

In this paper, I will argue that Aboriginal society and philosophy as a whole is focused on the virtue of treating nature as an end, as well as the vice of treating them as a means. This is reflected in the Dreaming stories and other pieces of philosophy present in Aboriginal culture. Firstly, I will argue that Aboriginal society treats nature as an end-in-itself; secondly that Dreaming stories highlight the virtue of treating nature as such; and finally I will argue that the Kanyini schema further supports that this belief is held within Aboriginal society.

Aboriginal society as a whole respects nature as an end-in-itself and discourages treating it as a mere means. Within philosophy, ends are seen as goals, and means as tools to achieve those goals. For example: "I ought to write this argument (means) to pass philosophy (end)". As means (such as a paper-knife) are mere tools, one can mistreat it as such; such treatment cannot be applied to humans, however, as humans are sentient and living beings. One cannot treat people as **mere** tools because they have inherent value in themselves. Acknowledging and respecting this value is treating something as an end-in-itself. Aboriginal societies expand upon this idea, allowing it to encompass all of nature. This is supported by the Kanyini schema, a visualisation of the moral law and philosophy of Aboriginal society presented by Bob Randall, which shows the four major aspects of Aboriginal society: *ngura* (land), *walytjia* (family), *kurunpa* (_soul), and *_tjukurrpa* (philosophy). Within this schema, *walytjia* not only includes fellow humans but also includes the animals and plants that live on the same *ngura*. This shows the belief that the environment and other living beings are equally precious as humans. He further questions the need to always overpower and alter nature, as it clearly exists because it works. He pushes that humans should simply try to integrate themselves into that functional system. Through this, we can see the deep reverence that Aboriginal people have for nature and its subsequent treatment as an end rather than a tool to be used. This culture is deeply ingrained into Aboriginal societies, allowing them to view nature as an end-in-itself.

Dreaming stories can be understood through Kant's deontological moral philosophy as stories of sacrifice, highlighting the virtuous traits of characters. Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy was based on duty, morality, and the virtue of goodwill. From Kant's perspective, to act from duty is to act with respect to the moral law. This was tested through the use of the categorical imperative. Within Kant's works, this categorical imperative was an end-in-itself, something people had to achieve irrespective of desire. There was only one such imperative: "act as if your maxim (reasoning) will become a universal

law". If such reasoning can be applied to everyone and everything without contradiction, then Kant believed that the duty must have been fulfilled. Furthermore, Kant believed that one showed the virtue of goodwill only when one fulfilled their duty even through difficulty, contrasting with Aristotle's and Socrates' ideals. This idea of goodwill can be attributed to the Aboriginal Dreaming story of the Southern Cross. The primary conflict within this story occurs between three starving people. Two people argue that they should hunt a kangaroo to feed themselves while forgoing Baiame (the creator god), but the other stays adamant that they should not betray the will of Baiame. He leaves their settlement and succumbs to hunger. By not only respecting the god's wish, but also respecting nature, the third mate shows his goodwill through a time of difficulty by abiding by his duty, and not acting in a way that would go against the moral law. For this, he is immortalised as the stars of the Southern Cross. This Dreaming story highlights the virtue of treating nature with regard to the moral law and respecting it as a living part of our world; treating it as an end.

Both the Kanyini schema and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs are different representations of the same idea, but both focus on different aspects of life due to their different origins. In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Abraham Maslow hypothesises that there are different levels of needs that require satiation, with self-actualisation laying at the top. Maslow predicts that self-actualisation would be impossible (or at least more difficult) to achieve when lower needs, such as the need for food and safety are not met. Maslow defines this "self-actualisation" as the ability to fulfil one's potential. Similarly, the Kanyini schema establishes that without the connections to all aspects of life (altogether known as Kanyini), a person in Aboriginal culture is unable to become the most of what they can be; unable to self-actualise. Dreaming stories also have a crucial role in self-actualisation, as it enables people to understand the world around them and presents experiences from previous generations that individuals can build upon and learn from. The passing down of these stories is a clear indication of the development of not only the individuals but also the community. Through this, people would have become self-actualised; become aware of their own capabilities and the world around them. These Dreaming stories also teach about respecting nature, which allows people to live with respect in both societies and the larger world. We can see this reverence manifest itself in Aboriginal Dreaming stories, such as the story of the Mallee Hen Dreaming. Within this story, a woman, having not learnt of the land, disrespects the environment by using it for her own gain **without** giving a tribute to the Water Dreaming Serpent that also calls this place home. This ignorance further leads to the false accusation and spearing of a stranger who was

presumed to have stolen the eggs. By being ignorant of the land and having used nature as an end, she is not only punished by nature but will have to continue to live with the guilt of having caused the death of an innocent bystander.

For these reasons, I believe that Aboriginal societies are focused on the moral treatment of nature.

Firstly, Aboriginal society does not treat nature as a **mere** tool; secondly, Aboriginal society continues to do so through difficulty emphasising their virtue; and finally uses Dreaming stories as an opportunity to self-actualise, building upon the experience of others.