency. If An organism was to cease to thrive, another would replace it. This is of no objective net less and is of natural and inevitable change and fluctuation. Much cooperation of organisms is coincidental rather than on purpose. For example, organisms such as bees, just so happened to inadvertently pollinate flowers, whilst attempting to collect nectar to make honey.

For this reason, I will argue that a specific ecosystem can have no intrinsic value, only extrinsic value. The ecocentric viewpoint becomes relevant only in terms of an ecosystems entire annihilation by humans or otherwise (e.g. introduction of foreign parasites, insects plants or animals). Though only in terms of extrinsic value, with any intrinsic value situated only within individual organisms. Just as there is a mechanism behind evolution and competition, there may also be a mechanism behind cooperation, if not the same mechanism, of which is not within the conscious intention of each organism. I wish to investigate the existence of such a force, in search of more complex intrinsic values behind biological systems. Additionally, I will review the human being as an ecosystem itself, whilst analysing other mainstream theories of interconnectedness. Not only is the human body a home to at least four species of parasite, it provides the habitat for bacteria considered essential for human life, which the human can never exist separate from.

I wish to introduce the notions of positive and negative anthropocentrism. Positive anthropocentrism implying taking the life of a species for our own gain and negative anthropocentrism being the choice to choose not to save or preserve an organism, whilst only attempting to save humans. Whilst acknowledging all life is of equal value, I promote a human bias. Regardless of consequentialist analysis (Attfield, 2014) or of human superiority or not (Taylor, 1981, pp. 73-85). Humans should be bias towards humans, bee should be bias towards bees and lion towards lion, granting the grounds for human bias, despite holding a non-pluralist egalitarian position. I will allege that we should live to our empathies and that if a Panda, a Tiger and a human were drowning regardless of the species endangerment we should innately feel a surge of emotion to save the human, claiming that this characteristic of our species is natural and intrinsically valuable. An animal's needs come second if at all. Hence compatible with a negative anthropocentric view.

The biological characteristics of an organism are not enough to characterise value. Whilst Naess alludes to concepts of flourishing, overpopulation, species diversity and richness (Naess, 1986, pp. 96-97), he fails to completely asses the intrinsic value of balance. Balance

Are non-pluralistic positions more plausible than pluralistic ones though?

suggests instrumental value.

This is far from clear.

Why do you think this? I value it you are.

advocating an extreme form of anthropocentrism

Why do you think this?

is not only relative to external species; it is also relative respective of our own nature. If we reproduce relative to food supply etc., this suggest to just have as many offspring as will survive, which a planet can sustain, as Attfield (2014, pp. 16-18) discusses. However, more is not better. Naess suggests formation of new governmental policies in terms of comprehending nature (Naess, 1986, pp. 198-200), yet not of self. My essay will explain the correct balance of the human with all of existence based upon mathematical proportions, growth and decline within nature. As it is balance itself that is of intrinsic value.

Naess outlines criteria for classification of deep ecology, considering biological facets of ecosystems and the harmful activity of humans to ecosystems (Naess, 1986, pp. 196-200). Western philosophy approaches conservationism from the perspective that humans have a duty to protect nature (Taylor, 1981, p. 72). I wish to contest the current viewpoint and outline criteria for alternative approaches. Whilst, I agree with Naess that human's interference with the non-human world is excessive, unwarranted and detrimental to the balance of nature (Naess, 1986, pp. 196-197). The proposed restoration approach may be in reality counterproductive, which asserts that more human intervention is necessary to implement beneficial changes (Naess, 1986, pp. 196-200). Attempts to solve ecological problems may do more damage, as we cannot know ideal action. Current interventions of conservationism only increase the suffering of animals due to the hand of humans. I wish to put forward a different approach of non-intervention. It is a human's duty to take care of humans and leave nature to be. We do not have to protect nature, only to respect nature. Extinction is natural and of no concern of ours.

Additionally, whilst not attempting not to negate or contradict non-pluralistic egalitarian views. I wish to address naturalness, as an intrinsic value. We often view the unnatural in terms of human interference with ecosystems (Naess, 1986, pp. 196-200). I wish to address naturalness of species, in terms of domestication, captivity and farming. Autonomy as reviewed by Taylor (1981, pp. 79-85) and Attfield (2012, pp. 45-46) is an admiral quality for any organism, yet this is reduced by the above practices. Due to the domestication of farm animals over thousands of years we have decreased their physical capabilities, hence their intrinsic value. Whilst captivity reduces instinct, thus intrinsic value is decreased. I will apply the same principles to genetic modification of dogs, as not only unfair to the organism, but also decreasing intrinsic value for the same reasons. Additionally, we have caused species such as pigeons and rats to adapt in unnatural ways due to the desecration of their habitats. With a wild pigeon being viewed as more natural than the pigeons termed vermin, from a non-pluralistic egalitarian standpoint both birds are equal in terms of life; though the wild pigeon has greater naturalness, thus greater intrinsic value, which must be weighed on an alternative scale simultaneously. It is this naturalness of species, which is of intrinsic value to nature, as opposed to man-made or caused phenomena.

Text Three-The Ethics of Respect for Nature

Paul Taylor assumes a human centred (anthropocentric) stance, aligning his theory in opposition to life centred views (Taylor, 198, p.71). Whilst respecting organisms as possessing their own intrinsic values, he views humans needs as a greater determinant for the contingencies for determining moral action regarding non-human organisms; considering humans to hold no obligation to protect organisms or ecosystems other than for their own gain (Taylor, 1981, pp.71-72). Taylor asserts whilst species such as trees have value, we should not base our moral judgement upon these facts and base them solely upon the value of the trees utilization for ourselves, considering the teleological experience of plants irrelevant

Principle of equality - not a description of actual equality; a prescription of what we ought to do.

But our missions have consequences too.

But - is there a difference between what's natural & what's moral? #

okay, but you need to argue for this, & relate to the essay Q.

would you say the same of humans too? what are the implications of this then?

Not correct

What text are you actually reading?
This is not Taylor's now at all.

to ethical debates, due to their lack of feeling or emotions, despite having their own interests (Taylor, 1981, pp. 71-79). I wish to inverse Taylor's anthropological argument. Whilst we can acknowledge the value of an organism as morally considerable, we must search for what is intrinsically valuable within self. We should respect nature, not because of the value of it to ourselves, nor its intrinsic value, but because of the intrinsic value of self and the value of conducting the self with respect. It is not the lack of emotions or sentience of the plants which we should base our arguments upon, but the inherent sentience of a human's emotional guidance system, which we should embrace.

Taylor (1981, pp. 79-85) draws upon the issues of claiming human superiority, reviewing the talents of humans such as ration, moral freedom and autonomy; deliberating these qualities as the ground for claims of being a higher organism and addressing the apparent lack of objectivity within the matter. Whilst Taylor (1981, pp. 80-81) asserts humans are the only organisms possessing moral merit, human actions do not correlate with his claim. As opposed to evaluating if humans are higher morally, I focus on our ability to utilize moral discernment, again of intrinsic value, hence should be operated in accordance with. Taylor (1981, pp. 75-77) views the human as an animal in evolutionary terms and acknowledges the balance of nature as beneficial to humans, hence anthropocentrism does not necessarily always disregard biological systems. Taylor (1981, p. 76) respects nature and ecosystems, yet only in terms human wellbeing.

Taylor (1981, pp. 75-77) also addresses damages to the environment by humans regarding pollution of the air, sea, lakes and land; technological degradation of the planet, radioactive waste and man-made materials such as plastics. Arguing the destruction of nature has been detrimental to other species, to the extent that the cessation of human life on the planet may be beneficial for the good of all (Taylor, 1981, pp. 75-77). Whilst acknowledging the miniscule time period in which humans have been in existence, Taylor (1981, pp. 76-77) still believes the damage humans have done may be irreparable. Whilst Taylor may overestimate the damage done to the planet; and underestimate the planet's ability to regenerate, due to our human bias. I will also analyse the plausibility of global warming as beneficial to the survival of the planet over the importance of the human, in terms of object intrinsic value.

Despite agreeing with Taylor's belief that human activity is harmful. Many organisms depend upon human activity, including certain plants which grow upon our buildings, micro-organisms and unwarranted parasites; whilst we also promote the survival of many bacterial species. This is not of credit to our-selves, thus objectively, detrimental activity towards a species is not the criteria to be assessed in terms of consequentialism, but naturalness. It would be too much of an impertinent claim to propose rats and pigeons have benefitted from our activity, despite reproducing, beyond ordinary contingencies. I again claim naturalness is the key, identifying intrinsic value. It seems we have not achieved maintenance within equilibrium with nature, in terms of reproduction, infrastructural developments (Taylor, 1981, pp. 73-77) and the harvesting of crops. Plants as static often rely upon mobile organisms for the dispersal of seeds. Hence it is in the trees greatest interests to produce edible fruits in terms of their flourishing. Whilst environmental philosophy remains focussed on statistical data of destruction, my essay will focus specifically on the ways in which we can gain from a balance with nature. Modern trends in dieting fashions create gaps within the market for consumerism. I will outline practical solutions which function in harmony with nature, by only using the parts of the plant, which benefit the plant, or can be harvested without great detriment.

page number

Text Four-Can Biocentric consequentialism meet pluralist challenges?

Within this paper Attfield (2014) consistently addresses biocentrism, ecocentrism and anthropocentrism as mutually exclusive ideals, weighing the viewpoints against each other. In terms of philosophy, this results in competition as opposed to cooperation. I will show that anthropocentrism does not necessarily imply that we should not extend our moral consideration to all of existence. Attfield refers to consequentialist theories, declaring it moral to act in accordance with the overall good of all living beings, taking a biocentric standpoint (Attfield, 2014, p.2). To act in accordance with nature is of our own benefit, not only in terms of benefits provided by ecosystems including food and medicine; but also, for a harmonious and peaceful lifestyle. How much better to work within an organic garden for an individual's physical and mental health, than to work with the farm animals mentioned within the previous chapters. A supporter of anthropocentrism could make such a decision, with only his own benefit being taken into consideration.

Why is this relevant?

Whilst Attfield (2014, p.7) asserts that pleasure and happiness are of intrinsic value. I wish to add the concept of health, as intrinsically valuable, physically and mentally. Health often being a product of the prior two factors, with all three factors (health, pleasure and happiness) increased when forming an intuitive balance with nature. Present era offers a greater comprehension of the benefits to oneself from eating a vegan or vegetarian diet. Thus, compatible with an anthropocentric perspective. I concur with Attfield that non-anthropocentric views are impossible, yet disagree that compassion, shown by biocentrism's, is not in our own interests (Attfield, 2014, p. 10). Thus, anthropocentric viewpoints, which convince an individual that conducting self with respect to all of nature, is within their own interest for; health, happiness and other factors of intrinsic value of the human, may harbour the most influence to inadvertently bring about the greater good of all.

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