

From Egoism to Environmentalism

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In the alteration of our conceptual environment, philosophy has a major role to play. Whether or not philosophy plays it, the task urgently waits to be done by someone. We are on a collision course that is far more than a conflict of political and economic ideologies. It is the mad scramble by human beings, following outmoded ideas of their relationship to the earth, for control of the natural resources of the planet.

—Thomas Colwell, “Ecology and Philosophy”

The “key-log” which must be moved to release the evolutionary process for an ethic is simply this: quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.

—Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

A GREAT DEAL OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY ETHICAL THOUGHT HAS BEEN devoted to foundational questions. By foundational questions, I mean questions about the justification of ethical claims and the explanation of ethical motivation. This is not to say that classical ethics, from Plato and Aristotle through the modern period, has not been concerned with foundational questions—perhaps even centrally. It is to say that the contemporary period

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has shown an unusual intensity about these sorts of questions to the point of exclusivity.

Another phenomenon characteristic of the twentieth century is the emergence, again with a new intensity, of environmental stresses hitherto unknown in human society. Together with the emergence of environmental problems (pollution, conservation, preservation, population) has gone, in the last few decades at least, an increasing puzzlement over the *roots* of the problems. Specifically, many thinkers have sought to relate the emergence of environmental crisis to the framework of ethical or evaluative presuppositions which have characterized the period in question.¹ And it has occurred to some to wonder about the rather general impotence of moral philosophy vis-à-vis the sorts of problems we are facing.

The reflections which follow are *not* an attempt to suggest a causal connection between the preoccupations of moral philosophy with foundations and the emergence of our environmental difficulties. Such a suggestion would be ludicrous and far too arrogant an assessment of the causal significance of philosophy in any age. Nevertheless, with a certain amount of fear and trembling, I do want to venture the hypothesis that ethical theory has, in its concentration on foundational issues, left itself vulnerable and relatively uncritical on certain other fronts. And this vulnerability may well be manifesting itself currently in an incapacity to deal with the needs being expressed for an "environmental ethic" and for a relevance of moral philosophy to public affairs in the environmental context. In other words, though philosophical preoccupations are probably not the cause of certain social problems, they may well be part of an explanation for our current conceptual weakness in providing ethically enlightening solutions to these problems. And as the saying goes, one who is not a part of the solution . . . is part of the problem.

I shall attempt to clarify and defend my hypothesis simultaneously, beginning with a brief sketch of the two dominant foundational views of the modern period in ethics. I shall then proceed to exhibit what I take to be the basic procedural flaw common to both approaches (classically and in their more recent versions). Then, after a short discussion of what might seem to be a potent objection to my allegations, I shall begin (but *only* begin) the task of elucidating environmentalism as a normative ethical posture.

I

Broadly speaking, the dominant foundational preoccupations of modern ethical thought can be sketched in terms of two families of views: what I shall call the H-family and the K-family.² The families are pitted against one another and together against moral skepticism.

The H-family is a loose association of positions on a number of topics which relate to ethics, ranging from the nature of moral knowledge through the analysis of human action to the content of moral virtue. The approach is fundamentally empiricist in spirit, inviting us to construe morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives, deliverances of a sentiment capable of explaining causally both judgment and action. Ethical predicates are understood as resting on factual criteria whose practical bearing derives not from Reason, but from Interest. Actions are events—assessments of actions, therefore, claims about the causes and effects of those events. Virtue is a characteristic of the *tendencies* of action, often but not exclusively organized around a principle of utility.

The H-family, as I am understanding it, stands against skepticism in the sense that interpersonal justification is provided for, albeit justification of a sort which would hardly satisfy the stronger demands of the K-family.

In contrast to the H-family, the K-family represents an association of positions systematically contrary to empiricist ethical theory as normally understood. It is just as pervasive and extensive as the H-family in terms of its range of views on foundational issues, but in almost every case the positions are contrary. For example, morality (according to the K-family) is a system of categorical imperatives, deliverances not of sentiment but of a critique of sentiment: practical reason. Explanation of judgment and action is crucial, as with the H-family, but explanation *not* in causal terms so much as in terms of principles of conduct. Ethical predicates are understood not as resting on factual criteria but as regulating those criteria *a priori*, their practical bearing deriving not from Interest but from Reason. Actions are not simply events: assessments of actions, therefore, not simply claims about the causes and effects of events. Virtue is a characteristic of the will, not of overt (or even dispositional) behavior—often but not exclusively organized around a principle of “respect for persons.”

Like the H-family, the K-family stands against moral skepticism in the sense that interpersonal justification is provided for, though justification of a sort which mystifies the more empirical minds in the H-family.³

II

Despite their radical differences over foundations, and aside from their common opposition to skepticism, the H- and K-families are congruent from other points of view. Most important, for my present purposes, is the fact that within both families we see a concentrated effort in the direction of vindicating “benevolence” and “justice” (both psychologically and logically) over “egoism.” This effort manifests itself in the H-family primarily in an impar-

tialist analysis of the moral sentiment or point of view and in the rejection of psychological egoism as either logically confused or empirically simplistic.⁴

In the K-family, the same animus emerges in the universalization or generalization test for moral maxims and in the rejection of self-referentiality in our understanding of reasons for action. Respect for persons, all persons, is a conceptual demand on rational action.

It is this shared antagonism for egoism and the associated affinity with what might, broadly speaking, be called "humanism" that I wish to focus on. It is on this point, I think, that the perspective of moral philosophy is most in need of critique, and it is here that the quest for an environmental ethic meets its most important procedural obstacles.

Let us return first to the H-family. In unfolding the content of the moral sentiment, the H-family of positions typically examines empirically the objects of moral esteem in an effort to organize them around one or more basic principles. In the course of this enterprise, psychological and ethical egoism are invariably portrayed as inadequate accounts of human motivation and obligation respectively. What is more, the moral object of concern is quite often described *by contrast* to the egoistic position, e.g., as including not only the interests of the self *but also the interests of other selves*. It is as if the moral sentiment is viewed as a kind of generalization of self-love or self-interest: the same sort of sentiment, but wider with respect to its class of beneficiaries (and presumably more intersubjectively accessible—and acceptable—for that reason). Hume writes in the *Enquiry*:

Usefulness is agreeable, and engages our approbation. This is a matter of fact, confirmed by daily observation. But *useful?* For what? For somebody's interest surely. Whose interest then? Not our own only: For our approbation frequently extends farther. It must, therefore, be the interest of those, who are served by the character or action approved of; and these we may conclude, however remote, are not totally indifferent to us. By opening up this principle, we shall discover one great source of moral distinctions.⁵

and Mill in *Utilitarianism*:

The happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct is not the agent's own happiness but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator . . . education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use that power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole, especially between his own happiness and the practice of such modes of behavior, negative and positive, as regard for the universal happiness prescribes.⁶

This tendency to form morality from the rib of egoism is further emphasized in the pressure toward accounting for justice in terms of social utility or benevolence alone. The neatness of the direct generalization of egoism is disturbed if justice, for example, is admitted as a separate form of moral concern altogether.⁷

When one looks for some argument for the general approach to morality as multiplied egoism, very little is available. One has the impression that it just *goes without saying* in the H-family that there must be some unified account of our considered moral judgments and principles, and that self-interest provides the common denominator in terms of which the fractions of the virtues can be summed.

When we come to contemporary exponents of the H-family view, the same pattern manifests itself, and occasionally we even get a hint of the underlying motivation. Gilbert Harman, for example, in his recent book *The Nature of Morality* (Oxford, 1977) writes:

Taking an interest in someone for his own sake is not difficult; we do it all the time if only to make our contacts with others more bearable. The difficulty is maintaining such an interest over time. You have to go through the motions over and over again until it becomes habitual. Then, by the same *psychological principle of generalization* that leads the miser to become habitually interested in money for its own sake rather than for what it can buy, you may find yourself habitually taking an interest in other people for their own sake and not just for your own benefit. Paradoxically, in thus casting away your egoism and becoming concerned with others, you act in your own interest and help make yourself happy.

And again: "Moral reasons are not reasons of self-interest. They derive from an intrinsic concern or respect for others *as well as yourself* [italics mine]."⁸

The suggestion, clearly, is that the only way to conceptualize and psychologically explain the moral sentiment is in terms of extending self-interest to include other bearers of the sentiment. But why should this be? Why should it be thought that our moral sentiments are best ordered by variations on self-interest? Perhaps we are supposed to believe that self-interest so clearly provides a paradigm of practical rationality that only by working off *its* persuasive power (only by tying our carts to *its* automotive wagon) can we hope to ground an adequate set of moral principles.

I am not, of course, suggesting that the moral sentiment in the H-family, is at bottom reducible to self-interest as its ground—quite the contrary. *Ex hypothesi*, self-love is *not* its ground.⁹ What I am suggesting is that self-love is its guiding model—providing its "key-log," to use Leopold's term. Value is tied to the interests of persons and is moralized by being tied to the interests of all or most persons.

A consequence of this model of the moral philosophical enterprise is that normative ethical principles or ideals which are not easily reducible to some function of the interests of selves both fail to be readily intelligible and fail to be plausibly defended. Specifically, as I shall discuss more fully a bit further on, environmental ethical principles and ideals are antecedently less likely to be well-received on this model.¹¹

III

Let us turn now to the K-family. Here, despite expectations and initial appearances, things are not much different. On first glance, it might seem that a perspective on moral judgment which strenuously denies its connections with interest and inclination would be one whose tie to both self-interest and benevolence (and so to the model I have been questioning) would be sufficiently weak to escape my line of criticism. But the lack of hospitality to environmental ideals turns out not to be a function of the "interest" components of phrases like "self-interest" and "general interest." It is the "self" and the "general" that seem to be at the root of the problem, and a Kantian ethic traditionally has stood fast here. This is most evident in Kant's own discussion of the second formulation of the categorical imperative test—the supreme principle of morality. This formulation comes closest in Kant's account to providing something like substantive action-guidance in a theory otherwise charged with being too formal to be practically helpful. After insisting that the ends which a rational being proposes to himself are only relatively or subjectively valuable (giving rise, therefore, only to hypothetical imperatives), Kant writes:

Supposing however, that there were something whose *existence* has *in itself* an absolute worth, something which, being *an end in itself*, could be a source of definite laws, then in this and this alone would lie the source of a possible categorical imperative, that is, a practical law.

Now I say: man and generally any rational being *exists* as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* to be arbitrarily used by this or that will. . . . Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on Nature's, have . . . if they are nonrational beings, only a relative value as means, and are therefore called *things*; rational beings, on the contrary, are called *persons*, because their very nature points them out as ends in themselves, that is, as something which must not be used merely as means, and so far therefore restricts freedom of action (and is an object of respect).¹²

And this leads Kant directly to his humanistic formula: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only."

Now, I am not claiming either that the foundational theory itself or other formulations of the supreme principle have the consequences for normative ethics which I am challenging. Indeed, I think that there is evidence that Kant's more important first formulation of the supreme principle precisely avoids many of my difficulties.¹³ I do want to claim, however, that this formulation, by far the most popular and the source of the "respect for persons" ethic, is hostage to the same sort of model of morality attributed to the H-family. Kant's conception of the "end in itself," necessary and insightful as it is as part of his view of the categorical force of moral judgment, is translated for purposes of application into the (quite independent) doctrine of "persons versus things." Kant moved (in his own view, naturally) from the contention that the notion of an end-in-itself was presupposed in our moral conceptual framework, to the view that the only candidate for the status of end-in-itself is the (rational) person. Perhaps his view was that *some* entity or entities had to be the bearer(s) of this status, and that no given rational will alone could qualify (egoism?). This belief, together with Kant's conviction that using persons as mere means was bad, may have led him in the quoted context to his fallacious conclusion—fallacious because it equivocates on the term "end-in-itself."¹⁴

For a more contemporary example of the K-family's egoistically modeled humanism, we can look to Thomas Nagel's *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford, 1970). There is no time here for an adequate discussion of Nagel's difficult but rewarding reinterpretation of Kant. Suffice it to say that the main theme or project of the book is precisely to show how egoism can be defeated by a consideration of the nature of "objective" reasons for action. As Nagel puts it:

My argument is intended to demonstrate that altruism (or its parent principle) depends on a full recognition of the reality of other persons. Nevertheless the central conception in my proposed interpretation will be a conception of *oneself*, and the argument will rest on self-interested action. . . .

The precise form of altruism which derives from this argument will depend on . . . the nature of the primary reasons for action which individuals possess. If these are tied to the pursuit of their interests, in some ordinary sense of that term, then a normal requirement of altruism will be the result.¹⁵

In his discussion of "objective" reasons for action, then, Nagel moves naturally with the assumption that the road to altruism is the important moral road and that it is to be reached by a discipline of "objectifying" subjective or egoistic reasons for action. By making moral concern a matter of subjecting egoistic or personal reasons to impersonalizing constraints in order to vindicate (non-"*solipsistic*") rationality, Nagel is suggesting, in effect, that

moral reasons are essentially related to a class of "persons" in the same sort of way that the H-family relates them to a class of "interests." As with Kant, the insight of objectivity, itself quite independent of humanism, is transformed into a sword with which to fight egoism and vindicate its generalization or universalization.

IV

I have been arguing so far that the two major foundational accounts of morality share, both in their classic formulations and in their contemporary interpretations, a fixation on egoism and a consequent loyalty to a model of moral sentiment or reason which in essence generalizes or universalizes that very egoism. And I have suggested that it is this fact about modern moral philosophy that makes it particularly inhospitable to our recent felt need for an environmental ethic—an ethic which, in the words of Leopold, takes the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community as its central touchstone. For such an ethic does not readily admit of being reduced to "humanism"—nor does it sit well with any class or generalization model of moral concern.

As I have noted in passing, however, this last point needs more attention. Indeed, the spirit of an increasing amount of recent literature on environmental "obligations" seems to be against me here. For example, the distinction is made between "shallow" and "deep" environmentalism in order to emphasize the difference between justifications which ultimately appeal to human concerns in addressing environmental problems and justifications which focus on the interests of nonhuman beings.¹⁶ The implication is that the former path is merely instrumentalist, utilitarian environmentalism—"human chauvinism"—while the latter path is the path of the new environmental sensitivity, avoiding arbitrariness in extending its moral concern to a far larger class of beneficiaries: birds, fish, whales, and other animals; plants, trees and forests; lakes, rivers, air and land.¹⁷

Does this move toward "deep" environmentalism not show that my thesis is mistaken, at least in its contention that it is the generalized egoistic model that is the problem? After all, it is exactly this model which many of the new environmentalists invoke in their defense of the "biotic community" and in their charges of human chauvinism. Peter Singer invokes it in his book *Animal Liberation*. Christopher Stone invokes it in his *Should Trees Have Standing?* Far from it being the case that generalizations of egoism are inhospitable to environmental obligations and ideals, it appears to be the case that exactly such generalizations (only more extravagant) are what we need to ground our environmental obligations and ideals. It may be true that modern

ethics has been unduly human-centered, but this is a problem with the degree of its impartiality, not a problem with the structure of its thought.

Such is the objection, and a persuasive one it seems to be. Nevertheless, I think it is misguided. In fact, it is the structural tie to the generalization model in these thinkers which seems to me to be the right explanation for the (often) counterintuitive implications of their views. What I want to suggest is that the *last* thing we need is simply another "liberation movement"—for animals, trees, flora, fauna, or rivers. More importantly, the last thing we need is to cling to a model of moral judgment and justification which makes such liberation movements (with their attendant concentric reasoning) the chief or only way to deal with moral growth and social change.

What I am maintaining is *not* that the "individualistic" model cannot be pressed into service, epicycle after epicycle, to deal with our obligations in matters environmental. Rather my point is that when this is the only model available, its implausibilities will keep us from dealing ethically with environmental obligations and ideals altogether. Such a "deep" or "generalized" version of environmentalism strains our moral sensitivities and intuitions to the breaking point, inviting talk of the "rights of animals," from dolphins to mosquitos; "rights," and even duties, of natural objects like trees and rivers; "chauvinism"; and court suits brought in the names of personified species or even historical landmarks. And this not to mention conceptual problems of individuation, interspecies comparisons of utility, and justice between nonhumans.¹⁸

None of this is meant to suggest that extensions of the conventional class of morally significant beings are either unintelligible or undesirable. Though I have doubts about the extension of the concept of 'rights' beyond certain limits, this latter concept seems to me not to be crucial in the present context. What is at stake, rather, is a more generic notion which might be called "moral considerability." Indeed, I believe that philosophers who challenge the conventional humanistic constraints on moral considerability are performing a great service in helping to clarify the necessary and sufficient conditions involved.

Nevertheless, I am convinced that the mere enlargement of the class of morally considerable beings is an inadequate substitute for a genuine environmental ethic. Once the class of morally considerable beings is enlarged, no hint of a method for assessing or commensurating the newly recognized claims is provided. Nor does it seem likely that it *could* be provided in a nonarbitrary way, given the lack of structure in the model. In fact, I would want to argue, though I shall not attempt it here, that the very resources needed to see that moral considerability is not tied to human individuals at the same time provide the realization that such considerability is not tied to individuals at all. The place-holders for moral respect could (and I think do)

range over systems of individuals as well. Once this awareness dawns, environmental ethics opens up beyond the constraints of the model I have been criticizing.

It is the inability to understand the range of the moral sentiment (or practical reason) in any but an abstract extensional mode that seems to be the problem: the single-minded mapping of morality onto "beneficiaries" and "communities of ends" whose relation to *their* environment is still left outside except instrumentally. I am suggesting that our normative ethical theorizing, when it becomes substantive, is hostage to the complex question: If not one's own interests or dignity, then whose?

The oft-repeated plea by some ecologists and environmentalists that our thinking needs to be less atomistic and more "holistic" translates in the present context into a plea for a more embracing object of moral consideration. In a sense, it represents a plea to return to the richer Greek conception of a man by nature social and not intelligibly removable from his social and political context—though it goes beyond the Greek conception in emphasizing that societies too need to be understood in a context, an ecological context, and that it is this larger whole which is the "bearer of value."

V

Having got to this point, I am somewhat at a loss as to how to go on. If the line of argument pursued in the previous sections is plausible, then it suggests an approach to environmental ethical obligations and ideals which is *not* a simple extension of the humanist model (nor a pure humanism in its own right). This means that the criteria in terms of which actions and policies are to be assessed must be

- A. either nonrelational in character, or if relational, then not relational to an extended class but to something else; and
- B. not practically *empty*.

The challenge which these present to moral philosophy is substantial and significant. Can we make sense of, let alone render plausible, a normative ethical posture satisfying these conditions?

Kant, in the *first* formulation of the categorical imperative test, seems to have been hinting at something that *might* be interpreted along the lines of Leopold's ethic when he writes: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature." And in his reflections on beauty and the sublime:

For since each one pursues actions on the great stage according to his dominating inclinations, he is moved at the same time by a secret

impulse to take a standpoint outside himself in thought, in order to judge the outward propriety of his behavior as it seems in the eyes of the onlooker. Thus the different groups unite into a picture of splendid expression, where amidst great multiplicity unity shines forth, and the whole of moral nature exhibits beauty and dignity.¹⁹

And Henry Sidgwick too seems to hint at something beyond what I have called the "extended egoism" model when he talks of grounding moral obligation not only from an agent's own (relational) point of view but "from the point of view of the universe."²⁰

But neither of these philosophers gives us very much to go on, failing in practice if not in principle to satisfy B above. It is interesting to speculate, however, whether their accounts would have differed had they had available to them the emerging science of ecology.

When we look to contemporary literature, many are the voices but few the answers. Thomas Colwell, in his essay "Ecology and Philosophy," quotes approvingly from ecologist Paul Sears and suggests that the "balance of Nature" provides the normative content that we seek:

The balance of Nature really has to do with the way in which natural processes relate to their environments: namely, through the efficient recycling of energy.... The concept of the balance of Nature, so conceived, therefore becomes a *normative* concept for the life of natural communities. Of the many things a natural community must accomplish, it cannot fail to achieve balance in the pattern of its energy utilization. This is the first law of the morality of Nature.²¹

Colwell seems to be suggesting that Leopold's "integrity, stability, and beauty" can be cashed in in scientific terms by use of ecological notions like "homeostasis" and an abandonment of the Man/Nature dichotomy so characteristic of traditional ethical thought. And these suggestions seem to me well made.

Nevertheless, as Holmes Rolston ("Is There an Ecological Ethic?") observes, Colwell's perspective, for all its healthy emphasis on ecological wisdom, tends to remain anthropological. In Rolston's words: "All goods are human goods, with nature an accessory. There is no endorsement of natural rightness, only the acceptance of the natural given."²² Rolston himself, on the other hand, appears to be pressing in a more radical direction, when he writes (of an environmental ethic which is not simply anthropological):

While it is frequently held that the basic criterion of the obligatory is the nonmoral value that is produced or sustained, there is novelty in what is taken as the nonmoral good—the ecosystem. Our ethical heritage largely attaches values and rights to persons, and if nonpersonal realms enter, they enter only as tributary to the personal. What is proposed here is a broadening of value, so that nature will cease to be merely "prop-

erty" and become a commonwealth. The logic by which goodness is discovered or appreciated is notoriously evasive, and we can only reach it suggestively. "Ethics cannot be put into words," said Wittgenstein, such things "*make themselves manifest.*" We have a parallel, retrospectively, in the checkered advance of the ethical frontier recognizing intrinsic goodness, and accompanying rights, outside the self. If we now universalize "person," consider how slowly the circle has been enlarged fully to include aliens, strangers, infants, children, Negroes, Jews, slaves, women, Indians, prisoners, the elderly, the insane, the deformed, and even now we ponder the status of fetuses. Ecological ethics queries whether we ought again to universalize, recognizing the intrinsic value of every ecobiotic component.²³

The difficulty lies in understanding whether Rolston intends, as he seems in this passage, to be embracing the individualistic model. The following remark in the same article suggests that he is aware of a difference: "The focus does not only enlarge from man to other ecosystemic members, but from individuals of whatever kind to the system."²⁴

The equivocal character of Rolston's description here serves to intensify my concern about its implicit model. For what may appear to be an essentially rhetorical distinction (between "enlarging" moral concern to include all living individuals and conceiving the environmental imperative as inviting respect for something more unified than simply the set of its "members") is not, I think, only a matter of terminology. Rather, it is a distinction whose implications for the structure and plausibility of environmental ethics are central.

Let me put the matter this way. If we approach the question as to the proper object(s) of moral respect solely in terms of extending or augmenting the class of already acknowledged moral persons, we run the risk of constraining our moral sensitivity to the size of our self-wrought paradigms. Human persons may well be paradigms, of course, but paradigms provide clues and starting points—not stopping points. They may be exemplary but they need not be the most embracing integral units in our moral universe. Indeed our moral universe might contain structures *inclusive* of persons respect for which is just as incumbent upon us morally. Such, I would want to argue, is the biosystem as a whole: not as a mere collection of biotic particles, but as an integrated, self-sustaining unity which puts solar energy to work in the service of growth and maintenance. The history of evolution is the drama of the biosystem's successful self-protection. Recent industrial history may well be an episode in that drama which will lead to a destruction of the system by some of its own participants, a kind of biotic hemorrhage.

I have no wish to sound either metaphorical or apocalyptic.²⁵ Much less do I wish to suggest for a moment that biosystemic respect should dilute human concerns for happiness and justice. I do, however, suggest that if an

"environmental ethic" is to be made both genuinely intelligible and morally persuasive, it must abandon a class-membership model of what can count as an "end-in-itself" or deserve respect. We must, I think, take literally and seriously the possibility that to be worthy of (moral) respect, a unified system need not be composed of cells and body tissue: it might be composed of human and nonhuman animals, plants, and bacteria.

To be sure, these suggestions need further working out. I hope, in fact, to be able to provide more along these lines in the near future myself. An important part of this task will be a general account of what might be called "bearers of moral value"—setting out not only sufficient but also necessary conditions for the proper application of that notion.²⁶ And essential to this effort, in my view, will be a careful avoidance of the pitfalls involved in demanding more of paradigm cases than they can supply. Ethical egoism is a posture which falls into the pit right off. Humanism and "extended" humanisms fall in only after circumambulation. Perhaps when it occurs to us that we may not be the measure of all things moral, we shall have taken the required giant step.

In any case, an environmental ethic must, while paying its respects to the individualistic model and to humanism, break free of them *without* breaking free of rational discourse and scientific method. The invitation, in Rolston's terms, to "get in gear with the way the universe is operating"²⁷ needs to be accepted and requires an understanding of that operation. The motivational force, one can hope, will take care of itself as it normally does—in the face of integrity, stability, and beauty.

NOTES

1. Numerous examples can be found in the following: Commoner, *The Closing Circle* (New York: Random House, 1972); Hardin, *Exploring New Ethics for Survival* (London: Pelican, 1972); Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Barbour, ed., *Western Man and Environmental Ethics* (Reading, Ma.: Addison Wesley, 1973); Disch, ed., *The Ecological Conscience* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970); and Blackstone, ed., *Philosophy and Environmental Crisis* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia, 1974).

2. H and K for Hume and Kant, though permit me to beg off of exegetical niceties by the use of the "family" and initial letter disclaimers.

3. I shall assume that membership in the respective families is not impossible to assign on the basis of the above characterizations. For those who need names, Hume, Mill, Perry, Toulmin, Baier, Foot, Rawls, Stevenson, Warnock, Brandt, and most recently Gilbert Harman are just a few whom I would include in the H-family. Kant, Price, Moore, Prichard, Ross, Ewing, Gewirth, and most recently Thomas Nagel are examples of the K-family. Doubtless readers will wonder about the inclusions here and there on the respective lists, and probably would want to classify some on a skepticism

list instead. There are also some important philosophers (such as R. M. Hare and W. K. Frankena) who resist classification on either list. And though I am prepared to defend the lists in terms of my sketches of the families, this is really not to the point. For my main goal is to distinguish the families in order to examine what they have in common.

4. See, for example, James Rachels, "Egoism and Moral Skepticism," in *A New Introduction to Philosophy*, ed. Steven Cahn (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

5. David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, section V, last paragraph of Part 1.

6. J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 2, seventeenth paragraph.

7. This fact should not be taken to imply that those who insist on a different analysis of justice are counterexamples to my conjecture. For a distributionally sensitive account of generalized self-interest is offered in most contractarian views. Usually such accounts are offered as alternative monisms, however, not simply as complementing the utilitarian mode of generalization.

8. Gilbert Harman, *The Nature of Morality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 150 (italics mine).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

10. For this reason, I acknowledge that the use of the term "egoism" might mislead. Perhaps "individualism" would be a better term.

11. I am not suggesting that the "individualistic" framework exhibited above renders an approach to environmental ethics impossible. In section IV, I will consider examples of recent attempts to ground an environmental ethic on exactly this model. My point is rather that this format is the only format possible in terms of standard moral theory, and that therefore environmental ethics tends to stand or fall with the plausibility of further "extending" the moral class of beneficiaries or contractors to include nonhumans and future humans. If one is struck, as I am, by the contrived and artificial character of the results of this effort to extend humanistic ethics, one will see it as the exception proving my point.

12. Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, second section, paragraphs 42 and 43.

13. See below, section V.

14. "End-in-itself" may be the opposite of "End-for-someone" or the opposite of "Means (for someone)." In the argument

Moral judgment requires that there exist an End-in-itself;

All and only rational beings exist as ends-in-themselves, not as mere means;

Therefore, all and only rational beings deserve respect in terms of the requirements of moral judgment,

this ambiguity appears to be a source of invalidity.

15. Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 89.

16. I first heard this distinction from Richard Routley.

17. See Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Random House, 1975); Christopher Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?* (Los Altos, Ca.: Kaufmann, 1974); and John Passmore's discussion of the trend in *Man's Responsibility for Nature* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), ch. 5. Also see the essays by Peter Singer and R. and V. Routley in this volume.

18. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?*, notes 26, 49, and 73; Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, ch. 5; and parts 3 and 4 in Regan and Singer, eds.,

Animal Rights and Human Obligations (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976). I should hasten to add that none of this should be taken to imply that we do not have moral obligations—and many more than we sometimes recognize—where animals are concerned. It is the model of reasoning to these views which worries me. So the implication is not that we must remain with "human chauvinism" or "shallowness"—God forbid—even though philosophers who would defend these latter views will probably share many of my difficulties with the "deep" model.

19. See T. C. Williams, *The Concept of the Categorical Imperative* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 22, 121.

20. Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed. (New York: Dover, 1966) p. 420.

21. Thomas Colwell, "Ecology and Philosophy," reprinted in Rachels and Tillman, eds., *Philosophical Issues* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 360.

22. Holmes Rolston, "Is There an Ecological Ethic?" *Ethics* 85 (Spring 1975): 98.

23. Ibid., p. 101.

24. Ibid., p. 106.

25. That the biosystem is appropriately viewed as an "organism" in a firmly empirical, nonmetaphorical sense is becoming clearer to at least *some* respected scientists. See "The Quest for Gaia," by J. Lovelock and S. Epton, *The New Scientist* 65, no. 935 (1975): 304-9.

26. If the biosphere is such a "bearer of value," then "respect for life" may involve seeing its various forms as manifestations of value without seeing them as simply ends in themselves. But this need not be interpreted to mean that they are to be seen as "mere means." The ends-means distinction is not the contrast being evoked here. What is being evoked is the conception of a system whose integrity, stability, and beauty can be cashed in ecological (v. mystical) terms, and whose relationship to its specific "forms of life" is not simply that of class inclusion. It may be the persistence of life itself, of which the forms of life (including man) are multiple investments, which provides the environmental imperative (if there be one).

27. Rolston, "Is There an Ecological Ethic?," p. 108.