

Converging versus Reconstituting Environmental Ethics

Enlightening Anthropocentrism

Bryan Norton propounds a "convergence hypothesis." He also predicts that convergence is taking place between the anthropocentrists and the non-anthropocentrists. Further, he promotes this. Anthropocentrism, also called "homocentrism," or "human chauvinism," is "the view that the earth and all its nonhuman contents exist or are available for man's benefit and to serve his interests and, hence, that man is entitled to manipulate the world and its systems as he wants, that is, in his interests."¹ As Norton writes, "The thesis of anthropocentrism ... [is that] only humans are the locus of intrinsic value, and the value of all other objects derives from their contribution to human values."²

Nonanthropocentrism, variously including "biocentrism," "ecocentrism," and "deep ecology," is the contrasting view that there are intrinsic values in nature, whether at the level of individuals or collectives, species, ecosystems, products, or processes, which at times constrain such human entitlements and interests. Natural things can and ought to count morally for what they are in themselves.³ The convergence claim is that "environmentalists are evolving toward a consensus in policy, even though they remain divided regarding basic values."⁴

If the claim is that anthropocentrists and biocentrists have some common ground, no one will deny great confluence of interests. They both want clean air and water. We ought not to foul our own nest. Further, what is good for

a whole range of human values is also good for nature itself, and this becomes truer the longer the time scale. But the argument only starts there; it argues that this common ground, upon thinking and acting on it, enlarges until the domain is all common ground. "The convergence hypothesis asserts that, if one takes the full range of human values—present and future—into account, one will choose a set of policies that can also be accepted by an advocate of a consistent and reasonable nonanthropocentrism."⁵ Thus, we get the global claim of "a unifying vision ... shared by environmentalists of all stripes."⁶ Such convergence will not be true for all those who may call themselves environmentalists; those who conserve forests for maximum timber, water, and game production will still disagree with those who want maximum wilderness preservation. But it will be true of all those reasonable anthropocentric environmentalists willing to be enlightened toward those policies that Norton desires, who will be meeting en route those whom Norton judges to be reasonable and consistent nonanthropocentrists, presumably mellowing out regarding attention to human desires and needs.

Norton must greatly approve of such projects as the huge Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, whose summary report, *Living beyond our Means: Natural Assets and Human Well-Being*, reveals their basic orientation: "At the heart of this assessment is a stark warning. Human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted."⁷ The several technical and accompanying volumes say it again and again; *Our Human Planet: Summary for Decision-Makers*,⁸ *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Health Synthesis*,⁹ *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Opportunities and Challenges for Business and Industry*,¹⁰ *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Wetlands and Water Synthesis*,¹¹ and *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: A Framework for Assessment*.¹²

Human well-being is a mantra through them all. A basic framework is to classify ecosystem services into four categories: (1) supporting services that result directly from ecosystem functioning, such as nutrient cycling and primary production; (2) provisioning services, the products obtained directly, such as food, freshwater, and fuel wood; (3) regulating services, such as climate regulation, erosion control, and control of pests and diseases, often viewed as "free" services; and (4) cultural services, nonmaterial benefits such as cultural heritage values, sense of place, and spiritual and inspirational values. No one can object to our prudent attention to our life-support system (the focus of the first three) or, for that matter, to the cultural services. I have regularly championed these myself.

But what starts to ring hollow are the numerous services for just our human well-being. Justice here is for "just us" humans. This Promethean force-fitting of every possible conservation good into something good for us in

our place goes sour, analogously to the way that force-fitting the conservation of goods for the many peoples of the world into goods for us Americans, or the conservation of goods for Americans into what is good for me and my family goes sour. The goods sought curve back in on ourselves, and no matter how much we enlarge the circle with increasing enlightenment, eventually the curve comes back to us and reveals the underlying motivation as self-interest, something less than fully moral.

Someone who wanted to be unkind, perhaps inaccurate, might say that Norton has found the best reasons to be difficult and pragmatically retreated to a less-demanding position. Most classical ethics is focused on humans. If one believes in any ethics at all, one must believe in promoting human welfare; everybody wishes to promote his or her own welfare. The natural world is regarded as a resource in almost all policy debates, as well as by most applied scientists, so why not swim with the stream and go with the flow? All you need to do is shift the rudder a little in a different direction; soften the anthropocentrism, but keep it.

Maybe, but maybe one ought to be suspicious of an anthropocentric ethic that is so sure such an ethic will always tell us the right thing to do. This is parallel to the suspicion one has of an ethic that tells Americans (or the British or the Israelis) to act in their enlightened self-interest and they will always do the right thing. In that light, the presumption from classical ethics is not that humans acting in their enlightened self-interest will do the right thing. The presumption is the other way around: ethical agents need a self-transcending vision of the values (goods, rights, utilities) that ought to be protected. Tribalism, even tribalism writ large, is not vision enough.

But the deeper reason such a complaint would be inaccurate (and unkind) is that Norton does not make his anthropomorphism easy or classical at all. He demands a radically transcending vision, first of the individual self on behalf of the larger goods of the human community, and, equally radically, of what is good for the human community.

Norton finds wide-ranging possible goods from biodiversity. Spiders build finely spun and surprisingly strong webs; whales communicate underwater; boa constrictors go long periods of time without food, camels without water. Humans might learn something from such species. Some species are r-selected, some k-selected (differing reproductive strategies). "This contrast provides a powerful metaphor for human population policy."¹³ Norton is likely right enough often enough that saving species as resources, rivets in our ecosystems, indicator species, Rosetta stones, recreational species, and study species makes good anthropocentric sense in setting national policy. But will these arguments do enough work?

An anthropocentrist might first suppose that a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature is quite possible without wolves on the landscape.

But this is not so. When Norton, as "an anthropocentric advocate of wolf protection" considers wolf policy (in Norway, presumably similarly in Montana), he argues that legislation is needed to force the sheepherders to accept the wolves; and, accompanying that, they need to be persuaded to see that the wolves are good for them. "I would argue that in this case the local people should ... be pushed to change somewhat in the direction of wolf protection." Otherwise, those sheepherders will "have sacrificed their birth-right of wilderness for a few sheep."¹⁴

"Too often, local communities have acted on the basis of short-term interests, only to learn that they have irretrievably deprived their children of something of great value."¹⁵ People should want wolves on the landscape lest future generations "feel profoundly the loss of wilderness experiences."¹⁶ The wolves are gone; what a pity—my grandchildren cannot have a real wilderness experience. They will never shiver in their sleeping bags when the wolves howl. So what are wolves good for? Making my grandchildren shiver. The "something of great value" is not the wolves; intrinsically they are of no value at all. The something of great value is the tingle in our grandchildren. We would not give a damn about sacrificing the wolves were it not that sacrificing them sacrifices our grandchildren's birthright to stand in their awe.

But notice that the anthropocentrism, however resolutely insisted on, is becoming less and less anthropocentric in focus. We start out thinking that we will be winners if we gain our interests at the expense of others. But then we learn that many of our interests are not a zero-sum game, not in the human-human parliament of interests. Next, we learn that again in the human-nature parliament of interests. Then we learn that many of our interests are not at all what we first thought they were. Once we wanted sheep to sell in markets; now we want to tingle when wolves howl. We win by ever moving the goalposts further out until the playing field is not human interests but the infinite creativity of natural history on Earth. Maybe we are winning, but we are also doing a lot of renouncing. I was mistaken about those sheep; the wolves are what I really want.

Given his convictions about how anthropocentrism can be enlightened, stretched, wolves to spiders, I fear that it might become pointless to offer Norton any more examples of direct caring for nature; he is going to cut all the evidence to fit his paradigm. "In the long run, what is good for our species will also be good for other species, taken as species,"¹⁷ and vice versa. So I next give him the example of the Delhi Sands flower-loving fly standing in the way of building a hospital in California, also blocking an industrial development with twenty thousand jobs.¹⁸ A California state senator exclaims: "I'm for people, not for flies."

I predict Norton will say something inspirational about people's birthright to hear these needle-mouthed flies buzz (they are bizarre and interesting

flies). Whatever case I give him, he is going to say that we have entwined destinies with these creative natural processes and all the resulting created products, rare flies included. Then he will fall back to our self-centered human interests in preserving whatever we have entwined destinies with. But, against Norton, I am doubting that entwined destinies with odd flies is going to be as politically persuasive as the respect for a unique species with a clever form of life defending a good of its own.

I too claim that no species among the five or ten million on Earth is worthless; each has a good of its kind; each is a good kind. But it is going to be quite a stretch to show that each and every one of them is some good to us. Norton himself backs off from his good-for-our-species, good-for-all-species claim above: "The convergence hypothesis does not, of course, claim that the interests of humans and interests of other species *never* diverge, but only that they *usually* converge."¹⁹ Usually they do, but often they do not. In fact, I think many of them are of little or no use *to us*. I do not lament that; the other way around, I am quite pleased that this is so. I do not want to live on a planet where my own species arrogantly claims that none of the other millions of species is of any account except as resources in our larder. If there is often divergence, we will need some nonanthropocentric convictions to save such species,

Nonanthropocentric Enlightening

Convergence suggests that the sides more or less equally move toward each other and meet in the middle, like compromise. Examining Arne Naess's wolf policies in Norway, Norton finds "a tendency to find compromise positions that may be acceptable to both anthropocentrists and nonanthropocentrists" and this, he thinks, "tends to confirm the convergence hypothesis."²⁰ So the farmers accept some wolves, and the deep ecologists agree to reimbursing the farmers' losses and to the removal of problem wolves in agricultural areas. Nevertheless, Norton does not really equate convergence with compromise. Convergence is not compromise because when it happens each side has dynamically altered its convictions, perhaps not its deeper metaphysical position, but its convictions about what action this requires in practice. They are now not compromising, because in a compromise each side gets only part of what it wants and gives up the rest. Now each side gets entirely what it wants; they turn out (despite their differing underlying principles) to want identically the same practice.

The anthropocentrists are getting more and more enlightened in the direction of accepting what the nonanthropocentrists wanted in the first place. Is it likewise true that the nonanthropocentrists are becoming increasingly enlightened in the direction of what the anthropocentrists wanted when this convergence started? It is more difficult to find examples of this. It is not

difficult, on the political scene, to find nonanthropocentrists agreeing to compromises. Politicians must work in a parliament, with pulling and hauling among interest groups. So the nonanthropocentrists (who also believe that nature is of value to people) will have to collect all the support they can from whatever quarter they can, enlightening the anthropocentrists as much as they can, and compromising when they can get only half a loaf. But increasingly, with convergence, the nonanthropocentrists get more and more of the loaf. With convergence, the goalposts are moving, but mostly for the anthropocentrist toward the nonanthropocentrists. With compromise, nonanthropocentrists may settle for less than they want, but this is not convergence.

Looking back across human history, conflicts of interests are perennial, especially in political life. One might expect they are forever with us. But if Norton is right on environmental interests, so long as there is a little more enlightenment each year, there will be less contesting and more convergence on policy, until finally there is no disagreement at all and there is consensus. That might not happen because in each generation a whole new set of anthropocentrists will be born who have to be so educated. The reeducation rate might be slower than the rebirth rate, so that the perennial problem continues into the indefinite future. I would be delighted if Norton were right. It might not happen until long after I am gone, but should it happen, I hope my great grandchildren are delighted. Meanwhile, what is misleading about the "convergence" metaphor here is that it is really the anthropocentrists who are increasingly pulled and hauled over to the nonanthropocentrists' policy: nature preservation, with more and more of these intangible benefits; wolves and wilderness are really good for your character.

What is happening is not that anthropocentrists and nonanthropocentrists are mutually enlightening each other and converging, but that the nonanthropocentrists are doing the enlightening. If they were not on the scene with their arguments, these anthropocentrists would not be moving toward these higher-level conservationist directions, Aldo Leopold finds an A/B cleavage in attitudes toward nature conservation. (Though Leopold does not flag his A/B cleavage this way, I utilize it here as a convenient mnemonic: A=anthropocentric, B=biocentric). The A side sees land, water, and forests as commodity, the B side as community. The cleavage continues with game versus wildlife, acre-feet of water versus rivers in ecosystems, timber versus forests, owning land versus sense of place, and humans as conquerors versus humans as citizens. Leopold argues: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community."²¹ It seems that we start out A (anthropocentric) and become increasingly B (biocentric).

No, says Norton, this shift is still in our enlightened self-interest, so it is a sort of bioanthropocentric convergence. True, the revised view is not com-

modity but now ecosystem oriented, with human and plant-animal goods entwined. We used to think of water in the river as a commodity, but now we think of it as our bloodstream—still our health is involved. Protection of the health (Leopold' integrity and stability) of these landscape-level processes should be the central goal of biodiversity policy because it is the same as the protection of human health.

But, meanwhile, is not Leopold's integrity of the biotic community pulling these anthropocentrists as far as they have come in the land-health direction? "That land is community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics."²² Without Leopold's nonanthropocentric love and respect for land, which Norton considers "an unfortunate interpretation of Aldo Leopold's land ethic,"²³ these anthropocentrists would never have become so enlightened.

Consider animal experimentation. For more than a decade, the University of Pennsylvania Head Injury Clinic conducted a series of experiments using primates upon whom they deliberately inflicted massive head injuries in order to simulate the sort of injuries humans experience in sports injuries and automobile crashes. Scientists could study such injuries and also practice innovative brain surgery. The research was federally funded at a million dollars annually through the National Institutes of Health. When the nature of these experiments was revealed, then U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret Heckler terminated the government funding.²⁴

On Norton's account, since there is not any intrinsic value in animal welfare, what policy we set depends on whether the experiments benefit our human welfare. Norton seeks long-term horizons and, in the long term, there are likely to be such benefits. On the animal welfare account, these benefits have to be traded off against decades of intense animal suffering, a disvalue that outweighs any promised human benefits. Anthropocentrists and non-anthropocentrists do not agree on policy.

To get convergence here, Norton will have to find some way to convince the anthropocentric researchers and their supporters that it is in the best interests of humans not to do such experiments. A National Institutes of Health spokesman initially praised the laboratory tests, but with continuing protests, an investigation found the laboratory to be unsanitary, deficient in surgical techniques, and poor in record keeping, and the researchers were inadequately supervised. So, why not clean up the lab and continue? Possibly because such experiments make the researchers sadistic, make us humans callous to animal pain, or because humans need to appreciate the great apes as relatives, or some such argument.

But, of course, if there is no value present in these monkeys, baboons, and apes, and therefore no disvalue in the animal suffering, then one ought to be

callous to it. Perhaps the great apes are ancient relatives, but since value only appears with humans ("only the humans are valuing agents"²⁵), there is no reason to count the primates at all. In fact, the real force driving those who insisted on the change of policy was that this is unethical treatment of these animals, not simply that it does not well serve our human interests. One effectively has to stop being anthropocentric to stop such experiments.

Ducks feed on spent shot that fall into their ponds, needing grit for their gizzards, and afterward die slowly from lead poisoning. Two to three million ducks and geese were dying this way each year. This had little effect on the total duck population, since ducks reproduce amply. Steel shot are a little more expensive, wear the bore a little faster, and were unfamiliar to hunters, who must adjust for the weight difference. Weapons manufacturers and hunters resisted steel shot for decades; federal agencies increasingly required their use for waterfowl hunting.²⁶ If one is anthropocentric, why count the duck suffering, since ducks have no intrinsic value on their own sakes? Nonanthropocentrists disagree; duck suffering is a bad thing.

Perhaps one can enlighten these anthropocentric hunters; they would get concerned if the lead shot were reducing waterfowl populations, or if some humans also ingested lead shot perhaps embedded in the flesh of the eaten ducks. Perhaps some hunters feel bad about the needlessly killed ducks, but most of these lead-poisoned ducks die out of sight and out of mind. Why feel bad about it, if the ducks do not count morally? The ducks need to count to stop lead shot. Those nonanthropocentrists concerned about suffering waterfowl were the drivers in this policy change, even if they managed to convince anthropocentric hunters only so far as some supposed better self-interest.

Consider the case of Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal, a primary sanctuary for Bengal tigers and half a dozen other extremely endangered species. This region in lowland Nepal (the Terai) was too malarious to live in year-round until the 1950s; it was formerly a hunting preserve, hunted in the dry season. Following a mosquito eradication campaign in midcentury, Nepalis began to move into the region. The migrants cleared the forests and started cultivating crops, also poaching animals. In 1973, to increase protection, the hunting preserve was designated a national park. Nepalis were surrounding it. The population of the Terai was 36,060 in 1950; in less than a decade, it was one million. With one of the highest birthrates in the world, and with the influx continuing, the population in 1991 was 8.6 million—90 percent of them poor, 50 percent of them desperately poor.²⁷

People cannot live in the park or cut grasses, graze cattle and buffalo, or timber the park at will. They are allowed to cut thatch grasses several days a year, and 30 percent of park income from tourists is given to Village Development Committees. The Royal Nepalese Army is responsible for preventing poaching, grazing, cutting grasses, pilfering timber, and permanent habitation

of the land. They also do what they can to improve the lot of the people. Probably the park would not survive the local social pressures except for the tourist income, which the national government much desires. Probably, however, the park would not have come into existence and been maintained except for the nonanthropocentric concerns of groups such as the World Wildlife Fund to save the endangered species there.

I have argued that we should continue to give the tigers priority over the people inside this park, a relatively small portion of the lowland inhabitable land.²⁸ I could not justify such efforts to protect the tigers if I did not believe that they have intrinsic value, if I did not believe that species lines are morally considerable, or if I thought that the values of tigers were only those that bring income to the nation. Norton will have to find anthropocentric reasons to save the tigers. Some are not far to seek: tourist income, a biodiversity reserve, some national pride in the tigers. But enough anthropocentric benefit to justify keeping tens of thousands of persons hungry in order to save the tiger could be hard to find. Nepalis have, I suppose, a "birthright" to hear tigers roar (like the Norwegians and Montanans and their wolves).

Norton advocates "adaptive management," which is both ecologically sound and community-based, a process that can "guide a community toward shared goals" to create an environmental policy that protects many or most of the values that are articulated by community members, and to do so democratically.²⁹ He wants to be "contextual" and "pragmatic," helping communities "to refine goals through iterative discussions among stakeholders."³⁰ His challenge is to "environmental ethics to address these real-world problems on a local, contextual basis and join the search for adaptive solutions and sustainable human institutions, cultures, and lifestyles in each local area. If we do not accomplish that task, nature has no chance."³¹ Alas, however, if Nepal were to become a functioning democracy (otherwise, much to be desired), and these nine million Terai people set policy by voting their "pragmatic" and "contextual" stakeholder preferences, the tigers would likely be voted out, repeatedly.

Norton and I would agree that this is a pity, but (since he wants a procedure that produces effective on-the-ground policy) he should realize that his enlightened anthropocentrism is not going to save the tigers in Nepal. The incidence of conflicts has been escalating for the last half century and shows little sign of slacking off. Norton thinks that accounts of duties to endangered species are too thin to introduce into policy, but introducing a birthright to hear tigers roar is hardly going to prove any thicker for forming policy in lowland Nepal. He may find himself shuddering while tigers roar only to find that they roar no longer because their forests have been cut. Only if there are effective advocates who care for the tigers and other endangered species placing some check on local desires (and enlightening them too when they can) do the tigers have a chance.

Norton and I will also agree that if this were an ideal world, there are ways in which Nepal could have its millions of humans in the Terai and its tiger sanctuary as well (massive aid, economic development, or whatever). We both will look for win-win strategies, if we can find them. I also concede that some strategies I might find morally desirable are not politically possible; hence I might compromise. Meanwhile, on present policy in the real world and in this park, the tigers are being given priority over poor people, and I approve. One of my arguments for this is that sacrificing the park provides no long-term solution to the human problem; human problems have to be fixed where they arise, in unjust and malfunctioning social structures.

But that complements my main nonanthropocentric motivation: that tigers as a species ought not to be sacrificed on the altar of human mistakes, regardless of what persons made mistakes and where in the complex chains of events. Fixing those mistakes is something I also desire; otherwise, maybe the tigers cannot be saved forever, and that will be good for people. Norton might hold out that saving the tigers is valuable because it gives humans an opportunity to fix these mistakes. But such remote humanistic reasons will never save the tigers today. For that, policy makers will also need the enlightening that nonanthropocentrists can provide.

When we get to the convergence, what do we have—anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, something polyglot? Sometimes Norton will just say that he does not have to answer metaphysical questions. He is agnostic about all these deeper issues, just a pragmatist who wants to get the conservation job done, and functional anthropocentrism will work fine—at least it will work fine if we can enlighten it sufficiently. There are many different ways of justifying wise environmental principles and policies.

Norton teaches in a School of Public Policy, and if I worked there, I might myself have gotten diluted (or become more inclusive) and come around to his position. If he and I were on the floor of the Georgia legislature, defending the Georgia wetlands, or the floor of the U.S. Congress defending the Endangered Species Act, his position would be my fallback position. I would be trying to transform those legislators into becoming more enlightened environmentalists. I would stoop to conquer. But afterward I would be sorry I had to stoop to conquer. I might congratulate myself on my political insight or on my psychological analysis of the way average citizens think, but I would think I had fallen back from philosophical high ground. (A day or two later, I might be apologizing to ordinary people, as well as to Georgia legislators, for selling them short as though they were never able to occupy any high moral ground respecting God's good creation.)

Norton allows that what we have is many worldviews, anthropocentrists and nonanthropocentrists of all stripes, but he also steadily claims that all we need is anthropocentrism. He tells us, with considerable enthusiasm, "why I

am not a nonanthropocentrist."³² The problem, as he sees it, is not the anthropocentrism ipso facto, but that anthropocentrists have been shortsighted and gross about what their interests really are. He needs resolute but "weak anthropocentrism."³³ The problem, as I see it, is that without the nonanthropocentrists making their strong stand and weakening his anthropocentrism, the anthropocentrists will never see how shortsighted and narrow-sighted they are. The anthropocentrists need the nonanthropocentrists as their educators.

At times Norton seems to think that nobody's worldviews change; only their policy gets more enlightened: "Environmentalists ... have not accepted a common and shared worldview, and those who look for unity in the explanations and rhetoric of environmentalists will be disappointed. I will pursue a different strategy and look first for the common ground, the shared policy goals and objectives that might characterize the unity of environmentalists."³⁴ So, Norton remains an anthropocentrist, though becoming a weaker one; Paul Taylor remains a biocentrist; and I remain a true believer in intrinsic value in nature. The result: "diverging worldviews, converging policies."³⁵

At times, however, it seems as if worldviews change. Perhaps Norton will want to say they get enlightened about what their larger, longer-range interests are. But on my account, we can better frame what is going on by saying that their goals get reconstituted; their sense of personal identity gets reconstituted. The more comprehensive their field of identity, the less and less plausible it is to speak of this as anthropocentric group self-interest.

Norton thinks his convergence hypothesis "is a falsifiable hypothesis about real-world policies."³⁶ In real-world policies, as everyone knows, resource-based anthropocentrists (like James Watt) disagree with nonanthropocentrists (like Edward Abbey), so Norton has to appeal to less-polar anthropocentrists and nonanthropocentrists. These too often disagree (sustainable foresters versus wilderness advocates in the Pacific Northwest), so Norton has to suppose still more enlightened anthropocentrists—those who think our birthright to owls overrides clear-cutting and replanting. Those in this projected dialogue about increasing convergence become less obviously those in fact contending in real-world politics. Some such persons can actually be found in the world (Norton is one of them), but finding such a minority is not much evidence for the hypothesis in real-world politics. One needs evidence that such persons are increasing in number or that the strength of these most enlightened convictions can determine and set policy equally well as do strong convictions about intrinsic value in nature.

Even if Norton were right that the various schools of environmentalism all come out desiring the same policy, it is still important to clarify motives. An ethicist wants the best reasons for action, not simply those that are good enough. Perhaps a political pragmatist will be satisfied to get the policy right, no matter who the supporters are and what their motives, as long as they are

conserving the environment: John saves the whales because he respects and admires their skills. Jack saves the whales because he runs the tour boat and makes money taking John and others to see them. Susan cares for her aging mother because she loves her; Sally cares lest she be cut out of her mother's will.

Behaviors converge, but we are more impressed with John's motive than Jack's; we admire Susan's behavior and are depressed by Sally's. When mother becomes incompetent and can no longer change her will, when tourists no longer come because the whales are sparse, behaviors will change. Perhaps we can enlighten Jack; he too will come to admire the whales, and continue to operate his tour boat. Maybe even Sally, taking turns with Susan caring for their mother, will come to admire her resolution and courage in prospect of death, and will both love her and desire the inheritance. But to be at all secure in conservation policy, we need transformations of values driving behavior, not simply convergence of behavior. Perhaps Norton's enlarging anthropocentrism can effect such transformations. He next advocates "transformative value."

Transformative Value

Consider Norton's account of sand dollars on a Florida beach, which, since it is autobiographical, must be a real-world case. He chooses, admirably, to place his memorable encounter with a little girl collecting sand dollars on a Florida beach as an introduction to his *Toward Unity among Environmentalists*. The sand dollar is featured on the book jacket. I share Norton's hope that she and her mother can find better ways of valuing sand dollars than to toss them into Clorox to kill and bleach them, make ornaments to sell, and sell the extras for a nickel each at the local craft store. But when he tries to give a rationale, to imagine what might be said to such a utilitarian mentality, he finds himself stuttering, unable to escape his "environmentalists' dilemma."³⁷

Perhaps he and the little girl and her mother, who was nearby "strip mining sand dollars,"³⁸ can have a conversation and there will be convergence. So Norton says: They are alive and I interact with them with "character-building transformative value."³⁹ I get an enlarged sense of my place in the world. And you could, too. The little girl replies, at first: I know they are alive, that's why we throw them into Clorox, to kill them. But I want to make them into dried shells for the ornaments my mother makes, and I value them for that. The mother adds that she has won prizes for her artistry with the shells—for her a transformative experience building her sense of self-worth. So far, the conversation will be just Norton's interactive experience against those of the collectors. His interactive acts lead to his behavior. Their interactive acts lead to

another. Different spokes for different folks. Norton ended his conversation on the beach, "in ideological impasse," in a "dilemma in values." "I fell silent, stymied." This dilemma with sand dollars, he muses, is a "microcosm" of the human relation to the whole biosphere.⁴⁰

Nothing will change until Norton can appeal to a better appreciation of what is actually there. He might bring the two exploiters around to his view ("convergence" on the "transformative value" of respecting the sand dollars for what they are in themselves, living creatures with a good of their own), but only by pulling the girl and her mother far into the orbit of respecting intrinsic value in living organisms, as he himself has learned to do. He shifts their goalposts, as his goalposts have been shifted.

No, Norton may reply, the goalposts have always been the same—to maximize human well-being—all that has changed is strategy. Once, the girl and her mother found a sense of self-worth collecting the shells and making lovely ornaments. Now they are more enlightened to the sand dollar for what it is in itself, but this feeds into a more enlightened sense of self-worth in respecting all things, great and small. So they join Norton in wishing to conserve the sand dollars, and feel proud of themselves in a new way. They now have new, more enlightened virtues.

Norton dislikes any hint of correspondence theories of truth. Following C. S. Peirce and John Dewey, he "re-focuses discussions of truth and objectivity from a search for 'correspondence' to an 'external world' (the 'conform' approach) to a more forward-looking ('transform') approach." "A pragmatist, transform approach to inquiry such as Dewey's may provide a way around the 'fact-value' gulf."⁴¹ First we might have thought that what is in our interest (exploiting the sand dollars) differs in such cases from what we take an interest in (the welfare of the sand dollars). But now it seems that whatever we take a beneficial interest in (the welfare of the sand dollars) is in our beneficial interests (transforming us). Usually we think we can sometimes distinguish between what we take an interest in (the well-being of the sand dollars) and what is in our interests (getting to be better persons). But no more.

Meanwhile, Norton's behavior belies his logic. What Norton himself clearly feels "is this sense of respect for sand dollars as living creatures,"⁴² for value present there that ought not to be sacrificed for a nickel. He gets transformed, yes; but he gets transformed because his knowledge "conforms" (God forbid that we should say "corresponds") to facts of the matter about the living sand dollar. Something "matters" to the sand dollars; that is the problem with killing them so trivially. Norton hit reality when he encountered the sand dollars, something that "matters" to him, and he lamented the little girl making a resource of them; but he has yet to face up to the epistemic crisis that contact with sand dollars entails.

Celebrating Creativity

More recently, Norton "values nature for the creativity of its processes." As he writes, "It is possible to recognize a deeper source of value in nature, what might be called 'nature's creativity.'" And further: "It may be possible to find, in a celebration of nature's infinite creativity, a universal value" that we all can share. "What is valued in common by persons with diverse relationships to nature is its creativity."⁴³ Amen! We can learn to respect the sand dollar as a product of this creative process. So our goal is to celebrate this infinite creativity; and we can and ought to conserve it. I too rejoice in this continuing creativity, and I rejoice that Norton has found it. Had I been along on his beach walk, he and I together would have urged the girl and her mother to celebrate nature's creativity.

But Norton quickly cautions, though this is "a deeper source of value in nature," do not think that this means we are locating any values in nature!! "Nature's creativity is valued both in the present and for the future because it is the very basis of human opportunity." As he puts it, "These creative processes,, we can further say, are valued by humans because a creative and building nature provides options and opportunities to fulfill human values whatever these human values are."⁴⁴ So we are still figuring what is in it for us; we really do not care about creativity past or present, except for what it means for the human prospect

Norton had earlier put it this way: "If one separates the question of the warranted assertibility of environmentalists' goals from the question of where values in nature are located, the search for an objective realm of value realism can be seen to be unnecessary."⁴⁵ We do not need to know whether nature in itself is valuable in the processes or products of this infinite creativity. All human environmentalists need to do is to assert their goal, which is "to maintain a non-declining set of opportunities based on possible uses of the environment for future members of their community."⁴⁶ It is "just us," after all.

So I was too quick with my "Amen!" I had jumped to the conclusion that Norton had found value in nature's creativity and was celebrating that. If I now try to say that celebrating this infinite creativity seems to exceed whatever human utilities are forthcoming from it, and that this infinite creativity does not sound like an anthropocentric goalpost anymore, Norton will pull back and start celebrating human transformation (these 'environmentalists' goals") in the presence of such infinite creativity (denying that it is "an objective of realm of value realism"). Preserve whatever might have a chance of transforming your life. You need to be part of this larger whole, and such an environmental ethic can translate into a more promising environmental policy. Get more inclusive; fit yourself into the bigger picture. Celebrate creativity; it is good for your soul and you will get a "creativity high" (this is analo-

gous to helping others in order to get a "helpers high"),⁴⁷ My problem is that I do not think it is high moral ground to celebrate something else in your own self-interests, no matter how enlightened those interests (analogously to helping others in order to get a kick out of it).

So Norton and I both try to persuade the girl and her mother to save the sand dollars. If we succeed, he thinks he has brought both through a transformative experience; the three of them are all enlightened anthropocentrists. But I do not think they and I have converged on anything halfway between anthropocentrism and biocentrism. I think they have been converted to my worldview that there is an ecosystemic nature that creatively generates a richness of biodiversity and biocomplexity on Earth, which humans ought to respect. Only Norton cannot bring himself around to admit this; that would be too upsetting to his anthropocentric epistemology.

I suppose that if, in further expansion of his discoveries, he comes to find an infinite Creator in, with, and under this infinite creativity, he will urge praising God because that too is good for us. Get yourself an abundant life. He does not think humans generally are able to face the universe without asking: "What's in it for us?" Or if some among them can, they do not need to.

"Introducing the idea that other species have intrinsic value, that humans should be 'fair' to all other species, provides no operationally recognizable constraints on human behavior that are not already implicit in the generalized, cross-temporal obligations to protect a healthy, complex and autonomously functioning ecosystem for the benefit of future generations of humans."⁴⁸ Continuing, introducing the idea that there is infinite creativity to be celebrated in nature provides no operationally recognizable constraints on human behavior that are not already implicit in protecting healthy ecosystems, in order that humans can flourish by celebrating such creativity. Well, stretch it this far, and maybe it is not operationally different for the super-super-enlightened, but it has gone far astray logically, stretching self-interest to the breaking point—which probably also means that it will not in fact do all that well operationally either. In fact, Norton says to the little girl: Put most of the sand dollars back.⁴⁹ I say to her: Put them all back.

Well, no, Norton will reply. You were not listening when I championed "transformative value." This ethic can be transforming. The enlightened environmentalist wants photosynthesis in place, freshwater in streams, a stable climate—and *spiritual inspiration*, transformative encounter with sand dollars. Nature preservation is justified because it leads to the fostering of multiple levels of values in human life and culture worth preserving. True, we can all agree about the basic, vital, lower-order values. But the convergence is toward nobler, higher-order values, equally vital to human well-being, and these are not reducible to the familiar anthropocentric array of demand or preference values.

This is a metamorphic transformation, maybe analogously radical to a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Norton once explored Henry David Thoreau's use of insect analogies, wondering if humans, like butterflies, can be transformed from the "larval" stage, mostly consuming the world, to a "perfect" state in which consumptions less important, and in which freedom and contemplation are the ends of life. There is a "dynamic dualism in which the animal and the spiritual self remain in tension, but in which the 'maturity' of the individual—transcendence of economic demands as imposed by society—emerges through personal growth based on observation of nature."⁵⁰ So there is transformation from bodily growth, consumption, to personal growth, spiritually. It does seem as though the goalposts have changed, or have they, since we are still seeking to win: only the sort of growth we seek has shifted from physical to spiritual?

Norton insists, right through to the end of his book searching for unity among environmentalists: "Moralists among environmental ethicists have erred in looking for a value in living things that is *independent* of human valuing. They have therefore forgotten a most elementary point about valuing anything. Valuing always occurs from the viewpoint of a conscious valuer... Only the humans are valuing agents."⁵¹ Maybe there is much transformation of people and what they choose to value, but this nowhere leaves him well placed to celebrate this creativity that nature has expressed in the nonconscious sand dollars, much less nature's global "infinite creativity." Are we to conclude: Well, there is infinite creativity out there, *independent* of us humans. but it is of no value until we conscious humans come along and evaluate it as beneficial to, *transformative* of, our human character? "The creative force is outside us," but we keep "the original idea of anthropocentrism—that all value will be perceived from the viewpoint of conscious [human] beings—intact."⁵²

Maybe Norton can keep this subtlety clear in his mind (infinite creativity out there; all value in here, in my transformation), but my mind is not subtle enough to keep that difference intact in my head for long, I doubt whether the citizens he wishes to persuade toward better environmental decisions will see that difference either, I can make good sense of the idea that we humans are the only species that can become consciously aware of this infinite creativity; we alone can celebrate it. I might say that we humans are at the "apex" of creation, the most valuable species—as far as we know. Human culture is now the leading story on the planet. But that does not justify any conclusions about humans being the solitary locus of value.

Norton also dislikes too much human self-centering; he fears its arrogance. Once we needed the rhetoric of the nonanthropocentrists, he says. That helped us reframe our picture of ourselves in the world. Now that we recognize our finitude, we no longer need such rhetoric:

The attack on human arrogance, which was mounted as a response to anthropocentrism, was well motivated but badly directed. One need not posit interests contrary to human ones in order to recognize our finitude. If the target is arrogance, a scientifically informed contextualism that sees us as one animal species existing derivatively, even parasitically, as part of a larger, awesomely wonderful whole should cut us down to size.⁵³

That is what those wolves are good for: making my grandchildren shiver, cutting them down to size. That is how nature serves our interests, cutting us down and forcing us to confront this awesomely wonderful whole. I myself have argued that the encounter with nature "protects us from pride."⁵⁴ Norton seems right on target until we start to wonder if seeing nature as valueless until we (the only valuing agents) get cut down to size keeps ourselves at the center of it after all by cutting nature (with its infinite creativity) down to our size.

Norton's convergence at this point has become rather similar to Peter Wenz's environmental synergism: *"Environmental synergists believe that synergy exists between respect for people and respect for nature. Overall and in the long run, simultaneous respect for people and nature improves outcomes for both. . . . Respect for nature promotes respect for people, so the best way to serve people as a group is to care about nature for itself."*⁵⁵ Wenz, too, can push this argument way past intelligent exploitation of nature to a thoroughgoing caring for nature, still finding the major push our own postenlightened self-interest. He concludes: *"People as a group get more from the environment by caring about nature for its own sake, which limits attempts to dominate nature, than by trying to manipulate it for maximal human advantage"*⁵⁶ This is a kind of backfire argument: You anthropocentrists should care for nature lest you get too pushy. Caring for nature is good for us; it cuts down our covetousness. If you want the most out of nature, less is more. That too sounds right—until we ask whether there is anything in nature on its "own sake" worth caring for, anything of value that justifies such care. Here, Wenz will answer yes. Norton will reply: Do not ask; all you need to know is that caring for nature is good for you.

Why do Americans want their national parks and wilderness areas? Because they can recreate there, of course. The outdoor experience enriches their lives. That is true enough, and it is where we must begin; it may be as far as we get on the floor of Congress. But it is only a beginning when we are in the field, whether as hikers on the trail or park managers. We find ourselves enlarging our vision. Norton will say: We find ourselves transformed, and that enriches us. But is this the best way to phrase it?

Roger DiSilvestro finds something radically novel about humans setting aside for protection their wildland parks:

Territorial boundaries are ancient; they are artifacts dating from a primordial world. They are, in essence, established for the exploitation of the earth.... Only in the past century has humanity begun to set the protection of wildlands as a broad social goal, creating national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, even protected wilderness areas. This is something truly new under the sun, and every protected wild place is a monument to humanity's uniqueness. The greatest qualitative difference between us and nonhuman animals is not that we can change and modify our environment. Practically every living creature does that.... But we are the first living things, as far as we know, to make a choice about the extent to which we will apply our abilities to influence the environment. We not only *can* do, but we can choose *not to do*. Thus, what is unique about the boundaries we place around parks and other sanctuaries is that these boundaries are created to protect a region from our own actions.... No longer can we think of ourselves as masters of the natural world. Rather, we are partners with it.⁵⁷

Norton might concur, provided that we recognize how we are still partners with nature, not masters but beneficiaries of setting such boundaries, gaining a new vision of ourselves in so doing. But this is a curious kind of anthropocentrism, which resolves to let wildlife be, to place wildness in sanctuaries protected from human mastery and control. Maybe the human uniqueness is that we are the one species that can care enough about other species to draw back and set some territories that are not our own, where we only visit and celebrate the wildness there. Parks are for people, the anthropocentrists will say. Yes, but here the park boundaries set sanctuaries, to protect wildlife *from* people as much as *for* people.

Winning and Losing

Since I have been pushing Norton further and further toward nonanthropocentric goals, and lamenting his refusal to renounce his ever-weakening anthropocentrism, I must conclude by conceding that when I think about winners and losers, I sometimes myself move closer toward his convergence hypothesis.⁵⁸ The issue whether those who do the right thing are losers is as old as Socrates, with his puzzling claim that: "No evil can come to a good man."⁵⁹ Doing the wrong thing ruins the soul, the worst result imaginable. Doing the right thing ennobles character. Yes, but can we translate this into environmental ethics?

Environmental virtue ethicists think so. An inclusive moral virtue, well-rounded excellence of character, requires that we be properly sensitive to the

flow of nature through us and its bearing on our habits of life. Otherwise, life lacks propriety; we do not know our place under the sun. Norton has said the same thing, Wallace Stegner epitomizes this memorably: "Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed. ... That wild country ... can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope."⁶⁰ Walt Whitman found this out: "Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth."⁶¹ So, for the sake of our own identities, of being who we are where we are, of being at home in the world, of being the best persons, we need to maintain the integrities of the fauna and flora on our landscapes. This is not as much getting cut down to size as being lifted up to our noblest self-understanding.

I advocate this enthusiastically. But these wild others cannot be seen simply as a source of personal transformation. We must make the model at least an ellipse with two foci: human virtue and natural value. "In an environmental virtue ethics, human excellence and nature's excellence are necessarily entwined."⁶² Yet: "An environmental virtue ethics may start from a concern for human interests, but it cannot remain there."⁶³ To be truly virtuous, one must respect values in nature for their own sake, and not simply as tributary to human flourishing. An enriched humanity results with values in persons (the anthropocentric ones) and values in nature (nonanthropocentric ones) compounded—but only if the loci of value are not confounded. It seems cheap and philistine to say that excellence of human character is all that we seek when we preserve endangered species. Excellence of human character does indeed result, but only when human virtue cherishes, celebrates the value found in nature.

Winning, interpreted as becoming more virtuous, requires getting your goals right. My ancestors lost in the Civil War; they lost their slaves, they lost the war. But then again they did not really lose. Without this loss, "the South would not be anywhere close to the prosperous society that exists today, where whites and blacks have more genuine and more productive relationships, trade flourishes, people are autonomous, human rights defended, and so on. The South may have lost the war, but it did not really lose, because the war was wrong. When the right thing was done, things turned out win-win in the long term."⁶⁴ But I would not have said to the slave-owning whites: Free your slaves because you will get a benefit from it.

For us men, granting equality to women has been a similar experience, I would not have thought, as a man, that I should treat women equally in order to increase my opportunities.

Can we extend such reasoning to environmental ethics? Consider the Pacific Northwest. There will be some losers, in the sense that some loggers will have to change jobs. They will, meanwhile, come to reside in a community

that is stable in its relationship to the forests in which it is embedded, and that makes them winners. They once lived in a community with a worldview that saw the great forests of the Northwest as a resource to be taken possession of, exploited. But that is not an appropriate worldview; it sees nature as commodity for human gratification, and nothing else. The idea of winning is to consume, the more the better. When the goalposts are moved, these "losers" at the exploitation game will come to live in a community with a new worldview, that of a sustainable relationship with the forested landscape, and that is a new idea of "winning." "What they really lose is what it is a good thing to lose: an exploitative attitude toward forests. What they gain is a good thing to gain, a land ethic."⁶⁵ I can say; Get a land ethic; it's good for you—but with misgivings analogous to those above about whites freeing slaves, or men treating women more equitably.

If someone protests that this is cheating, redefining winning by moving the goalposts, I reply that, the analogy is bad. "If such a person is wrong, the goal posts, since they are misperceived, will have to be moved. That is not cheating to win that is facing up to the truth: what was before thought to be winning is losing."⁶⁶ But we do want to make sure we know where those goal posts are and what winning means for all concerned. This is not so much converging anthropocentrists and nonanthropocentrists—any more than whites and blacks converging on freeing the slaves, or men and women converging on equality. This is reconstituting an ethic where the anthropocentrists, like "us whites" and "us men" get the focus off themselves and focus on the inclusive conservation of values outside no less than inside them and their gang.

Can and should humans ever lose? The world is a complicated place and there is no simple answer. The answer is first yes and later no; sometimes yes, sometimes no; in some ways and places yes, in others no; superficially yes and at depth no; yes for self-aggrandizing humans, no for communitarian humans, not if their sense of moral community becomes inclusive of life on Earth.

We have a great deal to gain by doing the right thing; and, even when it seems that we lose by doing it, we typically do not; not if we get our goal posts in the right place, not if we can refocus our goals off the narrow self and enlarge them into the community we inhabit. There is always a deeper, philosophical sense in which it seems impossible to lose; that is all the more incentive to do the right thing.⁷

I applaud Norton when he enlarges the sense of human community and the deeper senses in which we humans can win. I applaud his celebrating nature's infinite creativity. I remain disappointed that he cannot yet reach a genuinely inclusive ethic, unable to count anything unless he can figure out a

way to covet it for human opportunity. As long as he still looks at Earth and says, "All this can be yours," he has not yet been cut down to size. He is still in the larval stage and not yet transformed into a spiritual butterfly. He does not yet have the goalposts in the right place. Actually, if I were to psychoanalyze him, I think he has crossed over unconsciously into more inclusive territory and cannot yet face up to this undertow flowing beneath his rational consciousness. He is both more virtuous and being carried out further than he realizes.

But rather than psychoanalyze Norton, let me rationalize my own inner struggles.⁶⁸ Do I think that in seeking such virtues, celebrating and conserving nature, humans are always, if subtly, acting in their own (now enlightened) self-interest? Here I twist and turn, torn between the natural world I seek to enjoy and the classic self-defeating character of self-interest. These fauna and flora have a good of their own, they are located in a good place, they are desired for their own sake; and appreciating them is my flourishing. That is a win-win situation. Oppositely, losing them is losing the quality of life that comes based on them, as well as their being lost in their own right; that is a lose-lose situation. We win when we assume responsibility for heritages that are greater than we are. Some things have to be won together.

Humans can and ought to inherit the Earth; we become rich with this inheritance, as and only as we oversee a richness of planetary biodiversity that embraces and transcends us. We are not choosing this inheritance for our happiness, but our happiness is bound up with it. Having moved the goalposts to where they now are, we are in significant part constituted by our ecology. There are essential cultural ingredients to happiness, but they now are conjoined with this ecological "birthright," to use Norton's term. Repudiating the natural world in which we reside, repudiating our ecology, is itself unsatisfying. Not choosing these ecological goods in order to gain authentic happiness, therefore, is a logical, empirical, psychological impossibility. So, in the end, Norton and I may be converging after all.

7 CONVERGING VERSUS RECONSTITUTING ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

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