

Anna Morris, Ass1

For completion by Marker 1 :

Comments: This piece of work contains some reasonable objections, comments & appraisals, but the quality of the English is quite poor in places. Ensure that you proof read your essay many times before you submit. There's evidence that you have understood key argument, but this evidence is weak because of a lack of clarity in places. For your next assignment, concentrate on the

Marker's signature:

Date:

For completion by Marker 2/Moderator:

Comments:

Marker's Signature:

Date:

AGREED INTERNAL MARK (where necessary):

Comment on process on arriving at agreed mark:

External Examiner's comments (if relevant)

External Examiner's Signature:

Date:

50%.

HPPH7009

ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

ASS 1, ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANNA MORRIS, STUDENT: 1904007

David Schmidtz, Elizabeth Willott, Environmental Ethics, What Really Matters, What Really Works, Published 2002 by Oxford University Press – Read Introduction, Why Environmental Ethics? Environmental Ethics As a Branch Of Philosophy, The Last Man, Instrumental And Intrinsic Value, Valued Objects And Valuing Subjects, Is Value Subjective, Does Value Presuppose a Valuer? Moral Standing, What Kind of Things Have Moral Standing, pp xi-xxi

Willcott and Schmidtz write an excellent introduction detailing concepts of environmental philosophy. The authors explain it fluently and accessibly which is helpful to a novice. I chose to acknowledge this chapter because I found myself referencing it regularly to remind myself of the logic and schools of thought I needed to arm myself with, when applying my critical thinking skills to various texts.

I know that environmental philosophy falls under normative ethics, but it was useful that the authors distinguish between descriptive ethics being the study of opinions and belief and normative ethics being the study of what is right and wrong in actions. I found this helpful because they point out that both schools of ethics are not to be confused.

They also point out the difference between intrinsic value and non-instrumental value offering a simple pictorial analogy which made me understand it immediately.

They describe an art dealer owning two paintings, one painting is of high market value because of the current art market trends, the second painting is a "better" painting due to its artistic skilled form, making it intrinsically better, but it holds less economic re-sale value than the first painting.

The painting of less instrumental value is a more beautiful painting, it has an intrinsic property due to its beauty unrelated to its usefulness to make money. In summary one attaches instrumental value to an object which acts as a means to an end and one attaches intrinsic value when we value what that object is. This pictorial example was helpful as it made me grasp the two concepts efficiently.

The authors also warn the reader not to get carried away on the concept that the relationship between value and valuer is completely subjective. I fell into this trap and I found the next example key in grasping another issue.

The authors warn us not to assume that valuing subjects make wholly subjective decisions when applying labels of value. They give the example of vitamin C. If one values vitamin C as instrumentally valuable to them because it is good for their health then that judgement of value is based on an objective reality, vitamin C is good for one's health and that attribution of value is due to a epistemic truth that we know of vitamin C, namely that it is good for us, whereas if we did not know factually its benefits then the belief it is instrumentally good would be birthed from a subjective realm of belief or illegitimate prejudice. This notion of prejudiced assumptions will be discussed further later in Paul Taylor's, The Ethics of Respect for Nature.

Pay attention to punctuation for correctly

needed taking out citations and full references

are page numbers

Expand for clarity. And critique - is something intrinsically valuable just because it is beautiful

Italics

The vitamin C example evidences the integral partnership between the value and valuer, it also evidences the question of whether vitamin Cs properties are of value within itself when there is no valuer in the equation.

Finally, the authors end the chapter by asserting that environmental ethics has no clear answers and this was comforting, as it reassures the learner that there are no clear cut answers to an ideal environmental ethic.

It is clear however, that the notion of an egoistic subject deciphering value is evidently problematic and reveals that psychology plays an integral part in anthropocentric views. This leads me to discuss the next chapter written by Paul W. Taylor who offers a remedy to anthropocentrism via psychology. He urges the reader to have a conscious transformation when we observe nature and invites anthropocentric people to transform egoism to compassion.

David Schmidtz, Elizabeth Willott, Environmental Ethics, What Really Matters, What Really Works, Published 2002 by Oxford University Press – Read Chapter 4 – Species Equality and Respect for Nature pp83 -95 – The Ethics of Respect for Nature – Paul W. Taylor

Taylor's paper offers an alternative perspective on how one can move away from anthropocentrism by adopting a new attitude of respect to nature which will encompass a "life centered view" ethic towards nature. Taylor's environmental ethic is bio-centric and psychological in nature.

I believe Taylor hopes to persuade the reader that a change in attitude could lead to a potential change in human conditioning on how we interact with nature, he asserts his paper will show just how we can do this and invites us to think pluristically about what he has to offer in his paper.

Taylor wants to inspire the reader to change their belief system about the biodiversity on earth. Taylor explains how biodiversity has been discriminated against through a human egoistic bias application of belief based upon a flawed prejudiced logic. He invites the reader to have a new perspective.

I found his paper enjoyable to read. Taylor does not assert that this paper offers a remedy to the environmental ethics problem but he offers it as a starting point from a psychological perspective and challenges human consciousness.

Taylor is challenging the prevailing western anthropocentric view, but one must be careful not to assume all human cultures house anthropocentric views, there are various indigenous people who practice "a life centred view" to nature already. For example some Native American tribes, Maori and Aboriginal cultures classify land and nature as sacred and a oneness with them. To read more on this read subject read "A Companion To Environmental Philosophy, Edited by Dale Jamieson, Part 1, Indigenous Perspectives pp4-20.

Taylor calls for a respect of the Earth's biotic community, but he also focuses on the importance of the individual entities welfare. Taylor claims that if we cultivate a relationship between ourselves and the various entities within our biotic community, only then, will a relationship develop and lead to a shift from anthropocentrism to compassion. Taylor believes that plants and animals have intrinsic worth because they can be harmed or benefited.

Taylor offers two concepts to the reader to ponder. Firstly, every species and living entity within our ecosystem has a good of its own because it houses a contributory purpose, and humans with moral agency can choose to benefit the biotic community or harm it, this also extends to species. If we

behave with good will to our fellow entities then that will safe guard them against unjust harm which destroys their purpose and place within the community. Taylor believes that these entities exist within our community because they are valuable, this *prima facie* reason is that they have intrinsic value, their existence and urge to fulfil their biotic integrity is arguably an intrinsic value of goodness.

Taylor is not swayed on the application of awarding superiority to beings based upon sentience. He believes we should intrinsically value the entities as a goodness in themselves because they can be harmed or benefited. This argument is meta-physical because the concept of valuing a system of biology is resistant for a lot of people who cannot relate to entities which are not cognitive in the capacity humans are.

Expand what does this mean?
The two opposite side effects of nature experiencing good or bad outcomes to their purpose has nothing to do with their consciousness or rationality. They can either flourish or be damaged and Taylor argues that our conduct should NOT be geared towards harming nature.

Taylor does not want to be mistaken for instructing a egalitarian application of rights, where plants can supersede a humans rights, nor does he want to instruct human behaviour towards our ecosystems.

I feel Taylor is stating that an act of selfish indulgence cannot justify harming a plants integrity, as Taylor explains "it is only insofar as their production and use by humans have good or ill will effects upon natural ecosystems and their wild inhabitants that the ethics of respect for nature come in to play" Taylor pp 85.

Taylor's second concept is acknowledging that nature has intrinsic value. This notion of intrinsic value is what obliges us to act with respect towards it. Taylor states "wild living things are deserving of the concern and consideration of all moral agents simply in virtue of their being members of the Earth's community of life." Taylor pp 85

I believe Taylor is saying that nature and humans share a commonality, a common goodness, a desire to live and an urge to survive, we are part nature not apart from nature.

Taylor asks us to combine his two concepts and realise that since nature's entities can suffer consequences from being harmed or benefited, the two possibilities of harm or good show that there is something "there" within them, an intelligence contained within their self-regulation and this is their worth and their currency to be afforded moral consideration.

Pinpoint nature
Taylor also asks the reader to consider nature for all its individual parts and appreciate how all these individual parts constitute a whole for example it urged me to think of trees which purify our air, we all have a part to play on the stage of life, biotic entities are all contributing to the bigger picture to regulate Earth.

This is similar to Also Leopold's belief system. Taylor confirms this by stating "the system as a whole, I contend, constitutes a coherent, unified and rationally acceptable "picture" or "map" of the total world," (Taylor pp86). This is a holistic approach to nature.

Taylor goes on to remind to the reader, that when humans assign themselves as the superior species, this is an irrational claim, because how can you psychology and objectively rank your own species? Taylor emphasises that this is implicit bias based upon irrationally in favour of our own species.

Can you bring Singer into the discussion here, perhaps?

Taylor confirms his point, by comparing our biased hierarchy contained within the class system, where upper class persons are afforded more merits of intrinsic value because of their luck and not their merits, affording them more intrinsic value on baseless grounds is irrational, yet society continues to do so.

Grammar

This unsolicited merit is akin to Peter Singer's argument contained within "Specism". It was not that long ago in America that black people were considered sub human more akin to apes and of less intelligence than whites, this application of having less merits than whites enabled systematic racism and the miss-treatment of black people in America.

The unfairness and prejudice of racism is akin to the same bias thought process applied in specism. Taylor is explaining that the class system is subject to the same unjustified thought process. We accept in general that assigning upper class people more respect and worth because of their "accent" or "title" is unjust, elitism is inequitable and so is "humans assigning superiority to their own species."

I found Taylor's analogy on class evocative because it touched upon human chauvinism. It also highlighted that even if humans did change their attitude towards nature and respected it, then I am not so sure it would do much good. A white supremacist can respect a black person insofar that American whites enjoyed black musicians and were happy to share spaces with them for the enjoyment of music but they would not extend this to allowing blacks to share hotels, restaurants and even a drinking tap with them. Taylor requesting a change in attitude could be futile because respecting beings for different contributions is not implicit to a worthy change of perspective.

Taylor states "In the Denial of Human Superiority" (pp90) that he wants people to accept our assignment of superiority is prejudiced. He wants us to assume the bio centric outlook as our new philosophy and ethic, namely that we accept that we are all interconnected as a whole and ecosystems are just a part of the community as we are, we are all connected as a whole and integral to the earth, I believe Taylor hopes this will encourage temperance.

Taylor is arguing that nature as a whole creates life and sustains life, without the individual organisms there is no life, this system holds intrinsic worth and a goodness benefited by all of earth's tenants.

I shall end this review on an excellent point raised by Taylor where he states that the well-being of humans is dependent on nature performing to its teleological purpose but warns the reader that nature is not dependent on us.

In fact nature would be better off without us and our existence is "unnecessary". This is apt because this concept is the antithesis of anthropocentrism and shows our miss-placed arrogance that we are so important.

I found Taylor's paper thought provoking based upon the points I discussed above, I would recommend it to the environmental ethics student, it was easy to comprehend however the only criticism was that I found it to be repetitive in places.

David Schmidtz, Elizabeth Willott, Environmental Ethics, What Really Matters, What Really Works, Published 2002 by Oxford University Press – Read Chapter 2 – Animal Liberation and The Land Ethic, The Land Ethic, Aldo Leopold pp 27-32 and:

Roger S. Gottlieb, Morality and the Environmental Crisis, First published 2019 by Cambridge University Press, Read Chapter 1, Environmental Crisis and Moral Life – pp3- 10

Re: humans
or black
people
are you
talking
about
racism or
specism
here?

principle of equal consideration of
interests relevant

that

Before I discuss "The Land Ethic" by Leopold I must explain why I have two books listed above. I read Gottlieb's chapter 1 after I read "The Land Ethic" and the effect of reading both chapters together was impactful because Leopold's paper is intuitively prophetic. Whilst it was published in 1949 it seems to hold more intrinsic value now than ever due to the environmental crisis.

Gottlieb's book was published in 2019 and acts as a sobering read. I had no idea what this subject would reveal, but what I was soon to discover would horrify me into a life changing existential moral crisis of my own. This is why I place both chapters together to act as bed-fellows to one another.

Aldo Leopold's philosophy has some similarities to Taylors in that he wants his reader to gain a deeper respect for nature but Leopold's paper is less focused on psychology and more focused on ecological practicalities.

Leopold presents real practical examples where anthropocentrism is harmful to our ecosystems. He acknowledges non-living things as having teleological worth and argues for their moral consideration also. Leopold is a holist, he is not interested in focusing on individual organisms sentimentally because he feels we should focus on a duty of care to the system as a whole thereby extending boundaries to include non-living things.

I likened this logic to the seasons the UK go through, the UK relies on the spring, summer, autumn and winter to birth and kill various living things. The seasons are not tangible objects but they are a system of flux to support life, our ecosystem is a sophisticated flux of intelligence and Leopold displays in his paper that our disruption of it can cause a dangerous imbalance and have devastating consequences to humans and non-human animals.

Leopold notes an interesting point that humans have adopted an ethical social contract of ethics to govern how we interact with one another to maintain civility meaning the governments laws to manage human behaviour.

Leopold the ecologist labels this alike to symbioses. The point Leopold is stating, is that we have no ethic to manage our relationship to the land. This reminds me of what Thomas Hobbes stated in Leviathan that man succumbs to his innate nature of being "brutish" without a formal set of rules. This applied to our ethics to the land and how we treat it is quite parallel.

Leopold is calling for a "land ethic" which extends to "soils, waters, plants, and animals, collectively: the land" Leopold pp28. This goes much further than Taylor.

He wants the "land ethic" to transform man's relationship with nature from a "conqueror" to a "plain citizen of it."

He asserts that the ~~Homo sapiens~~ anthropocentrism of only applying value to certain things is futile because similar to Taylor, Leopold asserts man does not know everything and believing otherwise will "defeat themselves" Leopold pp28.

The most informative point I felt Leopold raised was his paradigm of the "The Land Pyramid" This was illuminating for me. He explains that the ecosystem is the foundation of stability to all who live and feed off it.

The shape of pyramid which is biotic in nature acts as a metaphor representing the land. The bottom level of the pyramid is the soil, the next level is plants, then insects, then birds, then moving upwards to carnivores.

The key notion of movement for example moving upwards between each level is key because it shows the reader, that when you move up a level, the boundaries decrease and become narrower. This is important because it evidences the food chain of nature. We as humans sit at the top of the pyramid, the apex layer, at the narrowest point, this narrow space highlights our vulnerability.

The ecosystem sits within the largest boundaries of nature feeding and sustaining life upwards. I enjoyed this example as it was simple and explanatory plus easy to remember.

It evidenced that if we cause harm to the foundations of the "base layer" which feeds us upwards to the "apex layer" then this disruption could lead to the "base layer" not managing to make it all the way up to the apex layer, meaning, as plants dissipate, insects dissipate as birds dissipate, carnivores dissipate and eventually humans dissipate.

Another key theme, is to note our interconnectedness with the ecosystem, this connection really highlights our dependency upon it.

I note present day facts from Gottlieb's chapter pp4 to support Leopold's point.

"In the United States 40-50 percent of rivers and lakes cannot support life" (p. no.)

"Oceanic dead or low-oxygen zones cover areas larger than North America, have dramatically increased over the last 50 years, and seriously threaten the ocean's ability to sustain life" (Gottlieb, p4)

"Human activity is leading to the fastest and largest die-off of species in seventy million years – approximately one species every 11 minutes" (Gottlieb, p4).

This is frightening because if we take Leopold's "Land Pyramid" seriously then one species, every eleven minutes, becomes extinct, these are our relations, begging the question could we be next? Gr:

Taylor highlighted this point of our human delusion to think we are superior to nature, untouchable. If we look at Leopold's pyramid we are not safe from extinction.

A further point noted by Leopold was that the motion of flowing upwards via a food chain is not all one should consider. We need to consider death too and its need to flow downwards, to return to the "base level" in order to convert it's remains into new energy in order to diversify and sustain life. Therefore, as the law of nature states, what goes up, must come down, and this is in the literal sense ecologically also.

Human violence and disruption is stopping this process of motion. Leopold notes that the more dense and advanced a population is then the more violence is carried out.

Like Taylor, Leopold is aware that western culture does not consider this fact, stating that the "land ethic is the fact that our educational and economic system is heading away from rather than towards" (Leopold pp31).

If we fast forward to present day Gottlieb states that *"In 2004 St Louis study of new-borns, the average baby was found with 187 toxin substances in their blood."* Gottlieb p3

If the average person knew this fact would it motivate them toward a new "land ethic?"

Leopold's paper starts a dialogue about the environmental crisis and reveals how nature and mankind share a common good. Leopold like Taylor compels people to stop and think about their conduct to nature and perhaps with a change of belief and understanding his paper may motivate persons to adopt to a new "land ethic". This ethic would be a holistic approach to nature and

recognises that the earth's ecosystem is the soul of the earth, which is superior to us because it is not dependent on us, like we are dependent on it.

David Schmidtz, Elizabeth Willott, Environmental Ethics, What Really Matters, What Really Works, Published 2002 by Oxford University Press – Read Chapter.2 – Animal Liberation and The Land Ethic, Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce, Mark Sagoff pp 38 – 43

Sagoff moves us into the domain of animal welfare whilst also referencing Aldo Leopold's work in contrast to Peter Singer's ethics regarding animal rights. Sagoff does state that Singer is not advocating for animal rights but for an animals rights not to suffer which is slightly different, meaning Singer purports animals interests should count equally to human interests, thereby arguing that animals should have equal moral consideration to humans. One must focus on the word consideration because this is not to be confused with complete egalitarianism to humans. *Quality - cat on needed.*

The reason animals deserve moral consideration is due to their capacity to suffer, to feel pleasure and pain. Singer believes our justification to utilise and abuse animals as we please is unjust, because our logic is based upon the same logic which perpetuates racism and sexism.

However, I would be interested in exploring if Singer would allow the use of animals if we could guarantee that they would not suffer, would Singer let me take have free reign to use animals for completely selfish frivolous reasons on the premise that I gave them life altering drugs which stopped them suffering? I am not sure but my postulation seems like the wrong thing to do even without the concept of suffering. *Okay. Good. Could you expand?*

I must note that I have heard arguments from animal abolitionists who argue that Singer is not radical enough because he focuses on welfare and argues that we should reduce animal suffering not abolish animal use completely for human ends, as Singer is concerned with an animals capacity to suffer. *Not sufficient. Heresay not enough. Provide support/References*

Sagoff goes on to discuss J. Baird Callicott's comparative paper on Singer and Leopold. This was informative as it condenses the differences between Singer and Leopold effectively, namely Leopold is an unsentimental holist concerned with the ecosystem rather than its individual inhabitants, even going as far as advocating hunting, since we are aware from the Pyramid the apex is narrow and the carnivore food chain has narrowed, Leopold thought hunters could contribute something positive to nature by balancing out the food chain in order to regulate it.

Leopold is interested in maintaining population not protecting individual animals. Therefore, Leopold is not interested in appointing individual rights to living entities.

In response to the above I offer some evocative conceptions from Holmes Rolston III in "Values in and Duties to the Natural World" from the same book above pp37 who stated that "Species increase kind, but ecosystems increase kinds."

This is thought provoking because it asks the reader what sort of world they want to live in, what side of the fence do you champion, although Singer is not protecting species, one must remember that you cannot have a species without individuals.

I found Rolston a beautiful writer and enjoyed his writing on species particularly due to his teaching of offering a brand new thought concept for me of the role of suffering in nature and its consequences to individual animals.

I found Rolston's paper helpful when debating between Leopold and Singer.

In "Environmental Ethics, Edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III, Chapter 11, Value in Nature and the Nature of Value pp147. Rolston explains and I paraphrase that when a wolf is killing an elk, the elk itself is suffering but the elk species is not, the consequence of the elk being caught and harmed causes an equal and opposite reaction biologically in nature meaning the genome of elk's will adapt and become more efficient at escaping the grasp of the wolf, this genome sequence is dependent on the individual, nature really is in constant flux.

This ^{makes} ~~made~~ two points of value to me regarding animals in nature.

Firstly, that nature is more purposeful than I ^{we generally think it is,} knew, but also nature adapts to its environment, and any form of human interference with it ^{could be problematic (?)} makes me uncomfortable. It also presents a different type of suffering I am more comfortable with, I am accepting of nature being a violent place amongst the species, but I do not think it is a morally good argument to accept animal suffering because some sectors of environmentalists regard nature as cruel environment, thereby using this principle as a method of qualifying animal abuse and anthropocentrism.

Singer, an animal welfare activist, is concerned with individual creatures not groups of species. species do not suffer in a cognitive way like an individual animal. Leopold is not sentimental about the individual suffering of animals because he conceptualises nature as indifferent to individualistic suffering. "a thing is right when it preserves the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community." Aldo Leopold, Land Ethic p43

The sector of environmental ethics is so vast and interesting and I have more to say, however, I have chosen the above chapters because I found them most helpful as an introduction to a field I had no knowledge in.

clarity needed here
↓
You are raising a good point

re: distinction between suffering of wild animals because of the prey/predator relationship, for example, and re suffering of animals. But clarity is needed to make your point.

O. Spence

you've just said