FOREWORD

Philosophers since Socrates have insisted that the unexamined life is not worth living, but only more recently have environmental philosophers insisted that life in an unexamined world is not worth living either. Examining his life, Socrates said, "I'm a lover of learning, and trees and country places won't teach me anything, whereas people in the city do" (*Phaedrus* 230d). Socrates loved the city, with its politics and culture; he lived and died defending, and criticizing, Athens. Socrates aspired to the excellence of a noble person, but he hardly knew he lived on a planet. Today we reside on a remarkable Earth; *Homo sapiens* is an Earthling; indeed, we discover—so Don Marietta argues in the pages that follow—that we cannot know who we are without knowing where we are. We need an Earth ethics.

Aristotle placed humans, though they rise up from the humus, the earth, belonging by necessity in social communities, such as villages and towns: "Man is by nature a political animal" (*Politics* 1.2. 1253a). The human genus is animal, but the human *differentia* or essence is to build a *polis*, a town. The human habitat is town or city, which is another way of saying that human life is political and cultural. Humans are the creatures that nature did not specialize but rather equipped with marvelous faculties for culture and craft. Humans rebuild their world through artifact and heritage, agriculture and culture, and political and economic, philosophical and religious, decisions.

Humans have minds coupled to hands; they think about and go to work on their world. They plan what they want; they build themselves a place to inhabit. Deliberately rebuilt environments replace spontaneous wild ones. This is true already in rural communities but becomes especially evident in towns. There must remain a biological understory for our towns as well as for our countrysides, just as the life of the mind requires ongoing biochemistry. But after that, we may think, the values of society are up to us. Our preferences are to be evaluated by culturing those native endowments we call reason and conscience. The town is our niche; we belong there, and no one can achieve full humanity without it. The values that humans cherish in towns cannot be modeled on

values in nature, since there are no templates for towns in wild nature. Nature frees humans to do their own thing.

Such a view, emphasizing the exodus that humans make from nature, has been the glory of the last two millennia, first during the classical cultures of antiquity, then during the medieval cultures, and, as though as a culmination, during the scientific, industrial, and technological centuries. Since what we rather overconfidently called our "Enlightenment" we have become modern. The keyword for this phenomenon, in recent discussions, is human "development." But we have not yet found our place.

Indeed, as we turn to the next century, beginning the next millennium, our planet is in crisis. Diverse combinations of nature and culture worked well enough over many millennia, but no more. Development is escalating. We have gained startling powers for the rebuilding and modification, including the degradation, of this home planet. Perhaps the four most critical issues that humans currently face are peace, population, development, and environment. We seem to have reached a critical point in our human self-understanding, facing a future where culture must be reintegrated with nature. The challenge of the next millennium is to contain our developing cultures within the carrying capacity of the larger community of life on Earth.

So we need, as urgently as at any time in our history, indeed more urgently now just because of this long history of separating persons from nature, a discriminating account of the continuities and the discontinuities between persons and their planet, what Marietta calls a "critical holism." We are searching for an environmental ethics, for a satisfactory, situated fitness on Earth. For we humans, too, like the other species, should be a well-adapted fit, even though we no longer achieve that fitness simply by genetics and natural selection, but even more by cultural adaptation and rational evaluation of our roles. How then do we view ourselves in the world?

It is certainly true that humans are a different kind of species. There are some five to ten million species now on Earth; across evolutionary history, over a billion species have come and gone. The procaryotes have speciated in thousands of different lines. The eucaryotes divided into the protists, the fungi, the plants, and the animals. The animals evolved between two and three dozen phyla, with one, the chordates, of special interest. There are some fifty classes of chordates, and one, the mammals, evolved into perhaps twenty orders; and one of these orders, the

primates, evolved well over a hundred species. Each of these species is a remarkable biological achievement, from the simplest procaryote (still quite complex) to the most advanced species. The mammals, especially the primates, are amply intelligent. Still, only one of these myriad species achieves enough self-conscious, reflective power to support personality. No other species comes close to producing the transmissible cultures, tens of thousands of them, that characterize the human species.

But does this make us apart from nature? Or are we still a part of nature? If we are a part of nature, is there more to be said about our unique role and destiny? That is the question to which Marietta here turns. We are apart because we can make philosophy, but we find that a philosophy that sets us too far apart is untrue, as well as unsatisfying. Humans are the only species that can be "critical," to use the adjective that Marietta takes from the long-standing philosophical tradition (Greek *kritikos*, a divider, a judge, an evaluator). There are values in the world independently of us, but only we can evaluate this world in overview. Animals live in their own sectors, and so do we, but we also can see outside our sector; we can take a view of the whole. We espouse world views, as can no other species.

Symbolized by the views of Earth from space, what we see is a rounded planet with its community of life, a biosphere, the global location of all our cultures. We are persons on a planet, and we have to keep both nature and culture in focus, like the twin foci of an ellipse, if we are to circumscribe the whole. We humans are at the center of concern, environmental problems are people problems. But our concerns are not well-placed until we see what we are at the center of. That opens for us the opportunity of what Marietta calls a "humanistic holism," one that is also an "ecological holism." As participants in our world, we are not, and ought not to be, free from our world; but we can and ought to be free in it. We are free to be persons on this superb planet, and responsible because we are both caring and free.

An ethic has to be inhabited, as much as an environment. It is a place one lives, part of a niche, which is not just an address but an occupation. Ethics is not just theory but convictions; it is self-involving and life-orienting. A disembodied argument may still be an argument, but a disembodied ethic is nothing at all. An ethic, with its owner, is lived as biography, a story line on location in historical time and geographical space. Our lives are Earthbound, and, with still more particularity, we belong to our native lands, and to lands where we have chosen to dwell.

the environment are giving place to very different beliefs, and new attitudes are becoming widespread.

For roughly two thousand years, the mainstream of Western thought minimized the importance of the natural environment, except as it was useful to people as farm or ranch land or as natural resources. The human person was looked upon as separate and different from the rest of living things and the lands and waters that sustained them. Until this century very few people thought of humans as a part of nature. The "man"-apart-from-nature view was dominant. I use the term *man* deliberately because it was man, the human male, who was thought to be apart from nature, as I explain further in Chapter One. This dominant concept of human, especially male, superiority to all of nature shaped the thinking of all but a handful of the influental thinkers. Plutarch was one of the few Roman intellectuals who thought people were morally bound to treat other animals with kindness; most of the classical thinkers after the time of Socrates stressed the difference between humans and nature. In the Middle Ages Saint Francis loved nature and even called the creatures his brothers, but he was not a typical thinker of his time. The early Renaissance humanist Petrarca wrote of his appreciation of the beauties of nature and the inspiration he received from climbing a wild mountain side, but his was an unusual sentiment that few other humanists adopted. Giordano Bruno taught that all nature is one, but this unorthodox view disturbed the guardians of theological purity and contributed to his being burned at the stake. Spinoza's god was nature, the one nature of which all things material and spiritual are manifestations, but this was a radical departure from Jewish and Christian theism, and few people could accept it. The prevailing view of the natural world in Western thinking alienated human beings from nature. For most people, nature was a hostile or indifferent force that worked against the welfare of humans and their intellectual and spiritual development. Nature was available for humans to use, but nature had to be conquered to be useful. It was human toil that turned the wild places into gardens. People felt little kinship with the rest of nature.

The dominant conceptual model of these twenty-some centuries did more than separate man from nature. It tended to separate all things from every other thing. The "man"-apart-from-nature paradigm was atomistic rather than holistic. I call it atomistic because it was a way of seeing all things as separate atoms, which were only coincidentally parts of other things. This thinking stressed the individuality of things and minimized the connections between things. The differences between things became their defining characteristics, while the qualities

that things had in common were depreciated. This affected the common view of what humans are and of what the world is. One of the significant effects of this atomistic way of thinking can be seen in ethics, which stressed individual duties and individual rights and claims against other people, with little or no sense of collective responsibility toward the earth.

The individualistic, atomistic way of conceiving of things made the nature of each thing internal to it, but the relations that a thing had with other things had to be recognized. The relations that a thing had with objects that were not a part of itself were thought about hierarchically, with each thing ranked in relation to other things. The things with which a thing was related were either better or worse than it, above or below it, more or less important. People were ranked from ruler to slave. Aspects of nature and of human life were ranked, one above another. Soul was above body, reason was above emotion, human was above animal, and the European was above all other cultures and peoples. The most pervasive ranking of all, as a result of which half the human race was affected adversely, was the placing of man above woman. The rankings of human above nature and man above woman seem to have had the most profound affects on human behavior. The opposition to nature and the sexual chauvinism that saw the human male as the normative human being were merged in a dominant paradigm accepted by virtually all philosophers and religionists. Feminist philosophers rightly see a close connection between the oppression of women and the abuse of the natural environment in Western culture.

The separation of humans from nature paralleled a division of body and mind within each person. Psychophysical dualism, which saw the soul or mental aspect of human beings as the real person, with the body as a temporary housing of the soul, diminished the importance of the natural environment. This dualism also affected the position of women, with intellectual life becoming the domain of the male and caring for the body the service of women.

The amalgam of these several ideas made a powerful and comprehensive philosophical foundation for medieval and modern culture. In Chapter One I will explain in more detail the "man"-apart-from-nature view and contrast it with the new holistic models that are replacing it in the thinking of many people.

The obvious danger in which humans have put themselves by abusing the natural environment, shown by biological studies and the new science of ecology, has made increasing numbers of people take a critical look at the old ways of thinking about nature and look toward a new

paradigm that sees human involvement in the biosphere in a more constructive way. Recognizing that the trashing of the planet was more than an aesthetic offense has made people rethink their place in the natural world. Philosophers have begun to question the adequacy of atomistic, hierarchical, and dualistic thinking, and people in all walks of life have become aware of the inadequacy of old ethical principles in meeting the challenges of human damage to the planet on which life depends. At the same time feminism has forced a rethinking of basic values and standards of human life.

In Chapter Two I will explore a new perspective on the person as a part of nature. The new paradigms that are replacing the apart-from-nature view employ several images to make the relationship of people and the natural environment more vivid. A community model sees the human person as a citizen of the biosphere. An organistic model sees the human person as an organ in a larger organism, the planet Earth. Earth has been pictured as a lifeboat and as a spaceship. Each of these images has implications that will be examined; each of them has its strengths and its limitations as a way to visualize the role of humans in the world. The many implications of seeing the human person as a part of nature need to be identified and examined.

A major task for philosophers is helping to develop an adequate system of ethics for living in harmony with the natural environment. At first there was little realization that a new approach to ethics was needed. Many ethicists thought that an extension of traditional moral principles to cover issues raised by deterioration of the natural environment would be adequate. One of the first moral issues of which they became aware was related to the finitude of natural resources and the fact that a few nations were using up most of the nonrenewable resources. The main questions faced at first dealt with just distribution of resources among nations and socioeconomic groups, and they involved no new moral principles. Extending the principles of justice and utility to include animals and unborn generations required some refinements in understanding such notions as the concept of the moral community, so that the moral standing or considerability of nonhuman animals and future generations of humans could be recognized. Including plants in the range of moral concern extended traditional moral principles even further. This new development, extending ethical principles to cover all living things in the range of moral concern, is known as biocentrism or "second-phase extensionism."[5]

For nearly two decades now, environmentalist moral philosophers have been attempting to develop a new kind of ethics, which we can call

ecological ethics. The new approaches to environmental ethics are often called environmental holism because they are far more inclusive than the traditional ethical systems and recognize that the human person is a part of the natural system that supports life on this planet. Some of these new approaches to ethics include nonhuman animals in the range of ethical concerns. Others, often referred to as biocentric approaches, include all living things. Ecocentric approaches stress the value of the planet as a whole and uphold moral responsibility toward the whole system of nature. The ethic that I support is holistic because it stresses the moral importance of the interrelationships of animal and plant species and their common dependence on the ecosphere, the whole system of living things and the water and minerals on which life depends. I will call the holism that I advocate "critical holism." This is done partly for convenience, to avoid having to repeat such phrases as "the type of holism I advocate," but there are two senses of the word *critical* that are relevant to that particular kind of holism. First, the sense of importance; my holistic viewpoint recognizes the critical significance of understanding that humans are a part of nature. How they are part of nature will be treated later. The second sense is that of discrimination, of close and careful examination. Critical holism attempts to avoid an exaggerated or fanciful concept of the unity of nature. It tries to avoid going very far beyond actual findings of ecology. There are approaches to ecological science that do not focus on the holistic aspects of natural systems. In calling my approach ecological, I do not claim that it is supported by all points of view in ecology.

Holism has meant various things to different thinkers, and I do not think that some holistic views are sound. In calling my view holistic, I do not mean to place my ethics in the context of extreme versions of holism that neglect or minimize the role of human culture and the value traditionally given to the human person. The ethical approach that I describe and advocate here does not sacrifice to concern for the natural environment the traditional concerns of humanistic ethics, such as justice, human welfare, the advancement of knowledge, and the avoidance or mitigation of needless pain. For this reason, I also refer to critical holism as humanistic holism.

More detailed description of the concept of critical holism and the nature of and limitations on the interrelationships of humans and other things in nature will be examined later, especially in Chapter Two.

Upon the basis of critical holism, I defend a humanistic ethic that calls for a duty more inclusive than duty just to humans, or even just to living things; it recognizes a duty to be responsible toward the non-

living things without which there could be no life. The obligations to the whole system of nature do not supplant duties to other persons and to other living things; the duties to the ecosphere supplement the other duties. Responsibly meeting duties of these different types requires new approaches to ethics that I will discuss in the several chapters of the book.

Environmental holism and the concept of duties to the ecosphere has been disturbing to a number of thinkers. The ecosphere, whether it is thought of as a community or as an organism, has implications that have troubled a number of philosophers. If the welfare of the whole community is given priority, the human individual may no longer be the focus of moral concern, with significant loss of freedom and moral rights. This has been recognized as a danger when only the political community was the larger whole to which the individual was subservient; with the whole planet as the community, the subordination of the individual might be even more devastating. Talking about nature as an organism raises even greater fears than the concept of nature as a community; an organ might have less moral significance than even a lowly citizen. The principles of humanistic ethics, which governed the relationships and interactions between people for thousands of years, might be overwhelmed by duties to the whole natural world.

In Chapter Three this concern over the loss of individual rights and freedom will be examined. The danger that humanistic ethical concerns will be sacrificed to survival strategies remains a serious threat, which I do not take lightly, but I argue that it is not environmental holism itself that we need to be concerned about. A critical holism that avoids the pitfall of being too abstract in the way it pictures the role of humans in the natural world and the pitfall of being too reductionistic in its understanding of what the human being is does not pose a danger to humanistic ethics. It is excessive abstractness, which loses sight of what is actually happening in the ecosystems, and reduction, which ignores morally significant qualities of humans in general and of the individual person, that threaten the value of the individual and the ethical standards that have fostered peace and justice among people and nations. A properly understood holism does not entail draconian measures that sacrifice the moral significance of individual persons and human relationships. An ethical system that recognizes a number of sources of moral insight and a broad range of moral concerns will enable the reconciliation of concern for the natural environment, concern for animals, and concern for justice and human welfare.[6]

Many environmental philosophers have played down talk of concern

for humans, trying to avoid a biased approach to environmental matters that assumes the moral superiority of human beings and a special importance for human interests. They have seen that assumption of human superiority to everything else in the world has been similar to notions of racial or national superiority. They believe it was this focus on humanity that led to attitudes that were destructive to the environment. In Chapter Four I will review the development of the rejection of what is termed *anthropocentrism*. I will point out the good that has resulted from the realization that Earth was not made just for humans and that morality should not be limited to narrow human concerns. I have come to believe, however, that even though the deep-ecology and biocentric approaches to ethics, which claimed that humans are not morally more significant than other living beings, have had a beneficial effect upon moral philosophy, the attack on anthropocentrism should be reexamined. The positions in environmental ethics that challenged the limiting of ethical concern to human interests woke many of us from deep dogmatic slumbers, but blaming all the harm done to the natural world on anthropocentrism may have been a mistake. I examine the possibility that concern for humanity might offer a better approach to environmental ethics than has been recognized by many environmental philosophers. Of course, a human-centered ethic must not be shortsighted and must take account of ecological knowledge to be an adequate ethical stance. I believe this includes the adoption of a moderate holistic view of humanity that recognizes that humans are truly a part of nature, even if being part of nature is not all that humans are. Only a holistic anthropocentrism can be a scientifically credible and morally adequate humanism.

A new approach to ethics, forged in response to the crisis of environmental destruction, faces the task of showing that it is justified philosophically. The new approach to ethics requires a new understanding of what ethics is and how it works. There is more to philosophical ethics than the making of judgments about which acts are right and which wrong. Understanding the nature of ethics has always required attention to the meaning of ethical terms. More recently it has involved a more extensive analysis of ethical language and the nature of ethical judgments. One of the most difficult tasks of the moral philosopher is addressing the logical issue of justifying moral principles. Ecological ethics must try to justify the new principles that underlie the new duties to the ecosphere. It must try to explain the reasoning that underlies the recognition of the newly realized duties. The new environmental ethics must be shown to be logically coherent, consistent with our knowledge of the natural world, and able to give moral direction as we face difficult

environmental questions. Explaining why a moral principle is logically justified is a difficult but necessary aspect of moral philosophy. I believe it is morally wrong to destroy an estuary just to dig a channel for coal barges so someone can make more money than would be made if already existing ports are used. Some people do not agree with this. How can I explain why I am right and they are wrong? This can get complicated, but it needs to be attended to. The logical basis of the new environmental ethic must be made clear and shown to be sound.

At first moral philosophers tried to justify environmental ethical principles in the same ways older moral principles had been defended. A growing number of environmental philosophers came to believe that the new ethics raised not only new moral issues but also called for new moral principles to be informed by ecological knowledge. This raised new logical issues regarding the defense of these new moral principles. There must be some explanation of how moral knowledge (knowledge of what is good and what is bad) can be related to factual knowledge, including knowledge about the natural environment. For a long time moral philosophers have realized a need to avoid what is called the *is/ought* impasse, which results when attempts are made to use deductive or inductive reasoning to explain the relationship between factual information and moral evaluation. I will explore an approach that does not attempt to reach moral knowledge through deductive arguments. I will base this approach on current views about perception and the formation of beliefs. An important part of this is seeing the role played in moral judgment by a person's individual world view. World views are subject to criticism, and this enables the determination of which world views, along with the moral judgments that are made in their context, are adequate and which are inadequate.

I also explain the movement from moral knowledge of the good and bad to a sense of moral obligation to do what is good. Some moral philosophers have thought that a logical connection must be found between knowledge that certain things are good and others bad and an obligation to do what is good. My approach, based on an examination of actual moral experience, finds no gap between knowledge and obligation. I find that recognition of goodness and badness is accompanied by recognition of a fittingness between what is seen as good in a given situation and certain behaviors that are appropriate to fostering the good and avoiding the bad. This sense of fittingness shows which behaviors one should do and which acts one should refrain from doing. With this recognition of fittingness comes a tendency to seek what is good and avoid what is bad. The significance and the limitations of

this connection between knowledge and a sense of obligation will be examined.

A number of logical issues will be explored, especially in Chapters Five and Six. These chapters can be skipped or saved for a later time without loss of continuity with the other chapters.

Much of the new environmental ethics has been based on the concept of value in nature. Some of the ethical approaches are grounded in the attribution of intrinsic value to animals, to the biosphere, or to the whole ecosphere. This has raised a number of difficult questions, such as questions about the objectivity of values. Whether values can be objective and thereby able to give a sound basis for ethics will be examined in Chapter Seven. An effort to provide a clear taxonomy of value terms will be followed by an analysis that supports the conclusion that values are not properly understood as being either objective or subjective. I will examine the ethical significance of abandoning talk of objectivity with respect to values and argue that there will be no loss to ethics. There are clearer and more accurate ways of saying what we have tried to say in talk about objectivity, and using more descriptive ways of talking will not rob us of value, but may give us a better grasp of the values that are significant to us morally.

The obligations of which we become aware in seeing the fittingness of certain behaviors, including the fittingness of obligations toward the natural environment, are significant within specific situations. The meaning of the situation for the person who will act within the situation provides part of the context within which a behavior is fitting. It is within the context of *this* situation that *this* behavior is seen to be the right thing to do. An analysis of actual moral experience does not support the notion of moral absolutes that are binding upon all rational creatures regardless of the situation in which they must act. It supports the idea of contextual obligations, have meaning and are morally demanding because of a context that includes the person's individual world view. This world view incorporates the person's knowledge and beliefs and values in a comprehension of the world that includes cognitive, valuational, and volitional aspects. In Chapter Eight I will explain and defend the contextualist approach to ethics. This chapter concludes with an explanation of how holistic contextual ethics can contribute to the resolution of difficult and confusing moral issues, the hard cases.

In Chapter Nine I will explore moral pluralism, which is much more controversial than contextualism. Contextualism has been a part of moral theory almost from the beginning of ethics in Greek philosophy, even though some ethical systems tried to overcome its role in morality.

Pluralism is more threatening to traditional moralists because this approach uses different moral principles that cannot be reduced to one basic principle and cannot be logically derived from one master principle. I will survey some of the recent literature on pluralism and explain how use of different principles is justified. Moral judgments can be shown to be of very different kinds, such that different principles are in fact doing somewhat different jobs in the several cases, such as deciding what one should do, judging past behaviors, judging moral character, and making social policy. The situations in which moral judgments are made can vary from those involving people who are well known and whose lives one can affect very deeply to those involving people who are quite distant and who can be affected only slightly. Decisions involving wild animals and future generations are certainly not like those involving one's family or close associates. Different moral principles may very well be more appropriate in one sort of situation than in another. I will argue that a pluralistic approach is justified if a clear explanation can be given of how the kind of principle followed in a given case is justified by the particular sort of judgment that must be made and features of the context in which the judgment is made.

In Chapter Ten I will explore the causes of moral disagreements and the role of disagreement in moral discourse. I will argue that moral consensus is not necessary; moral disagreement can have the positive effect of showing alternatives and fostering creative approaches to moral matters. Moral disagreement does not call for the subjectivist view that all moral positions are equally valid, nor does it justify moral indifference. Environmentalists need not question their moral insights because there are people who deny moral responsibility toward the planet. In this chapter I will argue that a contextualist and pluralistic ethical system allows desirable flexibility and creativity in finding the appropriate and responsible moral behavior in new and complex situations. It does not allow justification of whatever a person might happen to fancy. Moral beliefs are not all equally justified. Previous chapters have explored the ways in which moral beliefs can be evaluated.

Equally honest and well intentioned people with equally good scientific knowledge can disagree, so disturbing disagreements about ethical treatment of the natural environment will occur, and this should not be surprising. Moral judgments are subject to varying degrees of uncertainty. There will be times when we must act upon probability. Some moral schools have claimed to give complete moral certainty, but this claim has not been generally convincing. I argue that the notion that moral systems should provide certainty has had a destructive effect

upon morality because this claim leads to unreasonable expectations of moral systems, leading to skepticism and subjectivism when the moral philosopher fails to produce the promised certainty.

In all areas of life we face uncertainty and have to act upon probability. Morality is no exception to this. Uncertainty does not destroy moral knowledge, just as uncertainty in other fields does not destroy the difference between well-founded beliefs and beliefs that are not credible. In all areas of life we must act on probability, but that does not obscure the difference between good decisions and bad decisions.

In the final chapter, I will defend the moral adequacy of the version of humanistic holism explained in this book. This ethical approach provides moral demands that are binding upon the agent. They are not absolute in some abstract way; they derive their meaning and significance from a context that includes the person's individual world view. This does not, however, keep the moral demands from meeting the standards that moral philosophers should expect of moral claims. They transcend the desires and self-interest of the agent and can be universalized in a significant sense. A contextualist and pluralistic ethical approach that acknowledges the element of uncertainty in moral judgment will help overcome a practical problem in moral philosophy, a problem caused in large part by a mistake of moral philosophers. The problem is a largely unexamined subjectivism that leads many people to consider ethics a matter of personal opinion, a matter of whim and fancy. This naive notion even parades as the modern person's sophisticated liberation from dogmas and superstitions of the past. Why has this subjectivism in ethics taken such a hold on the thinking of people who are far more demanding in regard to other areas of study? The fault, I argue, is the mistaken quest for certainty in ethics, which has led philosophers to favor abstract and reductionistic ethical systems that provided a spurious impression of clarity. Ethical theories that make valuable contributions to our moral understanding and to our making of ethical judgments were harshly criticised because they did not provide indubitable abstract principles. Moral philosophers themselves inadvertently taught other educated people to think that moral philosophers had not achieved very much. The tragedy in this is that many people are unaware of the help they can receive from philosophical ethics.

I try to show that a scientifically credible humanistic holism, which reconciles concern for the environment with more traditional humanistic ethical concerns, such as freedom and justice and human welfare, is workable and is the best approach to ethical concern available to us. This approach does not provide absolute certainty because it is contextual

and pluralistic and must resolve conflicts between duties to individual persons, to society, and to the natural world. Humanistic holism recognizes the complexity and uncertainty of life, and it accepts the need to consider everything that is relevant to the making of ethical decisions and to act in good faith on the basis of probability. While we live complicated and uncertain lives in a world we still do not understand completely, we do well to accept the goal of ethics as providing the best guidance now available to well-meaning people. That we will make some mistakes in morals, as we will do in other areas of life, must not make us reject a moral theory that is the best available to us. We can live responsibly, doing the best we can to create a sustainable society within a natural environment that can continue to support life. Even though it may not be easy or simple, we can live according to a humanistic and holistic ethic, one that seeks the good for people and for the planet.

CHAPTER ONE

Changing Perspectives on Nature

Natural Resources vs. Values in Nature

During the past few decades, the way knowledgeable people think about the place of humans in nature has changed. The way people conceive of nature itself is undergoing a change. This is a change in the fundamental conceptual model in terms of which people relate to the world, the interest they take in it, and the value they see in it. This change in people's conception of the world is of tremendous importance. It affects people's daily lives, local and national politics, and economic activities. One type of conceptual model, the scientific paradigm, is more basic than hypotheses and theories. The paradigm is the intellectual framework within which a theory has its meaning. It is the basic mental picture within which an hypothesis is important enough to be tested in experimentation. One of the most important changes in the history of science was the rejection of the Ptolemaic model of the solar system, with its picture of the earth as the unmoving center, and the acceptance of the Copernican system of a central sun with Earth and other planets in orbits around it. The change in conceptual models made some old concepts and theories meaningless. Speculation about epicycles, the notion of perfect spheres, and other matters that were important within the old model were of no interest within the new model. Some questions may remain important through a paradigm change because the old and new models may not be totally different.

Many conceptual models are not as clear or as closely related to observational data as are scientific paradigms. Some models loosely incorporate parts of several scientific models along with social and psychological concepts. A conceptual model can be poetic, even fanciful. The "man"-apart-from-nature concept is a model of the relationship of humans to the natural world. This conceptual model made sense of some ideas that many people now find unacceptable. Many of us have a different conceptual model, one changed from the apart-from-nature model to a person-as-a-part-of-nature model. This change in conceptual models

makes some old questions meaningless and some new questions consequential.

The dominant view of nature in Western society for more than twenty centuries has been that nature exists to serve human beings. The human use of nature has sometimes been wanton and wasteful. At other times nature has been used carefully, with an eye to the future. Since the science of ecology has taught us about the fragility of natural systems, a restrained use of the resources of forests, croplands, mines, and oceans, usually referred to as conservation, has been practiced more frequently. Conservation has not been universally practiced, however, and the forests and soils of many countries have been greatly diminished, while the waters and the air have been seriously polluted. Even though some people carefully husbanded the resources of nature and other people used these resources prodigally, almost everyone had the same basic notion of the value of nature. The basic view of nature held by people who were unhappy about the losses and the pollution, those who practiced conservation, was often the same as the view of the wasters and defilers; nature was seen as having value only as natural resources for humans. Arne Naess calls the conservation approach "shallow" ecology, which he described as the fight against resource depletion and pollution for the benefit of humans.[1]

The concept of nature as natural resources and the belief that humans are the rightful heirs of nature's treasures is indicated in many prevalent attitudes. Many people view as wasted any land left natural, any stream not used by someone, and trees left to decay in the forest. Many people simply cannot understand why people are concerned about the spotted owl and protection of the old growth forests. Tree farms seem to them better and more useful than old forests. With tree farms there can be easy access to just the right kinds of trees, that is, the species of tree desired for timber. The concept of nature as resources for humans is seen in our basic economic theory, known technically as classical liberalism. This economic approach, which underlies the thinking of capitalism and socialism, even Marxism, looks to the exploitation of the natural environment to provide for the satisfaction of human wants. The economic philosophy of John Locke expressed clearly the concept of nature as resources for human use. Locke held that the products of nature have no value until they are claimed and used by someone, improved or made into something useful. Locke helped to make a labor theory of value a basic feature of the economic theories underlying the European and American economies. According to Locke, nature contributes only a very small fraction of economic value; human effort and use make

land, streams, and plants valuable. The dominant economic principles of Western industrial societies recognize little value in nature itself; the goal of economic activity is held to be the satisfaction of human desires. An efficient economy is one that provides for meeting the interests of human beings to the greatest possible extent. This focus on human benefits is implied by the ideal goal of economy, Pareto optimality, which calls for a society in which no one can be benefited without taking something away from another person. This optimal condition would hold when natural resources are used with utmost efficiency. There is no place in these theories to consider the environment apart from human interest in it. One way to see this is in cost/benefit analysis, the widely used method for determining whether a project should be undertaken. Cost/benefit analysis, as it is commonly used, can take into account only the economic effect of an action or policy upon human beings. No value of unexploited nature can be recognized; nature can be assigned no value except on the basis of human interest in some aspect of nature. The only way to view nature is as a resource for human betterment. The only human satisfactions that can be measured and enumerated are, of course, those that can be seen in economic terms. Aesthetic values, spiritual values, and other values that a person might find important tend to be ignored in the making of public policy, which is usually based on cost/benefit analysis. Costs and benefits must have a market value to be included in the assessment of proposed projects.[2] There has been some objection to the basing of public decisions on market-place values,[3] and recently some economists have acknowledged that market value concepts apply to "economic man," which is a useful model for economists. Others have recognized the limitations of cost/benefit analysis and advocated giving a "shadow price" to values not subject to market transactions.[4] Some people object to shadow prices, which attempt to put a price on something that is cheapened by being given a monetary worth. Just as many people object to putting a price on a human life, some people object to considering the beauty of a forest or a river a thing that might be exchanged for money. The concept of things being priceless is still meaningful to many people. The problem comes when, in the making of public policy, the things that are priceless are treated as things of no worth. The worth of platforms for off-shore oil exploration can be established, or at least estimated, while the value of reefs that are not contaminated by oil is treated as something which exists only in people's minds.

Until recently very few people gave much thought to the limited supply of many resources. Even now many people ignore the finiteness

of nonrenewable resources, such as petroleum, and the danger of using renewable resources, such as timber, faster than they can be regrown. Some people express great confidence that suitable substitutes for oil and other scarce things will be found in time. Man has always found an answer, they say. Pete Gunter calls the Western belief that nature is infinite as natural resources, while man is infinite in his potential for conquering nature and solving all problems, the man infinite/nature infinite myth. This man infinite/nature infinite approach still gives people unrealistic expectations and blinds them to potential catastrophes. Gunter shows the connection between this myth and a view of nature that has no realization of the complex interdependency within natural systems.[5]

Even some people who have consciously rejected the soul/body dualism that allowed them to think of themselves as souls separated from nature still fail to see the extent to which humans are a part of a fragile natural system. Once people become aware of the relationships between living things in the complex system of nature, including the relationships between humans and other living things, they can see that the concept of humans as radically different from all other living things is a myth. It is a myth difficult to take seriously if one is aware of the human dependency on interactions with the other participants in the natural scheme of things. I remember the effect on my thinking when I learned about the multitude of organisms living inside me and on my skin, enabling me to live a healthy life. I have realized the advantage of having a yard crawling with lizards and aflutter with birds, with plenty of worms and smaller things in the soil. Where would any of us be without the good air to breathe, coming to us courtesy of the plant life on the land and in the sea? A holistic view of the place of humans in the natural system challenges the notion that humans are the only heirs of all the natural wealth by showing that this wealth serves organisms of all types. The environment that makes life possible for humans also enables other organisms, great and small, to live, and we can see that our human lives are dependent on those other lives. It is difficult to maintain, in the face of a holistic understanding of our place in nature, the old view that this all exists simply for us. I have enjoyed seeing a tortoise eating a prickly pear, a fruit that hardly seemed designed to meet my needs. I have eaten prickly pears, but not with the ease with which Brother Tortoise munched it, and not with an enjoyment that would make me seek them out except as survival food. I think it is good for us to see the other animals hunt, eat, and go about their lives. The natural environment becomes before our eyes a wondrous system of vast creativity, and we come to realize that human exploitation of this fountain of life

is not its only value. The issue of values in nature is a topic of profound importance that I will treat in Chapter Seven.

Separations vs. Interconnections

The resource-use approach to nature is not the only view that people have had of nature. It seems that early Mediterranean cultures had a nature-centered paganism that recognized that people were part of nature, along with all other life forms. The Hebrew scriptures provide evidence of paganism in the Near East; the writings of the prophets from about the ninth century voice condemnation of the religious practices of indigenous people and the influence of those practices among the Hebrew people. These pagan practices gave expression to the involvement of humans in nature, especially in the changing seasons, the growing season with its promise of security and well-being, and the season when nothing could grow and life was threatened.

Across the Mediterranean Sea, the Ionian culture was not marked by mind/body dualism, and the people of the early Minoan culture of Crete (and later the Mycenaean culture of the Greek mainland) worshipped gods associated with nature. The Cretan murals found at Knossos indicate delight in the beauty of nature, with birds and animals, including the dolphin, providing the subjects of many paintings.

On both sides of the Mediterranean, mystery cults, some lasting into the Roman era, were concerned with the annual cycle of fertile times, the warm season in Europe and the wet season in Egypt, and times when nature seemed to be dead.

The familiar story of Demeter and Persephone is the myth of the highly respected Eleusinian mysteries. Other myths related the stories of the consorts of goddesses who were associated with nature; the consorts were mutilated or killed and later brought back to life. These deaths and resurrections were symbols of the dreaded time when the crops did not grow and the return of the season of growth. The pagan religions show awareness that human welfare could not be separated from the natural world. The pagans seemed aware that they were a part of nature, and it paid to be on the right side of nature.

The early European and Near Eastern attitudes toward nature are not unique. Some American Indian cultures had beliefs and myths that affirmed the unity of all things in nature. There was no mind/body dualism in the beliefs of these cultures; there is talk of spirits, but a careful study of these cultures shows that spirit was associated with life, even

the life of non-human animals, plants, places, and elements of weather, such as winds. This way of understanding the place of humans in nature is seen clearly in John G. Neihardt's book, *Black Elk Speaks*, which tells the life story and the visions of an Oglala Sioux holy man. First published in 1932, this book reveals a concept of human life radically different from the perspective of man-apart-from-nature.

In Europe, the nature oriented mythologies gave way to religious philosophies that were concerned with the salvation of human souls, apart from the natural world. I will discuss some of the sources of this change in Chapter Two. Now I want to point out that the separation of humans from nature was not the only separation that marked the later western European approach. Mind or soul was separated from the body. A dualism of mind and body came to dominate the thinking of western culture, and this fostered a depreciation of the body and of the physical world because the most important part of the human was now thought to be apart from nature. Nature was hated and feared or simply held to be of little importance. The theistic view of nature in Christianity and Judaism was not derived wholly from the Hebrew scriptures, some passages of which express a great appreciation of nature. Judaism and Christianity were influenced by popular Greek philosophical ideas current in the Roman period, which were the source of attitudes that varied from hostility toward nature, seen as the source of evil, to a disdain for nature, seen as unable to provide salvation and often tempting the soul away from its proper object of love, the transcendent god, and from its proper concern, the everlasting life that follows the mortal life. The early pagan religions, which considered the human as part of nature, were bitterly condemned by most theists of the early days of Christianity, along with the music, art, and philosophy of pagan culture. More tolerant theists in the late Roman empire, such as Augustine, did not refuse to use the contributions of pagan culture that they deemed harmless and compatible with theistic religion, but the paganism with which third- and fourth-century Christians were most familiar was the highly intellectual Neoplatonism, which interpreted the pagan myths as symbols of the soul's quest for escape from the body in order to secure for the soul reunion with god. Christians and Jews who borrowed too much from this intellectual pagan philosophy were eventually condemned as unorthodox; their interpretations stressed too much the mystical union of the soul and god and the "pantheism" to which some forms of mysticism were prone. The robust paganism of earlier days, which saw divinity in the growing of crops and in other aspects of the natural life, was dead except in remote rural areas, the places where "villains" and "heathens"