



MAKING ENDS MEET: Reconciling Ecoholism and Animal Rights Individualism

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1. Introduction

Animal rights individualists and ecoholists appear to adopt fundamentally incompatible perspectives, both at the theoretical



PHILOSOPHY

Jim Harter, *Animals*, 1479
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level in what is valued and, as a result, at the level of action, where conflicts must be resolved. The ecologist values entire ecological systems or wholes and views the members of the biotic community as valuable to the extent that they contribute to the "integrity, stability, and beauty" of the biotic community.(6) The animal rights individualist values individual organisms because of their sentience or other mental capacities, such as their being "subjects of a life."(9) Because of these different value commitments, these two perspectives appear to counsel incompatible principles of conflict resolution at the level of action. If an individual animal falling within the "subjects of a life" criterion is interfering with the "integrity, stability, and beauty" of some biotic community, then the holist will counsel the elimination of this individual, for example, by shooting it, while the individualist will counsel letting it live. Thus, hunting and trapping are sometimes good, according to the ecologists, but never good according to the individualist. Predation is a positive good according to the ecologist but at best a necessary evil according to the animal rights individualist. Domestic animals are valuable and have rights according to the individualist, but they are in most cases a liability to ecosystems and thus worthless for the holist. Endangered species, sentient or not, are highly valued by the holist, since their loss is often an unrecoverable diminution in an ecosystem. It is acceptable to override the interests of common sentient beings for the sake of endangered species, sentient or not, according to the holist. This is not acceptable, according to the individualist.

All these conflicts are apparent but unreal. The holistic and individualistic perspectives are not incompatible but complementary. The proponents of these views have failed to notice this complementarity because they have failed to understand each other and because they have attacked weak versions of each others' theories. The most defensible form of animal rights individualism and the strongest version of holism are compatible with each other.

2. Charges Against Animal Rights Individualism

The charges against individualists appear to be particularly focused against a

Benthamite utilitarianism which focuses upon alleviating suffering as all important. As will become apparent, the charges do not equally hold against other forms of individualism, especially a rights-based individualism such as Regan's.(9) According to Rodman(10), in choosing mentalistic properties such as sentience or ability to feel pain as criteria for moral considerability, animal rights individualists (ARIs) adopt an anthropomorphic, sentimental, and indefensible criterion:

Sentimentality, in the sense of our tendency to feel for "chubby little bundles of soft white fur" with "tear-filled eyes" and humanoid cries, and not for tarantulas, is not so easily exorcised. Utilitarianism and the humane movement emerged together out of the eighteenth-century redefinition of moral action as that which was in accordance with human "moral sentiments." In the end, Singer achieves "an expansion of our moral horizons" just far enough to include most animals, with special attention to those categories of animals most appropriate for defining the human condition in the years ahead. The rest of nature is left in a state of thinghood. If it would seem arbitrary to a visitor from Mars to find one species claiming a monopoly of intrinsic value by virtue of its allegedly exclusive possession of reason, free will, soul or some other occult quality, would it not seem almost as arbitrary to find that same species claiming a monopoly of intrinsic value for itself and those species most resembling it by virtue of their common and allegedly exclusive possession of sentience? (10: 90-1)

The focus of some proponents of animal rights upon alleviating suffering has come particularly under attack;

The liberationist must ask: how can I most efficiently relieve animal suffering? The answer must be: by getting animals out of their natural environment. Starving deer in the woods might be adopted as pets; they might be fed in kennels. (12: 8)

Here, Mark Sagoff takes the idea of alleviating suffering as a reductio of the individualist's position. Animals in the wild

suffer, as do domestic animals; if the duty of the individualist is to alleviate suffering, then we must end the suffering in the wilderness, including starvation, predation, and other features of wild nature which are essential to the health and stability of the ecological community.

The ecologist argues that the ARI has adopted an anthropomorphic and thus arbitrary criterion of moral worth in extending rights to sentient animals. It leaves nonsentient animals and the rest of nature "in a state of thinghood," reduces animals themselves to inferior mirrors of humanity, and leaves us all with impossible individual conflict resolution problems generated by too much emphasis upon individual interests, particularly those of attaining pleasure and avoiding pain.

3. Charges Against the Ecologist

The individualist has equally unpleasant things to say about the ecologist, of course. Just as utilitarianism and rights have a history, so does the idea of subserving the interests of the individual to the interests of the common good. Thus, we find Regan(9: 362) and others dubbing the Leopoldian view "environmental fascism." Regan views the consequences of ecologism as utterly intolerable and uses the following example to illustrate his view:

If the situation we faced was either to kill a rare wildflower or a (plentiful) human being, and if the wildflower, as a "team member" would contribute more to "the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community" than the human, then presumably we would not be doing wrong if we killed the human and saved the wildflower. (9: 362)

The ecologist is faced here with a serious dilemma. For, if the ecologist denies that it would be right to kill a human in this circumstance, then she must either explain why humans are exceptions or agree that there are also some other beings who ought not to be killed to save an endangered wildflower. The former involves an indefensible speciesism; the latter admits the validity of the individualist's perspective. But agreeing that killing humans to save wildflowers is acceptable is surely repugnant. If the

ecologist perspective leads to this sort of consequence, this might well be taken as a reductio of ecologism.

4. The Common Ground

Ecologists have pressed individualists about their justification for giving primacy to beings possessing sentience, and individualists have given various answers which it is beyond the scope of this essay to assess. But let us suppose that when all is said and done, the intuition that there is something morally significant about beings with interests, sentience, ability to think, etc., is, as Partridge(8) claims, moral bedrock or, to put it less flatteringly, an undefended given. Does this show that the ecologist is on firm footing, while the individualist is stuck with an undefended assumption? Ecologists would like us to think so. In particular, some of them would have us believe that their view simply emerges out of the science of ecology. Partridge, for example, remarks that "Regan's 'rights approach' is an explicit extension into nature of a humanistic ethic; 'deep ecology' is an environmental ethic derived, in large part, from non-philosophical, scientific origins." (8: 68). Rodman sees as one of the obstacles to our transcending homocentric ethics and discovering an ontologically-grounded moral order in "the nature of things, the powerful prohibition of modern culture against confusing 'is' and 'ought,' 'fact' and 'value,' the 'natural' with the 'moral'--in short, the taboo against committing the naturalist fallacy." (10: 96). In other words, Rodman suggests that we should go ahead and run the is/ought gap and read our ethics off of the science of ecology. Presumably, if we do so, we will come up with the Leopoldian principle "that a thing is good if it contributes to the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community." A little reflection should convince us, however, that no such Leopoldian land ethic arises from ecology or from any other science. What ecology can tell us is the relationships and interactions among the various organisms in various ecological systems. It can tell us the consequences of stability and instability of various types, of depleting species, of eroding soil, of introducing new species. The science of ecology has nothing whatsoever to say about the beauty of biotic communities nor does it pronounce that stable systems with many types

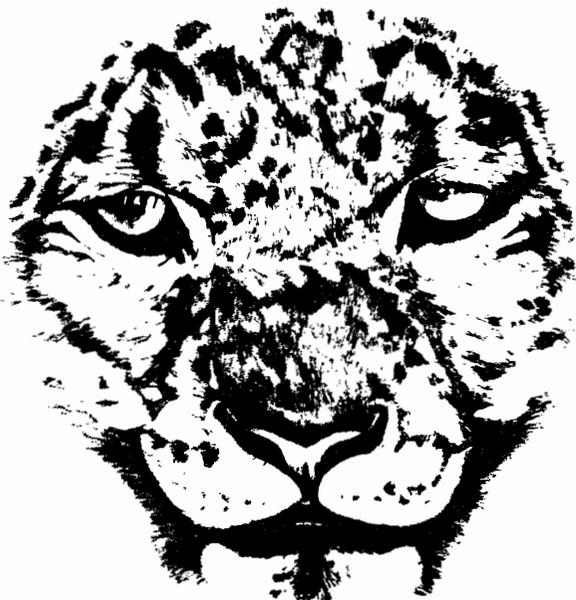
of flourishing species are preferable to unstable systems with a few species. Ecology does not tell us which ecological systems are best any more than evolutionary theory tells us which species are highest. From the perspective of evolution, the mudfish is one solution to what to do when the pond goes dry, and we are another. Neither is better. Similarly, the science of ecology does not condemn the clear cutting of forests or phosphate pollution of our streams from feedlot run off. But it does tell us of the consequences for us and our fellow species of such practices. And since we value our lives, the lives of other species, and what we take to be the beauty of wild nature, we then condemn these practices.

Thus, if someone asks why we wish to promote stability, diversity, and integrity in biotic communities, as opposed to instability, lack of diversity, and ugliness, ecology alone cannot answer this question. In fact, let us just ask this question, Why should stable environments be considered so valuable? Why is the conservative state of affairs better than one in which floods, erosion, volcanic eruptions, fires, or nuclear explosions constantly disrupt things? Why should stable environments be at such a premium? The answer cannot simply be that life itself is incompatible with unstable environments. For although it is certainly true that enough disruption will wipe out many life forms, in the vast majority of cases other sorts of life forms will move in which

are more adapted to living in chaotic upheaval. Microbes, simple plant life, some insects, fungi, and viruses can live in relatively unstable conditions. Cockroaches are particularly resistant to radiation and may be the inheritors if we wage nuclear war. In trying to explain our revulsion to unstable, monocultural, ugly environments, we may find ourselves once more at a moral bedrock or undefended given.

It may appear that we now have simply two incompatible bedrock ethics, one individualistic and the other holistic. But these ethics are entirely complementary if viewed from an evolutionary perspective. For, unstable, monocultural environments foster "r-selection," where "r" is the intrinsic rate of natural increase of populations. Organisms with high fecundity, early maturation, short life span, limited parental care, rapid development, and a high proportion of available resources committed to reproduction arise under the influence of r-selection. (4: 291) In contrast, the stable "Leopoldian" environments give rise to "K-selection," (where "K" is the carrying capacity of an environment. K-strategists employ low reproductive effort with late maturation, longer life, and a tendency to invest a great deal of parental care in small broods of late maturing offspring.

Complex species, such as the mammals, can only develop under the influence of K-selection, in stable, benign environments. R-selection does not produce highly intelligent life forms, since intelligence requires a long period of learning and parental dependency. (Organisms which are born capable of doing everything they need to do in life are not classed as intelligent by us, simply because there is no plasticity and no room for learning in such organisms.) In other words, the Leopoldian environments favored by holists are precisely those environments which give rise to and sustain the organisms favored by animal rights individualists. In light of this fact, the holist cannot really be said to be as neutral regarding the issue of sentience as she claims. For, while non-sentient beings can and do arise in all sorts of environments, it is only in the Leopoldian environments that sentience is adaptive and thus emerges. This may not establish that holists are partial to these sorts of species, but it is an interesting coincidence.



It is certainly part of the beauty of "wild nature" that a fox or wolf or bear may suddenly emerge into the clearing. And it is a regrettable degradation of environments when they no longer support such beings.

The holist may object that while she values the mammals in a diverse ecosystem and prefers systems containing these and a diversity of other species to those lacking them, this is no reason for singling out the smart species for special treatment, such as conferring rights on them and refusing to hunt or trap them. But, from an evolutionary perspective, it does make sense to do precisely this. For, as already noted, the sentient beings are also evolutionary K-strategists, which means that they are not prolific reproducers. They opt for reproducing a small number of offspring and nurturing them. Thus, these types of animals are individuals, both in the psychological sense of having individual interests and in the social sense that they are generally treated by others as being unique and identifiable. Parents and offspring recognize each other, and at least in some cases mates do not consider it irrelevant whom they breed with. And while many of them will die, it is not built into their ecological fate that nearly all of them should die in infancy. Thus, according them respect as individuals is not absurd in the way that according individual rights to r-selectors, such as flies, is absurd. The vast majority of flies must die for ecosystems to maintain their health and stability. Their lack of individuality and the consequent impossibility of respecting their interests as individuals are not merely psychological (in that they are mostly lacking in interests) but evolutionary and ecological.

Thus, the tendency of animal rights individualists to confer rights on certain "smart" species and not others is not merely grounded in the recognition of the psychological individuality of these beings but turns out to be ecologically sound as well. To attempt to respect the rights of r-selectors makes no sense; to try to preserve them would precipitate environmental disaster. To confer rights upon them would be as useless as mourning the fact that the vast majority of human sperm will never unite with eggs. Or, consider the male barnacle, which is simply a swimming bag of sperm. To treat each male barnacle as an individual worthy of rights

would simply be to misunderstand the nature of the organism. This is rather like talking to one's fingers. From an ecological perspective, r-strategists are merely team players in a way that K-selectors are not.

Of course, animal rights individualists do not consider reproductive strategy to be a morally relevant characteristic. So, the existence of a highly conscious type of being which nevertheless adopted the r-strategist technique of reproducing vast numbers of offspring would present a dilemma. Their mental abilities would entitle them to rights, but their position in the ecological scheme would imply the futility of conferring individual rights on them. While we can imagine such beings, they are pure science fiction from an evolutionary perspective. For, it is precisely the small brood size, delayed maturation, and parental care of K-strategists which allows for the emergence of intelligence.

The fact that r-strategists are not individuals and ought not to be treated as such, either from an individualistic or ecologist perspective, shows an inherent limitation on the extension of rights to an ever-widening domain, including bugs, worms, germs, trees, rocks, and rivers. Extending rights only sets up an impossible set of conflicts. This does not mean that bugs, worms, trees, etc., have no value. Rather, we should resist the equation of rights and values and recognize that many things have value, though it makes no sense to talk of their individual rights. This is one reason why it is not possible to eliminate the holistic perspective in favor of an ever-widening individualistic perspective. (Another is that many things do gain value through their interrelatedness to other things, something which the individualist perspective cannot capture, even by including larger and larger objects as individuals. The Colorado River as an individual is valuable--inherently valuable, if you will--but its value definitely changes if it reappears in downtown Manhattan.) Nor is it, as I will argue, possible to eliminate individualism in favor of a thorough-going holism.

5. Some Pragmatic Dilemmas Resolved

Noting the complementarity between eco-

holistic and ARI approaches is not enough, however, to resolve the many apparent conflicts between these views. It may still seem that one must choose either individualism or holism as fundamental. If this is true, it is a pragmatic and not a theoretical point. For, there is no incompatibility in valuing both individuals and whole systems. We do this all the time in valuing our friends and relatives as individuals and valuing our communities, our culture, and the entire human race. In order to show a theoretical incompatibility, we would have to argue that the properties claimed to be valuable within each perspective ought to be viewed as not merely sufficient but necessary characteristics of anything's possessing value. Most ARIs explicitly avoid claiming this and leave open the possibility that other things besides individual sentient beings may have value. There is no reason why the ecologist must claim that a thing has value only if it contributes to the beauty, stability, and integrity of the biotic community. It may be that things gain value in this way, and they also gain value by being sentient. As long as we are not confronted by difficult choices, there is no reason not to value both individuals and the systems in which they reside. The real pragmatic issue should be how to strike a balance between proper respect for individuals and proper respect for whole communities, not whether individualism or holism, considered exclusively must be adopted.

5.1. Environmental Fascism

Recall that we left the ecologist faced with a trilemma: admit that it is wrong to kill humans and some other species to save an endangered wildflower, explain why it is only humans who need be spared, or accept that it would be permissible to kill the human. The hard line against differential treatment for sentient species arose because the ecologist viewed it as anthropocentric, sentimental, and arbitrary. But I have argued that such differential treatment is not any of these things, even as viewed from a purely ecological perspective. Far from being arbitrary, the differential reaction is appropriate to the role that sentient beings play in ecosystems. Thus, there is nothing to prevent the ecologist from taking sentience into account in deciding how to react to various threats to the integrity of an ecosystem.

Further, as Katz(5) has argued, Leopold's land ethic can be viewed in two different ways. The environment can be viewed on an organismic model in which the parts gain their value purely in virtue of their contribution to the whole, ("total holism," as Sapontzis puts it) or the environment can be viewed on a community model in which the individual members have their own integrity and value independent of their contribution to the whole ("partial holism"). The latter model allows for a balance of holistic and individualistic values, while the former does not. Further, as Katz has shown, the community model is preferable purely from an environmental perspective, since it avoids the "substitution" problem. Suppose that it is possible to substitute for a naturally occurring species in an environment some other species without damaging the environment, perhaps even thereby enriching it. Suppose further that this replacement is not even a "natural" species but a genetically engineered substitute (imagine, in the extreme case that we devise a robot which performs the ecological functions of a wolf). From the strictly organismic model, this substitution must be acceptable if it indeed contributes to the diversity, stability, and integrity of the biotic community. But surely the ecologist should wish to resist this artificial interference with the natural, wild, biotic community. And from the perspective of the community model of the ecosystem, it is quite possible to do this. part of the beauty and value of wild nature is the value of the naturally occurring individuals there. They have their value as wild individuals, and no substitution of others who are functionally equivalent will make up for their loss. Thus, the community model is not only superior in its ability to accommodate a balance of individualistic and holistic perspectives, but it is superior considered purely from a holistic or deep ecological perspective.[1] Second, since ecologism is a kind of consequentialism, it is also possible to separate direct (or act) holism from indirect (or rule) holism, as Jon Moline has argued.(7) It is only direct holism which insists that we must act in each instance to preserve the integrity, stability, and diversity of the biotic community. Thus, it is only direct holism that gives us the above trilemma, and direct holism is, as Moline has argued, less defensible than indirect holism.[2] For, ecology itself warns us of our

ignorance and our inability to deal with nature on a case by case basis. Rather, we should foster rules, policies, practices, tastes, and attitudes which promote the good of the biotic community, not attempt to maximize that good on a single occasion at the undoubted expense of those very attitudes. We should also remember that Leopold himself speaks of extending concern from humans to animals and soils, not of kicking out our present objects of concern. Thus, the ecologist can get out of the trilemma by adopting a community rather than an organismic model, as Katz suggests, and by adopting an indirect, rather than a direct, holism, as Moline suggests.

5.2. Focus on Domestic Animals

Ecologists accuse animal rights activists of too much attention to domestic animals, when we ought to focus on ecosystems and endangered species. But there is simply no conflict here. If animal rights individualists accomplish their goals, then the numbers of domestic animals will be drastically reduced. If humans no longer eat them, there will simply be no point in raising them by the billions, and the pollution they cause, the vast amounts of land under cultivation to feed them, and the rain forests being chopped down to graze them can all be returned to wilderness. (Cf. Wenz(13) for an elaboration of this point.[3]) The change in attitude toward animals which would be necessary in order to eliminate the practice of meat eating would almost certainly be attended by greater concern for the environment and wild animals as well, and a resultant control of the human population.

5.3. Predation

Predation is clearly a positive good from the ecoholistic perspective. ARIs appear to be in an uncomfortable position on this issue, since predation often involves the killing of rights-holding individuals. ARIs need to show why we do not have an obligation to prevent predation wherever possible.

In considering what our obligations are with respect to animal predation, we must consider a number of values, not merely the issues of suffering or even death. But not all proponents of individualism view allevi-

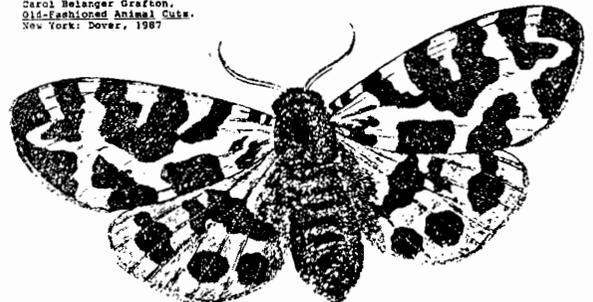
ating suffering as of sole or overwhelming value. Focusing on pleasure and alleviating suffering is peculiar to a Benthamite interpretation of utilitarianism. Rights-based approaches, such as Regan's, take a much more balanced view of the respect owed to other species. One of the most important rights is the right to freedom. We humans would not consent to being imprisoned in order to protect us from the risks of life. Nor should we lock deer up in kennels or feed soy burgers to wolves in order to shield these creatures from the risks of life, including predation. To do so would be paternalistic in the extreme. Thus, individualists such as Regan can and do agree with Callicott that domesticating animals and turning them into machines is a great harm even if it can be done painlessly and that the risks of living freely, including the dangers of being either predator or prey, are an acceptable part of the price of freedom.

Further, it may be that animal rights individualists should not subsume predation so quickly under models of intra-species human violence. Predation may be a part of the life and lot of wild species, not in the perverse way in which rape and murder are part of the risks of modern society but in the way that the cycles of birth, growth, and death are a part of all of our existence. Predation is the normal way of life of many wild animals; their lives revolve around this activity. Indeed, the way of life of a species, whether it be predator or prey, is a vital part of its being, of its *telos*, as Rollin(11) puts it. To deprive a species of its way of life is to remove its dignity.

5.4. Human Predation: Hunting and Trapping

According to some ecologists, it is sometimes a duty to hunt and trap when overpopulation of a particular species threatens

Carol Belanger Grafton,
Old-Fashioned Animal Cuts.
New York: Dover, 1987



the health of the biotic community. But it is never permissible to kill mammals in this way according to the animal rights individualist. This problem can be viewed as another instance of the "fascist" dilemma discussed above. If the ecologist insists on resolving environmental problems in this way, then consistency ought to dictate an immediate open season on humans. For no other species threatens the entire biosphere as ours does, and none is overpopulating to the extent that ours is. But just as we know there are alternatives to the wanton destruction of human beings, so there are alternatives to "game management" programs. Most obviously, a reintroduction of the predators who kept the species we are proposing to hunt in check is often the solution.

While it may at first seem inconsistent to favor animal predation and restrict "human predation," there are important differences between the two. Most obviously, humans have a wider range of choices than do other animals. We can live quite well without killing and eating other sentient beings. Thus, it is not a fundamental violation of our rights to require us to abstain from hunting and, in general, from eating meat. Further, given the broader repertoire of activities and life-styles available to us, it is not a fundamental violation of our telos or dignity to require such abstention from us. There may be exceptions to this, in the case of native peoples whose entire lifestyle and livelihood are bound to hunting. In these few cases, we should not be in a hurry to dismantle other people's cultures.

5.5. Endangered Species

Holists claim a special value for endangered species, while ARIs don't. But once again, the resolution of the "fascist dilemma" is the resolution of the species conflict. In general, there is no need to kill a common sentient being, such as a human, to protect an endangered, nonsentient being. Indirect holism dictates, rather, that we foster attitudes and rules which will lead to a reversal of the alarming extinction rate. But there is no situation in which killing an individual human or other sentient being will save an endangered species. For either this is the very last one of its kind, or it isn't; if it is, then it's too late to save it, and it is no longer contributing signifi-

cantly to the biotic community. If it isn't, there are others who can be protected, undoubtedly by means short of violence.

While individualism does not claim that a member of an endangered species has greater value than a member of a common species, there is nothing in individualism which dictates against applications of restitutive justice to cases of rare and endangered species. Just as blacks, women, and native Americans are accorded special status in some areas, so endangered species ought to be awarded high priority when issues such as land use are being decided. If the choice is between building a housing project and maintaining a wilderness area in which an endangered species resides, the interests of the endangered species should most definitely be respected, if they have interests. In doing so, we do not violate anyone's basic rights; humans have lots of places to live and ought to limit their population for the sake of other species as well as our own. If they do not have interests, we can still argue for their protection on the grounds that they are valuable, and not necessarily just "instrumentally valuable" but inherently or intrinsically valuable. The only thing prohibited by the individualist is the violation of the

The Social Philosophy and Policy Center will hold a conference on The Foundations of Moral and Political Philosophy, September 22-24, 1988, at Bowling Green State University. Participants include: Jean Hampton (Philosophy, MIT); Terence Irwin (Philosophy, Cornell); Russell Hardin (Philosophy and Political Science, Chicago); Holly Smith (Philosophy, Arizona); Eric Mack (Philosophy, Tulane); Peter Railton, (Philosophy, Michigan); Allan Gibbard (Philosophy, Michigan); and Stephen Darwall (Philosophy, Michigan). For further information, contact Kory Tilgner, Social Philosophy and Policy Center, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403, (419) 372-2536.

basic rights of individuals, and if ecologists accept Moline's interpretation of Leopold's land ethic, they will have no disagreement on this point.

6. Conclusion

I have argued that ecologism and individualism are complementary rather than incompatible. We must learn to balance the good of the ecological community with the good of individuals, human and animal, which dwell in the community. The extension of individual rights to the sentient members of the biotic community is not ecologically unsound, if it focuses on the full range of rights, including freedom, and not merely on alleviating suffering. And respect for the biotic community is compatible with individualism, given that that respect views the biotic community as a community, rather than as an organism, and given that an indirect (rule) rather than a direct (act) form of holism is accepted. Since these are the strongest forms of both individualism and holism, there should be no resistance to this accommodation from either side.

At the theoretical level, ecologists and individualists should recognize the common value they share. The individualist who values animals as autonomous, dignified beings must value their way of life and thus the ecosystems in which they live. In this way it is impossible to affirm the value of a wild animal such as a wolf without affirming the value of the wilderness which makes his way of life possible. Conversely, the ecologist in valuing stable, diverse, and "beautiful" ecosystems values the sentient beings who evolved in and continue to be dependent on these systems.

Finally, a purely pragmatic point. Individualists and ecologists may, in spite of all I have said, have different "visions" of what is valuable and important in this world. It may require something of a "paradigm shift," as Callicott has argued, to come to the ecologicist view. If so, we owe it to the animals and the environment to learn how to see the world from either point of view. For by and large, we have the same battles to fight. We both want to stop the destruction of the rainforests and other wilderness and the consequent destruction of individuals in wilderness environments. We both want to

stop factory farming, whether to end the suffering of the animals or to get rid of the pollution it causes. There are few enough of us to fight these battles, and the opposition is far better organized and much less squeamish about the company it keeps.

Notes

1. By "deep ecology," I mean the view that the environment, considered as a whole, is intrinsically, not merely instrumentally, valuable.

2. In general, act utilitarianism faces a host of dilemmas not confronted by rule utilitarianism, and thus, *prima facie*, a rule utilitarian version of holism is superior.

3. Callicott(3) has suggested that there is some irony "in an outcome in which the beneficiaries of a human extension of conscience are destroyed in the process of being saved." But we are under no obligation to perpetuate domesticated, dependent species which we have specifically bred in the past for our purposes. In fact, given all the uncomplementary things Callicott has to say about domesticated farm animals, he ought to agree that we have an obligation to them not to continue to perpetuate them.

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METHODOLOGY IN APPLIED ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: Comments on Dombrowski and Finsen

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In preparing these remarks, I have assumed that the individual commentators for the papers by Professors Dombrowski and Finsen would focus on specific details of the arguments, leaving me the luxury (and the responsibility) of making some kind of general comparative remarks. So I will begin with some general comments, and then I will try to show how these general remarks can illuminate some specific problems in both papers.

These two papers represent extremely different methodologies of applied ethics. Professor Dombrowski's paper is an example of what I call a "metaphysical" approach to ethical issues. This kind of argument attempts to draw the "proper" ethical conclusions from a specific metaphysical view of

