Senior Projects Spring 2011   Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

Spring 2011

Nonanthropocentrism and Intrinsic Value: In Search of an Alternative

Kevin M. Powell
Bard College

Recommended Citation

Bard

Nonanthropocentrism and Intrinsic Value:
In Search of an Alternative

Senior Project Submitted to The
Division of Social Studies
At Bard College

By

Kevin Powell

Annandale-On-Hudson, New York
May 2011

Acknowledgments

   I would like to thank a number of people who have made this project possible and who have made my life at Bard College over the last four years rewarding and meaningful. The first is my senior project adviser, Daniel Berthold, not only for his sustained guidance, feedback, and sympathy throughout the course of this endeavor, but for the many opportunities he has provided me to flourish and succeed during my time here at Bard; my academic adviser, David Shein, for participating on my midway board and for his indispensable helpfulness and relentless sense of humor; and my fellow advisees, Conor, Fiona, Parker, and Sofia for the valuable questions they have posed to me as I have written this project. I also wish to thank William Griffith, Garry Hagberg, and Kritika Yegnashankaran for answering some minor questions of mine that came up now and then as I thought about this project and the philosophical issues involved therein.

   Finally, I wish to acknowledge my parents, Michael and Reita Powell, for everything they have given me, and without whom my education would not have been possible. You have my undying love and gratitude.

Forever thankful,
Kevin

Preface

Environmental ethics is often classified as a branch of applied ethics, putting it on par with such fields as bioethics, medical ethics, business ethics, and military ethics, to name just a few. This is misleading in the extreme. Like the environment itself, the field touches everything, permeating countless other areas of philosophy and with thinkers today in almost every major philosophical tradition, from analytic to continental philosophers, feminist theorists, Eastern philosophers, and theologians from a wide variety of religious perspectives—Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, and Native American. The majority of these thinkers seek to do more than prescribe remedies to issues such as global warming or factory farming in the austere and remote language of ethical principles. They want to completely rethink and redefine our conception of nature, of how we perceive ourselves in relation to it, and of what brings meaning and goodness to our lives and to the universe at large. At its heart, environmental ethics is not a field of applied ethics, but a search for a different way of thinking, living, and being.

Questions about what beings do or do not deserve our moral consideration fall less into the sphere of applied ethics and more into what is called *metaethics*, a difficult philosophical field which addresses questions such as the semantics and epistemology of morality, metaphysical issues such as whether morality is objective or subjective, absolute or relative, and questions pertaining to the nature of value. We might say that metaethics is to ethics as metaphysics is to physics; it comes before ethics (surprising, considering that *meta* is the Greek word for "after") and forms the underlying structure or background upon which an ethical theory can sustain itself. A great deal of the earlier literature in environmental ethics, most of it from the 1970s and 80s, dealt more with metaethical questions than with applied ethics. One of the most frequent issues dealt with—and words used—was *value*. Who or what possessed it? What was its ontology? How could it be known? As soon as they asked these questions, environmental philosophers began to engage vigorously and articulately in metaethics, perhaps even inventing a new subdiscipline of philosophy in the process, one which might be called "environmental metaethics."

As these discussions began, the phrase "intrinsic value" very quickly came into vogue, along with similar-sounding phrases such as "intrinsic worth," "inherent value," and "inherent worth," among others. The term was treated as the antonym of "instrumental value," the value something has only as a means to an end. Environmental philosophers were looking for a shield; they wanted a way of defending the nonhuman world from those who prized it only for its instrumental value, and intrinsic value, ironically, was their means to that end.

This is a project about value and nature, though its scope extends well beyond the topics that those words connote. It also deals with subjects in metaphysics, moral psychology, and epistemology, among others. In the past, my philosophy professors have suggested that I try to avoid doing philosophy with a "surgical knife," so to speak, and take a more "holistic" approach toward things. I agree, and the upshot of my essay is a theory of value that is most certainly holistic. There are times, however, when we cannot see the whole until we first find the pieces, so that is what I have tried to do. With luck, the outcome will be of some value—which kind of value is a question I leave up to the reader.

Contents

Introduction: Environmental Ethics and the Problem of Intrinsic Value

Since the emergence of environmental ethics as a subdiscipline of philosophy, it has often been argued that the moral standing of nonhuman beings[1] requires us to defend a theory of intrinsic value. As early as the 1940s, Aldo Leopold, in his landmark essay "The Land Ethic," wrote that "[i]t is inconceivable . . . that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense."[2] Decades later, in an important 1981 essay titled "The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic," Tom Regan argued that "the development of what can properly be called an environmental ethic requires that we postulate inherent value in nature" and that an environmental ethic that failed to do so would regress into a "management ethic."[3] General agreement followed. As Dale Jamieson recollects,

> [t]o be an environmental ethicist one had to embrace new values. One had to believe that some non-sentient entities have inherent value; that these entities include such collectives as species, ecosystems, and the community of the land; and that value is mind-independent in the following respect: even if there were no conscious beings, aspects of nature would still be inherently valuable.[4]

More specifically, what these philosophers were looking for was an environmental ethic that was nonanthropocentric, one that did not construe humans as the only morally significant beings in the universe. Their goal was to defend an ethic that provided for the moral standing[5] of nonhuman nature as opposed to only humans, and it was assumed that the only way to do this was to supply some sort of condition upon which natural entities could possess that moral standing. Without such

---

1   From this point on, the term "nonhuman" should be understood to include "natural" things such as animals (excluding humans), plants, fungi, microorganisms, collectives such as species (excluding *homo sapiens*) and ecosystems, landscapes, wilderness areas, and natural objects. It does not include artifacts, artworks, or cities. Some may debate whether these things are always natural, for example, in the case of domestic animals or plants grown by humans or ecosystems that have been largely altered by human influences, but this is not a debate I wish to entertain at this time. The distinction, even if it is questionable, is necessary in any discussion that involves the term "anthropocentrism": anthropocentrism is understood as any ethical view that priviliges humans over the supposedly "natural" world.

2   Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), 223.

3   Tom Regan, "The Nature and Possibility of An Environmental Ethic," *Environmental Ethics* 3 (1981): 19-34.

4   Dale Jamieson, *Morality's Progress* (New York, Oxford UP, 2002), 201.

5   Tom Regan defines "moral standing" as follows: "*X* has moral standing if and only if *X* is a being such that we morally ought to determine how *X* will be affected in the course of determining whether we ought to perform a given act or adopt a given policy" See Regan, "Nature and Possibility," 19.

a condition, it was supposed, anthropocentrism was inevitable. Only by proving that nonhuman nature was intrinsically valuable could anthropocentrism be quashed once and for all. And furthermore, only by determining which things had intrinsic value and which did not could one then determine where to draw the line for moral consideration: did only sentient animals have moral standing? Could nonsentient organisms such as plants possess it as well? Did collectives such as ecosystems and species? Did nonliving objects such as rocks and waterfalls? Did intrinsic value belong to natural entities specifically, or rather to certain capacities of those entities such as happiness or flourishing? Answering these questions would supposedly allow us to determine the scope and details of our moral obligations.

My focus will be on the most fundamental of the questions above: do we need a theory of intrinsic value in order to defend a nonanthropocentric environmental ethic? It is still common among many environmental ethicists to assume that we do, and furthermore, that anyone opposed to intrinsic value is probably in favor of some species of anthropocentrism (pun not intended). This assumption has been fueled by such philosophers as Bryan Norton, who abandons the concept of intrinsic value and defends a doctrine of "weak anthropocentrism," arguing that the quest to locate intrinsic value is impractical, and that some kind of responsible, human-centered ethic is a more useful means of developing sound environmental policies.[6] Similarly, Andrew Light argues that debates over intrinsic value have impeded more practical discussions that could lead to the development of effective environmental policy and that an appeal to human interests could help encourage more of the reform that environmentalists seek.[7] Rebuttals to such arguments generally seem to take place under the strong belief that intrinsic value is vital to the idea that we should care morally about nature. In what follows, I argue the opposite: that we do not need a concept of intrinsic value in order to defend a nonanthropocentric environmental ethic.

By no means am I the first to do this. Dale Jamieson, for example, argues that even if the

---

concept of intrinsic value is problematic, we may still speak of the ways in which people "intrinsically value" things, which occurs when they "value [them] for [their] own sake."[8] Anthony Weston urges that we should understand values as pluralistic and interrelated, situated within the various relationships that we have to and within nature, and that we ought to avoid the temptation to seek some sort of "grounding" for environmental values.[9] Similarly, certain ecofeminists, such as Karen Warren, argue that it is the unique relationships humans share with nature that allows us to understand our moral obligations to the nonhuman world, not "reductionist" views that base moral considerability upon certain properties or features of a being.[10] These views are certainly not without their differences, but what all of them have in common is a shift away from a kind of foundationalist or deductive view of moral epistemology, one upon which moral obligations to nature follow logically from some sort of feature or attribute of a thing, towards one in which our moral relations to nonhuman nature arise from the way we respond to and situate ourselves within it.

This is the sort of view I am leaning toward. Defending it is no simple matter, however, and this paper, as a result, is broad in its scope. In the first chapter, I identify and discuss some different uses of the term "intrinsic value," both within and outside environmental ethics. After all, the term did not originate within the literature on environmental ethics; the popularity of the phrase among contemporary philosophers can probably be credited to the work of G. E. Moore, particularly *Principia Ethica,* and the idea has been around in some form or another since ancient times. Aristotle, for instance, devoted much of his ethical work to discussing "the highest good" (*to agathon ariston* in Greek, which more literally translates as "best good") at which all practical endeavors—arts and crafts, sciences, and politics, for example—ought to be directed.[11] Medieval philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas wrote of a divine or theological goodness which all other

---

8 Jamieson, *Morality's Progress*, 206.
9 Anthony Weston, "Beyond Intrinsic Value," in *Environmental Pragmatism,* ed. Andrew Light and Eric Katz (New York: Routledge 1996), 298-306.
10 Karen J. Warren, "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," in *People, Penguins, and Plastic Trees,* ed. Christine Pierce and Donald VanDeveer (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1995), 218.
11 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* trans. Martin Oswald (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 4.

good things were to be employed in pursuit of, a concept described by Boethius throughout his work as a *summum bonum* (Latin for "highest good"). David Hume described the idea of an "ultimate end," a thing regarded as good by human beings for no purpose other than itself.[12] Immanuel Kant, in his *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals,* described a good will as "good without qualification," noting that although qualities such as intellect, courage, or diligence were good, they were good only for the sake of some further end and, indeed, could be employed in the pursuit of very bad ends; later in the *Grounding* he also used the term "intrinsic worth" (*innerer Wert* in German, with "*Wert*" intentionally capitalized) to describe the same concept.[13] The term also appears in John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* to describe things people desire despite their apparent uselessness, such as gold.[14] Though these ideas are not without their differences, all of them get at the fundamental notion of a good or end that is good not for or because of anything but, as a child might say, *just because.* The notion does not owe itself to any of these particular philosophers, but seems to crop up in philosophical thinking simply because of how intuitive it is. Even those of us who do not study philosophy have probably thought of something similar at one time or another—as Shelly Kagan writes, though the term "intrinsic value" sounds like jargon to most people's ears, "it also seems plausible to me that when philosophers introduce the term 'intrinsic value' they are attempting to provide a label for a concept that does occur in ordinary thought, even if it only occurs implicitly and without a common label."[15] Indeed, every culture, past and present, has probably had some notion of intrinsic value, a fact Friederich Nietzsche might have been getting at in the chapter of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* titled "The Thousand and One Goals."[16]

Chapter one, then, addresses some distinct uses of this term, primarily as it is employed in contemporary analytic philosophy and environmental ethics. The term is often used in two senses:

---

12 David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* ed. J. B.Schneewind (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 87.

13 Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals,* 3rd ed., trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 10.

14 Locke, John, *Second Treatise of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration,* ed. Tom Crawford (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2002), 17

15 Shelly Kagan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," *The Journal of Ethics* 2, no. 4 (1998): 277.

16 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* trans. Thomas Common (New York: Random House, 19--), 72-75.

goodness that is *noninstrumental*, that is to say, not good merely as a means for the sake of something else, but for its own sake; and goodness that is an *intrinsic property*, a specific kind of metaphysical attribute belonging to certain objects, often in virtue of other traits. Some intrinsic-value views—indeed, many—employ the term to mean both of these things, and so in 1.i I address the theory of intrinsic value devised by Tom Regan and discussed in his 1981 paper, mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, "The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic." I note a number of issues with his conception of intrinsic value, and argue that among them is a problem related to moral psychology: that Regan's intrinsic-value view describes a concept so insubstantial that it cannot serve as a source of moral motivation, even if the thing described in his conception exists. Moral motivation, whatever its nature, must, like any kind of motivation, have causal roots, and intrinsic value provides none.

The rest of the paper is an attempt to devise an alternative theory of value that compensates for this issue. I start by taking a brief look at noncognitivist views and argue that none of them provides a preferable alternative to intrinsic-value views; I argue that moral sentences, including sentences about a thing's value, can and do express *beliefs*, not mere feelings or prescriptions. Emotivists, however, are onto something when they note the almost undeniable correlation between moral sentences and feelings, so in chapter three I attempt to explain how sentiment can contribute to moral belief, trying as best I can to argue for a view that is not anti-rational. I address and criticize the moral psychology of David Hume, who argues that the desire to act morally follows directly from our sentimental reactions to things; I argue instead that such desires are motivated by beliefs, that the beliefs are formed from sentiments, and that sentiment can actually assist us in forming true moral beliefs. As I speak of those beliefs, I will generally have in mind beliefs about the value of things, which I call evaluations, and which are distinct from beliefs about what one ought to do, which I call directives.[17] I conclude the chapter with a tentative diagram of the relation

---

17 Terms borrowed from David Wiggins. See Wiggins: "Truth, Invention, and the Meaning of Life." In *Essays on Moral Realism*, edited by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP), 133.

between sentiment, evaluations, moral beliefs, and morally motivated actions.

Such an account demands that I explain how evaluations can be true and justified, so chapter four addresses epistemological issues. I endorse coherentism in both truth and knowledge, a contentious move which requires me to make some rather weighty remarks on the value of a correspondence theory of truth, which, along with thinkers like Richard Rorty, I reject. I briefly describe a position called "representational realism," which involves the idea that we can have a conception of a real world without having to solve skepticism or speak about things-in-themselves. In chapter five, I discuss the metaphysics of value, endorsing what are called "sensibility theories," a word often used to describe the metaethical views of John McDowell and David Wiggins. I then address the question of what property or set of properties qualifies something for our valuation, arguing that the answer is best revealed through experience and discourse. The means-end distinction is also briefly called into question.

Broad as these topics are, all of them are addressed with a single goal in mind: to discover whether a nonanthropocentric environmental ethic is compatible with the rejection of intrinsic value. Much of the essay does not deal explicitly with environmental ethics. Indeed, chapters two through four do not even mention it. No area of philosophy is isolated from others, and environmental ethics is no exception. The conclusion, however, will return to the topic and remark on how we might re-approach the subject of environmental ethics in light of the discoveries made in this project. Following the conclusion, the reader should also look for an addendum, which briefly addresses the question of whether we can—and should—endorse a theory of intrinsic value for pragmatic reasons, if any can be found, and whether such an endorsement is compatible with the theory I have outlined. Oddly enough, as I wrote this essay, the question did not seem to fit into any particular section, so I have decided to treat it as an afterthought, a point to ponder, and a valuable one (though perhaps not intrinsically) at that.

(1) A Breakdown of Intrinsic Value

The concept of intrinsic value is difficult to analyze. This is because of the different kinds of ways the term has been used within both environmental ethics and moral philosophy in general; philosophers who use the term are not necessarily referring to the same idea. There are two prominent senses of the term, however, that especially concern us. The first is perhaps the most literal sense of the term: value that is an intrinsic property of something. G. E. Moore is probably the most well known defender of this version of intrinsic value. On Moore's view, "[t]o say that a kind of value is 'intrinsic' means merely that the question whether a thing possesses it, and in what degree it possesses it, depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question." [18] Moore elaborates on this definition with the following two points: first, that anything that possesses intrinsic value possesses it necessarily, so long as it possesses other properties from which that intrinsic value follows, and that this value does not depend on any contextual factors such as time, location, or other relational circumstances; and second, that if something possesses intrinsic value, so must anything that is identical (or perhaps very similar) to it. [19] In the dictionary sense, "intrinsic" describes features that do not vary depending on something's relations with other things, but that rely solely on other intrinsic features of that thing; Moore's definition seems to satisfy this meaning.

A much more common, if less literal, use of the term "intrinsic value" describes a kind of value that something has irrespective of its instrumental value, the utility it possesses for achieving a certain end. This idea is generally described in terms such as the following: a thing has intrinsic value if it is valuable or good "as an end," [20] for its "own sake," [21] or if it is "prima facie worthy of being preserved or promoted," [22] among other, similar terms. The language here seems to echo the third formulation of Kant's Categorical Imperative: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity,

---

18 G. E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies* (London: Oxford UP, 1965), 260. Note that Moore believes that intrinsic value can vary by degree and belongs to a wide range of objects and entities. Not all philosophers share this view, particularly those defending certain kinds of moral egalitarianism, such as Regan.
19 Ibid., 260-261.
20 Christine Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," *The Philosophical Review* 92 (1983): 169-195.
21 Shelly Kagan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," *The Journal of Ethics* 2 (1998): 279
22 Paul Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," in *People, Penguins, and Plastic Trees,* ed. Christine Pierce and Donald VanDeveer (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995), 128.

whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means."[23] We regard as a mere means that which has only instrumental value, but if a thing has intrinsic value, then we assume it possesses value as an end, value that is not reducible to or contingent upon its value as a means. Nature is useful, but if things in nature have intrinsic value, then we cannot do with them anything we please, at least not prima facie.

The difference between these two uses of the term "intrinsic value" is that the first is metaphysical while the second is normative: to claim, as Moore does, that intrinsic value depends on the intrinsic nature of a thing is to say something about the source or structure of that value; on the other hand, to claim that the value of something entails that it is good "as an end," for example, is to say something about the way we ought to treat that thing. Arguably, the two definitions are compatible; many philosophers who accept that something has value as an end assume further that such value is an intrinsic property. Yet at the same time, the two definitions involve ideas that seem to fall into distinctly different categories. Moore's definition is entirely descriptive—it tells us what *is*—but the other definition tells us something different: it tells us what we *ought* to do.

The distinctive meaning of the two senses is further illustrated by how they contrast with other terms. It has already been noted that the second sense of "intrinsic value" contrasts with "instrumental value." The same cannot be said about Moore's usage of the term, which instead contrasts with "extrinsic value." Whereas an intrinsic property refers to non-relational features of a thing, such as volume or mass, extrinsic properties are qualities a thing has based on relations, such as distance or weight (in the latter case, there is a relation between an object's mass and another object's gravitational pull). As David Lewis elaborates,

> [a] sentence or statement or proposition that ascribes intrinsic properties to something is entirely about that thing; whereas an ascription of extrinsic properties is something not entirely about that thing, though it may well be about some larger whole which includes that thing as part.[24]

---

23 Kant, *Grounding*, 38. The Formula of Humanity As an End is often mistaken to be the second formulation of Kant's Categorical Imperative, but it is, in fact, the third. The second formulation is the Formula of the Law of Nature. See *Grounding*, 30.

24 David Lewis, "Extrinsic Properties," *Philosophical Studies* 44 (1983): 197.

Working off of this definition, we understand that extrinsic value is a kind of value that would not depend solely on a thing's intrinsic properties, but that can exist only given the properties of other things. It bears emphasizing that although instrumental value is a kind of extrinsic value, by no means is extrinsic value necessarily instrumental, at least not by definition. Equally important, it must be emphasized that to say something has value "as an end," value "for its own sake," or that its value makes it "prima facie worthy of being preserved or promoted" by no means entails that such value is an intrinsic property. Certainly one may argue this, yet even if it were true, such a statement would be synthetic, not analytic; nothing in the definition of value "for its own sake" implies that such value is an intrinsic property.

How should we begin to resolve this confusion? Christine Korsgaard has made a useful distinction that I believe helps us: she distinguishes intrinsic value in the Moorean sense from *value as an end,* on the one hand, and extrinsic value from *value as a means* or instrumental value, on the other.[25] "Intrinsic and instrumental good," explains Korsgaard, "should not be treated as correlatives, because they belong to two different distinctions."[26] The same presumably applies to value as an end and extrinsic value. Korsgaard's point helps to clarify that some philosophers are not correctly using the word "intrinsic" when they contrast it with instrumental value, even though they may incidentally hold that value as an end is an intrinsic property. A further point of Korsgaard's is that we are not limited to conceiving of value as an end as intrinsic; as Korsgaard notes, such value may very well be extrinsic.[27]

A number of environmental philosophers seem not to acknowledge Korsgaard's distinction. Holmes Rolston, III, for example, blatantly contrasts intrinsic value with instrumental value.[28] He then goes on to define intrinsic value as value that is objective rather than subjective.[29] Clearly this is the kind of erroneous distinction that Korsgaard wants us to avoid. My point, however, in noting

---

25 Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions," 170.
26 Ibid., 170. It should be noted that Korsgaard prefers to use the terms "goodness" and "good" in place of "value" and "valuable."
27 Ibid., 172-173.
28 Holmes Rolston, III, "Are Values in Nature Objective or Subjective?" *Environmental Ethics* 4 (1982): 145.
29 Ibid., 147-148.

this distinction is not that we should chastise philosophers for improper usage of the word "intrinsic." Indeed, one may argue that so many philosophers have used the term "intrinsic value" to mean value that is noninstrumental that the term has simply taken on a second meaning. If this is so, then we need to acknowledge it when critiquing the term. Critics of intrinsic value appear sometimes to fail in doing this, or at least fail to specify which sense of the term they are attacking. If Korsgaard is right, some of the so-called "intrinsic" value views that appear in environmental ethics, specifically, the kinds that construe the value of nonhuman entities as noninstrumental without mention of whether such value is an intrinsic property, could in fact be compatible with extrinsic value. They might not have the same appeal to human interests that Norton and Light think are necessary for an environmental ethic to succeed, but they may still avoid the "reductionist" character that philosophers such as Weston and Warren want to avoid.

A circumspect account of intrinsic value in nature will mention both of these features; it will specify that the value required for the moral standing of nonhuman entities is value such that it behooves us to treat such things as ends in themselves and not mere means, but such an account will tell us furthermore that such value is an intrinsic property. An account that fails to do the latter is incomplete—question-begging, almost—since it bases the claim that we have moral obligations to something on the claim that it is worthy of those obligations (not intrinsically worthy, mind you, since it does not specify that that worthiness is an intrinsic property). We can leave the normative definition aside, then, since there is not much to criticize, and redirect our attention to the literal definition. This definition tells us only that value is an intrinsic property of something. It does not tell us anything beyond that.

1.i. A Metaphysical Critique of Intrinsic Value

Two problems immediately raise their heads when we speak of values as intrinsic features of things in the world. The first is skepticism about values: if there are indeed values residing intrinsically in certain objects, it is difficult to understand how we would know if they existed. Certain philosophers address this problem by treating intrinsic value as a theory or, to use Tom

Regan's words, a "postulate";[30] perhaps one cannot demonstrate that intrinsic value exists, but it is still worth considering the logical implications that would follow if it did. Nevertheless, the skeptical problem still persists, and with another consequence as well; not only are we unable to know whether intrinsic value exists, we also do not know which objects do and do not possess it, which has led to irresolvable controversy among environmental ethicists. Philosophers debate with each other whether intrinsic value belongs only to sentient animals, to mental states such as pleasure, to states of affairs like diversity or flourishing, to collectives such as ecosystems and species, or to individual organisms alone. The ad-hoc strategy of postulating intrinsic value, then, seems a weak solution if a consensus cannot be reached on which things possess it and which do not.

The second problem is the is-ought problem, originally articulated by David Hume.[31] Even if we were able to successfully determine which things possessed intrinsic value, how would it follow that we have moral obligations toward them? Granted they possess a certain property, an intrinsic feature of some unusual kind. Yet how does this property provide us a reason to regard them morally—what makes true the conditional statement "If something has intrinsic value, we ought to treat it morally"? Is the mere possession of intrinsic value enough to grant this statement truth value? Is intrinsic value synonymous with moral standing? This is dubious; intrinsic value is supposedly a necessary and sufficient condition of moral standing, and the two should not be conflated. Is it perhaps that the word "value" automatically implies moral standing, as though by definition? Surely this can be disputed and seems a rather lazy solution. Unless Hume's is-ought problem can be defeated, then even if we were to successfully prove the existence of intrinsic value in certain things, the outcome would be anticlimactic.

Value-skepticism and the is-ought problem are probably the two most obvious objections to intrinsic-value views. I should like to add a third, one which, I think, goes hand-in-hand with the

---

30 Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, 2004 ed. (Berkeley: UC Press, 2004), 247
31 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, vol. 2, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), 245-246.

first two but is not quite the same. The problem is as follows: to value something, e.g., to value it morally, is to have a kind of reaction to it. Valuation, then, is the result of a causal relationship between features of the valued object and the valuing agent. It must therefore be possible for those features or properties of the object to interact causally with the agent's mental faculties. Traditional accounts of intrinsic value, however, do not present us with a property that seems able to do this. The problem is that intrinsic value is a weak concept; philosophers who defend the idea make it unclear what precisely is being predicated when we describe something as intrinsically valuable. Predicates such as "big," "green," and "alive" give us clear information about an object and, assuming of course that we did not know at first that the object possessed those properties, tell us something new about it. Does the same work when we predicate "intrinsic value" of something? Let us being to answer that question by looking at a paradigmatic account of intrinsic value, the one argued for by Regan in 1981. Regan makes the following five remarks on what a successful account of intrinsic value would include:[32]

First, such value must be "independent of any awareness, interest, or appreciation of it by any conscious being."[33] In a word, it would be *mind-independent:* it would exist even if nobody were around to acknowledge it. G. E. Moore makes the same remark about intrinsic value; he proposes an "isolation test," in which we imagine a universe containing only one thing and decide whether or not that universe would be better if the thing existed than if it did not exist.[34] Similarly, Richard Sylvan has us imagine a scenario in which the last human being on earth goes about destroying the entire ecosystem; if we judge that the world after the last human's death would be better if the ecosystem were still around, then, according to Sylvan, we are ascribing intrinsic value to the ecosystem.[35] Values must be in nature; they cannot be in the head.

---

32 Note that throughout the corpus of his writing, Regan, himself an animal rights theorist, has been highly skeptical of the possibility that non-conscious entities such as plants or collectives such as ecosystems can possess intrinsic value.

33 Regan, "Nature and Possibility," 30.

34 Qtd. in Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions," 176.

35 Richard Sylvan (Routley), "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?" in *Environmental Ethics, an Anthology,* ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, III (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 49-50.

Regan's next claim is that "[t]he presence of inherent value in a natural object is a consequence of its possessing those other properties which it happens to possess."[36] This remark is almost identical to the definition provided by G. E. Moore (and it so happens that Regan is a Moore scholar). Regan adds that such value would be a consequential or supervenient property and that this point follows directly from the first one.[37]

Third, according to Regan, intrinsic value must be objective, as opposed to subjective.[38] If a river, for example, is inherently valuable, then "it is *a fact about the river* that it is good inherently."[39] Regan does not say whether this point also follows from the first one. Although the distinction between "objective" and "subjective" properties sounds like the distinction between properties that are mind-independent and those that are mind-dependent, this distinction might be false; for example, it might be true objectively that I am thinking right now, yet still mind-dependent. If indeed it is possible for a property to be mind-dependent yet objective, then a case *might* be made that values can have both features as well. One would be hard-pressed to make such a case, however, for there is a prima facie distinction between it being true objectively that a thing is valued by a conscious agent, on the one hand, and it being true objectively that a thing *has value,* on the other. In the meantime, we may still acknowledge that any property that is mind-independent is objective. It seems therefore that Regan's third point also follows from his first.

Fourth, "[t]he inherent value of a natural object is such that toward it the fitting attitude is one of admiring respect."[40] This idea "provides a way of connecting what is inherently valuable in the environment with an ideal of human nature."[41] In other words, the concept of intrinsic value is accompanied by that of ideal (and un-ideal) persons. The ideal person has the following capabilities: she can distinguish the objects in nature that are intrinsically valuable from those that

---

36 Regan, "Nature and Possibility," 31. Regan uses "inherent" in place of "intrinsic."
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.

are not, and admires and respects the ones that are.[42] "Admiration is fitting because not everything in nature is inherently valuable . . . . Respect is appropriate because this is a fitting attitude to have toward that which has value in its own right."[43] Furthermore, the ideal person never treats as a mere means those things that have intrinsic value.[44] In sum, the person is ideal in both character *and* epistemic ability: she regards things in nature with respect and admiration, but she also recognizes correctly which things have value and which do not, and she recognizes that such value is an intrinsic property.

Finally, this respect and admiration brings about a "preservation principle." "By 'preservation principle,'" explains Regan, "I mean a principle of nondestruction, noninterference, and, generally, nonmeddling. By characterizing this in terms of a principle, moreover, I am emphasizing that preservation . . . be regarded as a moral imperative."[45]

In summary, Regan's concept of intrinsic value construes it as a property that is mind-independent, consequential or supervenient upon other properties of a natural object, and objective; it is fitting to regard objects that possess this property with admiration and respect, and the property gives rise to moral obligations. Keeping these things in mind, I am going to call upon the reader to participate for a moment in a thought-experiment: suppose that you and I have never before heard of intrinsic value. Suppose, furthermore, that the term has just been introduced to us, but that instead of being called "intrinsic value," it is introduced to us under the much more mysterious name "Property *P*." Why remove the word "value?" Because raising the question of how intrinsic value, if it exists, can entail any moral obligations might provoke one to respond immediately that it entails them simply in that "value" connotes something normative, a moral property. But now we no longer have the word "value" to help us, and therefore, if we are to understand how the possession of Property *P* functions as a source of moral obligation to something, we will need it explained to us without mere recourse to the claim that it is a kind of value. All we know about Property *P* thus far

---

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., 31-32.

is that it is a property. If we add to this some of the remarks made by Regan, then we know the following:

(1) *Property* P *is mind-independent.*

(2) *Property* P *supervenes upon or follows consequentially from other properties an object possesses.*

(3) *Property* P *is an objective property of whatever possesses it; if a thing has Property* P*, then it is a fact about that thing that it has Property* P*.*

The problem with this account is that we do not, given the information supplied in the three propositions above, have a very firm or substantial concept of what Property *P* is like or of what something with Property *P* would be like if it possessed it. I will not go so far as to say that predicating Property *P* of something fails to offer any description at all, or that we have no concept whatsoever of Property *P—w*e are told *some* things about it. But are we told enough for the concept to tell us something truly meaningful about the owner of Property *P*? To help answer this question, it is useful to make a distinction between first-order and second-order properties. Second-order properties are the odder of the two: they are properties of properties, such as being extrinsic or intrinsic, objective or subjective, instantiated or uninstantiated, natural, non-natural, physical, supervenient, and so forth. First-order properties are much simpler and better reflect what we think of when we think of properties: they belong to things, as opposed to properties of things, and can be referred to without any mention of second-order properties. As it concerns Property *P*, we are given several second-order properties, yet we are not supplied any information about Property *P* that would allow us to understand it as a first-order property. We know that if something were to possess Property *P*, it would possess a property that is mind-independent, supervenient or consequential, and objective. To be sure, this tells us *something* about an object that has Property *P*, but not much—not enough, I think, for one to offer a robust description of the owner of the property.

What, then, do we accomplish when we predicate Property *P* of something? Let us compare it to another property, for instance, greenness: certainly, we can name some of the second-order

properties of greenness, for instance, being extrinsic, natural, observer-dependent, or—obviously—a color. But we can do more than this: we can also understand what it is like for something to be green. Perhaps we cannot describe what green looks like in words, but still, we may at least refer to it indexically: I can point to my lawn, say "The lawn is green," and somehow we understand what I mean. On the other hand, when one says "The lawn has property P," something seems to fail in terms of adding to our conceptual content of the lawn. We are given some second-order properties, but there seems not to be any first-order property. One might object by saying that a statement such as "The grass has a mind-independent, objective, consequential property" is to name a first-order property—the statement clearly does describe the grass and not just a property. I agree, but not without some hesitance, for it seems quite intuitive that something vital is missing from the description. If we can understand Property P only in terms of its second-order properties, then we are certainly saying something about the structure or typology of the property, but we're not saying anything about its *content*. We are describing a property, but we seem to be providing only a meager description of the owner of that property.

What, then, is it about Property P that makes Regan's next two claims true?

(4) *Any natural object with Property* P *merits our "admiration and respect," such that each is a "fitting attitude," and*

(5) *Our admiration and respect for things with Property* P *give rise to a moral imperative, the preservation principle.*

I believe there is nothing about Property P that makes these claims true; the concept is too flimsy for it to have any moral effect on us. My objection, then, is metaphysical rather than epistemological: intrinsic value lacks *causal* power. Although it putatively functions as a reason for us to act a certain way with regard to the intrinsically valuable object, still, we must keep in mind that reasons have causal connections to things in the world as well. Yet the rather empty concept described in (1) through (3) does not provide us any force, impression, or influence of any kind, such that it can serve as a source of moral motivation. To predicate it of an object, even if the

predication were true, seems tantamount to predicating nothing. It is unsurprising, then, that value-skepticism should be a problem for intrinsic value, since it seems dubious that such a vaguely understood property could be known; and it is unsurprising as well that the is-ought problem should appear, since it is difficult to understand how that property could provide a reason to act morally. In contrast to these objections, my objection points out only that the concept of intrinsic value seems incapable of having any influence upon us agents. Our deliberations, judgments, and reactions to things in the external world undoubtedly have causal connections to the things in that world—and to their various properties—in some way or another. I am dubious that intrinsic value, as it has been described for us by Regan, could allow any such connection. The upshot of this, then, is that if there is some feature or set of features in the world that serve to elicit moral reactions from us, it cannot include intrinsic value. It must be a property (or properties) of another kind.

(2) Some Remarks on Noncognitivism

Now that we have rejected intrinsic value, to what alternative do we turn? Various metaethical theories have been developed that attempt to explain what is involved when we call something "good," "right," (or "bad," "wrong") or the like. These views tend to be placed under one of two broad categories: "cognitivist" and "noncognitivist."[46] Cognitivists hold that moral sentences express propositions, i.e., sentences that can be true or false. Moral realism is one example: the moral realist holds that some moral sentences describe genuine facts about reality that are true irrespective of whether anyone believes them. Error theory is another type of cognitivism; the error theorist holds that all moral statements are false. Ethical subjectivism is also cognitivist; according to ethical subjectivism, moral statements are simply statements about the attitudes of the speaker, which themselves possess truth-value.

Noncognitivist views deny that moral sentences possess truth value, asserting instead that they express some kind of attitude, predilection, or interest on behalf of the speaker. The emotivism of A. J. Ayer is one example; Ayer asserts that ethical sentences merely voice one's approval or disapproval towards something.[47] R. M. Hare's theory of universal prescriptivism holds that an ethical sentence is an imperative sentence intended to influence a listener or listeners to act a certain way in a certain kind of situation.[48] The expressivism of Charles Stevenson combines these two views: according to Stevenson, to call something good means literally "I approve of this; do so as well."[49]

Some other philosophers' views seem to resist, or, at the very least, not really concern the cognitivist/noncognitivist divide, and the views listed above are by no means exhaustive of those that fit neatly into the two categories. These views are instructive, however, in that each of them, in addition to having something to say regarding the metaphysics and semantics of morality, also

---

46 "Cognitive" in this context means of or pertaining to truth or falsity and/or, with regard to sentences, capable of possessing truth-value. "Noncognitive" means the opposite.
47 Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952), 108.
48 R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (London: Oxford UP, 1972), 1-16.
49 Charles L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1944), 81.

assume what it would involve, psychologically, for an agent to regard something as good, bad, right, or wrong: for the cognitivist, to regard something as good is to hold a particular belief about it. For the emotivist, it is to take a certain emotional attitude toward it. For the prescriptivist, it is to will that one act a certain way with regard to it.

I am going to assume that noncognitivism is (probably) false. I am going to assume that moral statements—statements about qualities such as goodness or badness, rightness or wrongness —can and do express beliefs, at least sometimes and in part.[50] This seems to me intuitive; indeed, it seems almost impossible to disbelieve, given the way in which we employ moral vocabulary. The challenge that interests me at this moment is determining how to explain those beliefs. Noncognitivists, emotivists in particular, seem to find themselves at odds with the idea that moral statements have truth-value when such statements often seem to be bound up in some way with affect. Thus, the emotivists assume, moral statements really just express emotions. I wish to find a theory that can explain the close relation between sentiment and morality without succumbing to the claim that there are no moral beliefs and turning ethics into some sort of anti-rational enterprise. I spend chapter three doing this; for the remainder of this chapter, I discuss a view that attempts to retain noncognitivism, specifically, an emotivist view, and still argue for the possibility of rational moral discourse. I try to show why it does not work, and why cognitivism is necessary in order for the enterprise of moral discourse to succeed.

2.i. A Critique of Projectivism

Though I reject emotivism and other noncognitivist views, it is still necessary to address the connection between moral belief (namely, as it relates to our discussion of belief in moral properties) and feeling. It must be more than a coincidence that we tend to have certain feelings toward the things we believe are valuable, and it behooves us to attempt to explain some sort of causal relation between the beliefs and the feelings. Simon Blackburn has made a famous attempt to

---

50 I say "in part" because there may be emotive aspects to moral statements as well, and I say "sometimes" because declarative sentences may not necessarily express beliefs, for example, if the speaker is lying, or in the case of phrases such as "There is no God," when it is used merely to express the despondency or frustration of the speaker and not her theological opinions.

do something roughly along these lines. Blackburn argues that moral properties "are projections of our own sentiments (emotions, reactions, attitudes, commendations)" towards things we encounter in the world.[51] His position is inspired by an interpretation of a certain famous remark made by David Hume in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.* Hume identifies and distinguishes two faculties of human beings, "reason" and "taste," the first of which "conveys knowledge of truth and falsehood," and the second of which "gives the sentiment of beauty and deformity, vice and virtue."[52] Of taste, Hume writes that it "has a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects, with the colors, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises, in a manner, a new creation."[53] It is this remark, in particular, that concerns Blackburn. Such sentiments differ from beliefs in that the latter are about the truth or falsity of things, whereas the former are not. The process described by Blackburn begins when "genuine, observed properties," that is to say, morally neutral properties represented through sense-data, "impinge" upon the observer, bringing about certain affective or conative responses. Blackburn lists "habits, emotions, sentiments," and "attitudes" as examples. These responses are then "projected" upon the observed phenomena as what Blackburn calls "spread properties,"[54] in much the same way that sentiment, according to Hume, "gilds" and "stains" the natural objects observed in the external world, resulting in a "new creation." Humans then form beliefs about these spread properties, effectively regarding them as genuinely real and statements about them as true or false.

Blackburn supplements his projectivism thesis with another view, which he calls "quasi-realism." "Quasi-realism," writes Blackburn, "is the enterprise of explaining why our discourse has the shape it does, in particular by way of treating evaluative predicates like others, if projectivism is true."[55] If projectivism accurately describes our moral thinking, quasi-realism may be used as a tool

---

51 Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: UP, 1984), 180. J. Baird Callicott takes a similar view, arguing that "inherent value" (this is his use of term), though not an intrinsic property, is "conferred or projected" upon things by valuing agents. See Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY UP, 1989), 161.
52 Hume, *Enquiry*, 88.
53 Ibid.
54 Blackburn, *Spreading the Word*, 181.
55 Ibid., 180.

to explain and evaluate that thinking. In particular, quasi-realism is an attempt for us "to earn our right to talk of moral truth, while recognizing fully the subjective sources of our judgments, inside our own needs, desires, and natures."[56] An unearned notion of truth, presumably, is one that would fail to recognize the latter. It is Blackburn's belief that by employing quasi-realism, people will be able to reach reasonable conclusions about moral matters.

Does Blackburn's projectivism work as a suitable alternative Regan's intrinsic-value view? In at least one respect it is preferable, for unlike the view expounded by Regan, projectivism at least proposes a causal relation between the properties of an object and moral motivation. Regan assumes that moral properties are external to and independent of any observing agent, and yet there is no way of imagining, as far as I can tell, how those properties are in any way able to "impinge" upon an observer and bring about a moral response. On the other hand, Blackburn's view, like Hume's, attempts to locate properties that can and do share causal relations with humans, and he attempts furthermore to plausibly explain the relation between those properties and moral motivation. As Hume writes, only taste, not reason, can stir a human to action, functioning as "the first spring or impulse to desire and volition."[57] The disinterested perception of properties in the world, unmediated by sentimental responses, can't.

But projectivism is not without problems. The first one, incisively noted by John McDowell, is what seems to be its overly simplistic metaphysics:

> projectivism has nothing to sustain its thin conception of reality (that onto which the projections are effected) but a contentiously substantial version of the correspondence theory of truth, with the associated picture of a genuinely true judgment as something to which the judger makes no contribution at all.[58]

Initially, it might be tempting to think of Blackburn's view as one which portrays humans, by means of their projective faculty, as active participants in the construction of reality. But on further examination, projectivism actually portrays them as passive; a world of "genuine, observed

---

56 Ibid., 197.
57 Hume, *Enquiry*, 88.
58 John McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities," in *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches*, ed. Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 209.

properties," all of which are natural and value-free, "impinges" upon human perception. The resultant projections, strictly speaking, do not exist in the way that the value-free properties exist, but are only "quasi-real" flukes of human perception which can be described as real but in fact are not; only the "genuine, observed" things can be correctly called real. Humans might provide further descriptions of reality which, according to Blackburn, it would be pragmatic to regard as true or real,[59] but ultimately, they are not truly true, nor are they really real.

McDowell, in the essay quoted above, is not interested in further discussing the metaphysical problems related to truth-theories. I, however, am, assuming that part of the present task is to discuss the relation between properties of things and moral motivation. Like Hume and Blackburn (and countless others), I am in certain agreement that there is a relation between perception, affective responses, and morality; however, I reject the projectivist model. Part of this has to do with the reliance on a hard correspondence theory of truth that McDowell notes of it. Another objection concerns what I think is a failure of the projectivism/quasi-realism view to achieve what Blackburn wants it to achieve. Blackburn's project is for quasi-realism to simulate the ordinary vocabulary of realism, thereby allowing us to engage in moral discourse. However, Blackburn is a noncognitivist when it comes to moral sentences; on his view, the latter express attitudes, not beliefs.[60] Since moral sentences do not assert anything, it appears that they cannot operate within logical propositions or arguments.[61] How, for example, can a conjunctive sentence such as "It is wrong to tell lies and your mother is going to be annoyed" be true or false, given that the second conjunct is a proposition while the first is only an emotive expression?[62]

In order to address this problem, Blackburn argues that even if one of the sentences does not contain an assertion, both sentences still contain *commitments*, and so long as the speaker accepts both commitments, the attitude expressed in the first conjuct and the assertion in the second, then

---

59 Blackburn, *Spreading the Word*," 182.
60 Ibid., 170-171.
61 Ibid., 190.
62 Ibid., 191.

this creates "an overall commitment which is accepted only if each component is accepted."[63] Blackburn then uses this solution to illustrate how sentences expressing attitudes can fit into logical arguments. The legitimacy of such sentences should be judged not by their truth value, but by the *sensibility* of the speaker, which is determined by the behavior of one's community and its endorsement or approbation. "For instance," explains Blackburn, "a sensibility which *pairs* an attitude of disapproval towards telling lies, and an attitude of calm or approval towards getting your little brother to tell lies, would not meet my endorsement. I can only admire people who would reject the second action as strongly as they reject the first."[64] The acceptability of moral sentences— and of moral arguments incorporating those sentences—therefore depends on the consistency of the commitments expressed by the speaker; consistency is desirable because it is sensible and, therefore, socially endorsed.

My primary issue with this argument involves Blackburn's attempt to pair noncognitive attitudes with belief and logical argumentation. Blackburn's projectivism, as already noted, involves the claim that moral sentences are about attitudes, not beliefs; nevertheless, says Blackburn, both beliefs *and* moral attitudes involve commitments, and adherence to either depends on whether the speaker *accepts* those commitments. It is Blackburn's use of the word "accept" that I have a problem with, for I do not think that the notion of acceptance, strictly speaking, can pertain in the case of noncognitive attitudes, at least not in the way it pertains in the case of belief. The kind of commitment yielded by an expressive sentence would, I should assume, only be some sort of affective tendency—a tendency to act on the relevant emotions and adopt similar attitudes when faced with similar situations. If we were to call this "acceptance," it could not possibly mean the same kind of acceptance that pertains in the case of belief. And Blackburn certainly cannot mean that when one is committed to a moral attitude, then she accepts that she ought to act a certain way and hold congruent beliefs, since on an expressivist view, ought-sentences would be just another

---

63 Ibid., 192.
64 Ibid.

kind of expression. With this problem in mind, I believe that the projectivism/quasi-realism view fails to simulate the putative character of moral belief.

My second issue with Blackburn's view concerns its replacement of the rational evaluation of moral arguments with endorsement of another person's moral sensibility. Blackburn, in his explanation of sensibility, omits what I believe to be a vital part of how we critique the moral views of others. He explains the term as follows:

> A moral *sensibility*, on [the projectivist] picture, is defined by a function from *input* of belief to *output* of attitude. Now not all such sensibilities are admirable. Some are coarse, insensitive, some are plain horrendous, some are conservative and inflexible, others fickle and unreliable; some are too quick to form strict and passionately held attitudes, some too sluggish to care about anything. But it is extremely important for us to rank sensibilities, and to endorse some and to reject others. For one of the main features affecting the desirability of the world we live in is the way other people behave, and the way other people behave is largely a function of their sensibility.[65]

Our endorsement of a person's sensibility relates to how human behavior is adapted to bring about a more desirable environment. Sensibilities that contribute to social behavior are better endorsed, while anti-social or unconstructive sensibilities are better rejected. I grant that these features are relevant in many respects to human morality, yet I believe that, in the passage above, Blackburn omits something vital about how we conduct much of our moral discourse: rational evaluation of moral claims and arguments. With this in mind, I believe that Blackburn's portrait of how people engage in moral criticism is inaccurate. It is unsurprising, however, that this inaccuracy should occur on a noncognitivist view such as Blackburn's.

In the end, although Blackburn's view attempts admirably to explain causal the relation between sentiment and morality, its denial that we possess real moral beliefs makes it difficult to accept, and its attempts to compensate for these difficulties appear deeply flawed. In the next section, I wish to consider a somewhat radical proposal: that our sentimental faculties can help to tell us things about the world—things that can be true or false—in way analogous to perception. This much, I believe, is true: our emotions *do* contribute to the formation of genuine beliefs in the

---

65 Ibid.

truth of propositions. My goal now is to consider whether and how truth and justification might apply to such beliefs.

(3) Sentiment As a Truth-selective Faculty

With the exception of skeptics, we tend to regard our perceptual faculties—our senses—as capable of discerning true facts about the world. Let us call such a faculty truth-selective: it assists us in forming beliefs, some of which are potentially true. Perception is not our only truth-selective ability; the complimentary faculty of inductive reasoning is also truth-selective; it helps us make judgments about what is probable or predictable with regard to our perceptions, and judgments about probability or predictability can be true as well. Deductive reasoning is (most would agree) our most reliable truth-selective faculty, as it permits us to form beliefs that, if backed by the right premises, cannot be false. Introspection is considered by many (though, like deduction, not all) to be infallible as well; unmediated reflection is all that is required of me to know something about my state of consciousness.

In sum, a faculty is truth-selective if it helps us form true beliefs. This does not necessitate that such beliefs are always justified for the believer, but only that there is a connection between the faculty, the truth of a proposition, and belief in the proposition. Such faculties are not always reliable, nor is any single one of them always sufficient to yield justified beliefs (or any beliefs at all). Deductive reasoning, for example, cannot by itself allow us to form justified beliefs about states of affairs in the external world without being assisted in some way by perception; perception is often unable to tell us what might happen in the future without the supplementary use of inductive reasoning; and introspection about my current sensory experiences does always yield knowledge of the things perceived. Different faculties might need the support of others if they are to be employed effectively. Furthermore, truth-selective faculties may often fail; a perceiver may be nearsighted, one may reason invalidly, or a researcher may conduct an experiment carelessly or fail to make essential observations that would otherwise affect her conclusion. The debate over what makes beliefs justified is an endless and contentious one, but generally, these four faculties—perception, induction, deduction, and introspection—are the ones most frequently discussed; in any

discussion of what is true or knowable, we instantly assume that they are relevant.[66]

My contention is that sentiment is a truth-selective faculty. My argument relies on the following assumptions: (1) that sentiment causes belief, (2) that some such beliefs are true, and (3) that we would not be able to have any such beliefs if we did not have our sentimental faculties. Chapter four, however, qualifies this thesis with the following claims: sentiment is not the only truth-selective faculty that can contribute to moral belief; logical deduction can as well, assuming that the antecedent beliefs that factor into those deductions are produced by sentiment. The idea here is that although we have a set of core moral beliefs established in part through emotion, logical obligation requires that the agent hold beliefs consistent with the sentimentally produced ones, even if the logically derived beliefs are not formed directly from sentiment. Coherence, therefore, is a significant part of the test of justification in moral belief.

3.i. Sentiment and Normativity

I employ the word "sentiment" in two senses: the first concerns the emotions we experience towards things. This is not the same as sentimentality, the literary or rhetorical exploitation of people's (typically more vulnerable) emotions. A sentiment can involve any emotion, negative, positive, or both.[67] Sentiments are also object-directed; they are the emotions we have toward, and not merely in response, to things in the world. A phobic response unconsciously triggered by some unacknowledged environmental stimulus is not a sentiment; if, on the other hand, I am made aware of the stimulus and find it frightening, I now have a sentiment towards the frightening object. Relevant examples may be invented for all the other emotions: sadness, anger, joy, and so on. We can have more than one kind of sentiment towards the same thing; spiders, for example, may inspire feelings of both fascination and disgust. Furthermore, different people might have different

---

66 There are probably numerous other truth-selective faculties. Memory, for instance, helps us identify things by applying remembered concepts to perceived characteristics. It might also be that the cut-off point between truth-selective faculties and other kinds is difficult to draw. My heart needs to be beating in order for my senses to work. Is the ability to pump blood a truth-selective faculty? This is not a question I think isf necessary to pursue to get across the basic idea of what a truth-selective faculty is.

67 Awe, for example, is not merely negative or positive. It involves profound admiration as well as deep fear of the awesome thing.

sentiments towards the same thing—one may not fear spiders at all, while another may.

The second sense of the term refers simply to our ability to have any such sentiments. This, I assume, needs little elaboration. If I feel a sentiment of awe while looking out over the Grand Canyon, it is because I am able to: something in my biological and psychological makeup gives me the ability to have emotional responses towards the stimuli I encounter. This is straightforward enough.

Sentiment can contribute to belief in a variety of ways. One rudimentary example is that it tells us how we respond emotionally to things: being fearful of spiders tells me that spiders are frightening to me, being in awe of the Grand Canyon tells me I find it awesome, and so on. Circular as this account sounds, there is an important distinction to be made: fearing or being in awe of something is a noncognitive attitude, while thinking that it is frightening or awesome, even if only to me, is a belief. Sentiment may also contribute to belief in cases of hope or denial: hoping strongly enough that one will recover from an illness may produce a belief that she will. Thus, noncognitive mental states can yield cognitive ones that have to do with truth or falsity. The same obtains with the relation between perceptions, for example, colors or sounds, and beliefs about our environment; colors and sounds are not cognitive, but the beliefs they contribute to are. It is established, then, that noncognitive mental states can yield cognitive ones.

This, I am sure, is nothing new to the reader. But sentiment can also help me form *normative beliefs*; it can help me determine the way in which it makes sense to regard or treat things. That is to say, there is a connection between the sentiments I have for a thing and rational motivation. My view, then, is notably different from Hume's. Hume believes that a motive to act follows directly from sentiment without any prior belief in rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness. I argue that such a belief must prevail in order for the motivation to occur. The assumption that all so-called "moral" behavior really involves only the indulgence of one's emotions due to some hedonistic drive is inaccurate. Sentiment helps us learn *how* to act; it does not merely (or even necessarily) *make* us act.

Normative beliefs fall into one of two categories: evaluations and directives. Evaluations, in particular, are what I have in mind when I say that sentiment contributes to normative beliefs: they are beliefs about whether something is good or bad.[68] Directives, on the other hand, are beliefs about what one ought or ought not to do. I wish to argue for a tight motivational relationship between the two: on my view, evaluations in everyday life involve making determinations about whether something is worthy of a directive, not about metaphysical properties. Claims about whether something is good or bad are therefore action-guiding; while directives concern which actions one ought to take, evaluations are determinations of where we should focus those actions—they are beliefs about which things are worth our attention and effort. Directives, on my view, function as hypothetical imperatives; once we have made our evaluations, directives tell us what actions we ought to take in order to treat the worthwhile object as though it were worthwhile, taking into account considerations of what is good for it. For example, if I make the evaluation that a plant is good, and I then determine that the plant's promotion and integrity depend upon its growth and flourishing, the resultant directive is that I ought to let it grow and flourish. Let us take another example: if I make a positive evaluation about you, and believe that you benefit from liberty, then the resultant directive is that I ought to respect your liberty. A desire to promote the end in question prevails at some point in this scheme.

In this regard, I side with Philipa Foot in believing that there is no distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives.[69] Moral motivation might be in some respects phenomenologically different from generic prudence, or perhaps it is to be found in the distinction between altruistic and non-altruistic behavior. I do not claim to have a definitive answer to what distinguishes the two. Nevertheless, I argue that regardless of the possible distinctions, both possess the same fundamental connections of feelings, beliefs, desires, intentions, and actions. What I hope will be one of the side-effects of this discussion is to refute the idea that sentiment in ethics commits

---

68 They can also include beliefs about a thing's aesthetic qualities.
69 Philippa Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," *The Philosophical Review* 81, no. 3 (1972): 305-316.

us to some sort of psychological egoism, in which an agent's feelings are the only end she really cares about. Within the scheme that I argue for, an agent's conduct can have its origins in sentiment and yet still be completely altruistic, i.e., still be such that the agent's own good does not factor into her reasons for acting.[70] I must also emphasize crucially that *a belief about my own sentiment is not what provides the reason for action.* Believing the statement "I like people" is not what motivates one to act beneficently. The relevant reason is the belief that something is worth my attention and effort. It is in this respect that I believe sentiment is truth-selective; it can give me some information about what it's reasonable for me to do as an agent—*objectively* reasonable, in that it is a true fact that it is reasonable for me to believe in the worthiness of something and act accordingly (and, if you share my reasons, objectively reasonable for you as well). Most of us are uninterested in questions about the metaphysics of values; we are more interested in determining what it makes sense to care about.[71] Here, I think, is where we can reach true answers about what we ought to do. After all, when I assent to a claim about what it is most reasonable or rational[72] for me to to believe or to do, in the end, I seem to find myself confronted by a statement about what I *ought* to believe or to do. Rationality implies normativity.

3.ii. Sentiment, Moral Belief, and Moral Motivation

It is difficult to explain precisely how sentiments give rise to evaluative beliefs, just as it is difficult to explain precisely why perceptions bring about descriptive beliefs. *Why* does the perception of a bright green circle bring about my belief that a tennis ball is on the floor? One way to begin answering this question is to bring up the notion of *concepts.* I have a concept of a tennis ball that involves certain perceptible properties such as bright greenness and circularity, and the

---

70 In this respect, my view is similar to the one proposed by Thomas Nagel in *The Possibility of Altruism.* Nagel's main argument is that beliefs are what motivate altruistic behavior, not sentiments like sympathy—"it is not a feeling." My scheme, however, attempts to locate a place for sentiment. Nagel also wants to minimize the role played by desire in moral motivation, arguing that desires are merely an obvious and trivially true consequence of altruistic behavior. See Thomas Nagel, "From the Possibility of Altruism," in *Moral Discourse and Practice,* ed. Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 323. I on the other hand argue that both the belief and the desire are necessary to account for, and I argue furthermore that the belief motivates the desire.

71 "Care" in this context should not be taken to mean "caring" in the sense of tender devotion to something, but only in the sense of taking an interest in something—the sense that one employs in the phrase "I don't care." One may certainly care about a thing in both senses, however.

72 Here I am using the terms "reasonable" and "rational" synonymously.

thing I see on the floor seems to meet the criteria of that concept. We might call the process by which I apply these concepts *conditioning*. By conditioning, I do not mean to say that I am the one conditioned to have these concepts, but rather, that my concepts establish conditions by which I classify and give names to the things I encounter in the world. As a result, conditions determine the meanings of the sentences in which those names are employed, which then allow us to devise propositions that may be true or false. A tennis ball is identified as such because it meets the relevant conditions that my conceptual faculties have established for it. Those conditions include certain perceptual experiences—"raw feels," we might call them—such as a bright green circle. Although those perceptual experiences are themselves not beliefs, when combined and arranged in the right way so as to fit the right concepts, they then yield a believed proposition, specifically, the proposition "A tennis ball is on the floor." If the proposition is true, then there is a causal connection between the tennis ball and the true belief I have about it. Perception thereby functions as a truth-selective faculty; it allows me to obtain the information necessary for forming true beliefs.

Sentiment and perception are not the same, however. Perception, we assume, provides us with a causal connection to things that are "outside" of ourselves and therefore objectively real in some significant way. Sentiment, we assume, does not involve any such causal relationship, and whatever beliefs it may yield about things in the external world therefore lack the connection assumed to obtain in the case of perception. It is therefore dubious that sentiment could connect us with the truth of anything in that external world.

With the latter claim I am in full agreement. Sentiment cannot assume the role of perception. This is true in cases of hope and denial; for example, I might hope so earnestly that a sick family member will recover that I come to believe she will. However, even if she does, my hopefulness has no connection with the fact that she is going to recover; if any truth-selective faculty did, it would be a combination of perception and inductive reasoning. Another example is a man so terrified of the idea of his wife cheating on him that he comes to believe adamantly that she isn't. Indeed, she might very well not be, but the husband's sentiment would have no causal connection between his

belief that she is not cheating on him and the fact that she is not. Perception, on the other hand, could have such a connection—for example, the husband could hire a spy to observe his wife for a prolonged period of time and affirm that she is indeed not cheating on him. Unquestionably, sentiment cannot do what perception does, nor is it my argument that it can.

My argument, rather, is that sentiment can tell us which things are worth caring about. Hume's picture of moral psychology is that sentiments lead directly to moral motivation (they are "the first spring or impulse to desire and volition"), while beliefs do not. The sequence of events, for Hume, is sentiment → desire → intention → action. I wish to challenge this scheme and argue that a belief falls between the sentiment and the desire. The belief is about a relationship between me and the object: it is the belief that something is worth my moral attention and effort. *This is valuation*—not the sentiment I feel for something, but the belief that it qualifies for my directives. If this is the case, then moral motivation is supported by beliefs, contra Hume, who claims that it is merely spurred or compelled by sentiment. My view, on the other hand, is that the sentiments bring about the beliefs, while the beliefs bring about the motivation to act. These beliefs also add to our concepts of things, conditioning the way in which we conceive of them: we find them valuable, in that we regard them as providing some reason to hold certain desires, form intentions that are appropriate to those desires, and act accordingly.

What evidence do I possess to dispute Hume's conception of moral psychology? The first is that a belief is a necessary condition of having an intention. When people act intentionally, they do so for reasons. Why should matters be any different in the case of moral motivation? Hume wrote with regard to belief that it can only function in terms of deciding how an action should be carried out *after* a sentiment has motivated one to act.[73] Unfortunately, he neglected to explain how an intention can exist without a belief that the action is preferable to begin with, unless he meant to imply that moral behavior is unintentional—which I would reject outright. Moral actions are intentional, and I contend that without an antecedent belief, the agent would have no motive to act;

---

73 Hume, *Enquiry*, 88.

the agent must have a reason for acting in order to have any such motive to begin with.

A more contentious point, however, is my choice to place the belief before rather than after the desire to act. One may argue, first, that the desire to act is what produces the belief that x is worth the directive; and second, that sentiments lead directly to those desires, e.g., that the sentiment of sympathy leads directly to the desire to alleviate someone's bad situation.[74] I maintain the reverse: that the sentiment brings about the belief and, furthermore, that the belief is what leads to the desire to act. My rationale is that a desire to act morally towards something can persist in the absence of any particular sentiment. Sentiment might have manifested itself quite strongly with the desire at some point in the agent's past. Nevertheless, it appears that one may possess moral motivation even in the absence of that sentiment, for example, when relatively cool-headed or even when experiencing negative feelings (frustration, for example) towards the moral beneficiary. If an agent can possess a desire to act morally even when not experiencing the relevant sentiment, then there must be something else motivating that desire. What would that be?

I think the most plausible answer to that question is a belief. Agents carry with them a set of beliefs about what things are worth their moral attention. A belief of this kind is initially formed from a sentiment that the agent has towards an object, but the sentiment need not persist for the belief to remain, nor need it persist in order to sustain the agent's desire to act positively towards (e.g., to benefit, promote, preserve, defend, or in some way further) the object if the situation demands. A belief is what sustains that desire. Indeed, it might even be possible for an agent's sentimental inclinations to change over time while her moral beliefs remain the same. For example, she might come to terribly fear dogs due to some traumatic event, yet still consider them worthy of her moral consideration in spite of her terror of them.

How, then, do I support the argument that sentiment leads to evaluative beliefs? The best explanation I can come up with (I think it is a good one, if not an incomplete one) is by working

---

[74] Note, however, that even if this were true, it need not threaten my claim that sentiments are truth-selective, so long as it were also the case that those desires could yield true beliefs.

backwards. If certain sentiments are often paired with certain desires, and if those desires must be sustained by evaluative beliefs, then the sentiments must yield the evaluations if the desires are to persist. How could it be otherwise, unless one were to argue for the implausible claim that desires somehow retroactively generate evaluations, or that the correlation between sentiment and moral belief is just a fortuitous happenstance? Further insight into this process is a task for empirical psychology, though I believe my theory of moral motivation, rudimentary as it is, is more accurate than Hume's. Sentiments don't just compel me to act morally in the same way that thirst compels me to reach for a glass of water, especially not given how moral motivation persists throughout one's lifetime and affects one's considered plans for the future. Belief in the worth of things must play a role in such considerations.

With regard to the connection between sentiment and the truth of evaluations, we stand confronted with a sort of anomaly. I have argued that an evaluation is a belief about what it is reasonable to care about,[75] and consequently, about what it is reasonable to do—and ought to desire and intend to do. I have argued furthermore that such beliefs must precede those desires and intentions. I have also speculated—reasonably, I think—that there is probably some causal connection between sentiments and moral motivation.[76] However, I have also argued that if evaluation precedes motivation, then the sentiment must be what brings about that evaluation. So, if I am correct in claiming that some such evaluations are true, then there is likely some connection between sentiment and truth. Either that, or the correlation between sentiment and moral belief is an uncanny coincidence, which I find dubious.

Precisely how that connection functions is a mystery, though I think the matter can be made a bit less mysterious by acknowledging that the connection between sentiments and evaluations is

---

75 Some may find this point trivially true. I do not. "Yes," one might say, "claims about value and moral-standing are claims about what we ought to care about. We know this already. What about the metaphysics of such value?" I am attempting to reframe the issue by giving a commonsense definition of value. In everyday parlance, what we mean when we call things valuable or worthy for their own sake is just that we ought to care about them. Metaphysical concerns, I think, obfuscate this point. I do, however, think values do have a certain metaphysical character, which I address in chapter five.

76 Entailing, literally, that my argument that sentiment is truth-selective is, in fact, a hypothesis, since it relies on a premise supported by inductive reasoning.

not in every respect analogous to that of perceptions and objects. Whereas perception, to put it in crude terms, tells me about things "outside" myself, sentiment tells me about something internal: it tells me about the way in which it makes sense to care about things. Perhaps a good way of looking at this is to understand that sentiment is action-guiding much in the same way that beliefs such as evaluations and directives are: sentiment is a facilitator of normativity; it helps us along in our normative lives, though, like all of our faculties, not infallibly.

3.iii. A Fuller Scheme of Moral Motivation

In this chapter, I have tried to explain how elements such as sentiments, beliefs, desires, directives, and intentions factor into moral motivation. I want now to produce a more developed picture of how such elements work. Moral motivation takes place on two levels, a *general* level and a *situational* level. The general level involves how we come to value things and subsequently form general intentions to treat them a certain way. The situational level involves moral motivation as it occurs in particular situations or in reaction to certain events, and, ideally, culminates in morally motivated actions. The elements and structure of each level are presented in the following diagram, which is then explained:[*]

1. General:
perception of nonmoral properties → sentiment → evaluation → dispositional desire → dispositional intention
2. Situational:
moral perception →→ dispositional intention → directive → occurrent desire → occurrent intention: action
or
moral perception →→ dispositional intention → directive → occurrent desire → occurrent intention: no action (agent was prevented)
or
moral perception →→ dispositional intention → directive → occurrent desire → *no* occurrent intention: no action (agent was irresponsible)

---

[*] A single arrow describes a relationship in which each item is the outcome of the previous one. The double arrows that appear on the situation level describe a relationship in which an agent refers to or retrieves something.

General – The agent first perceives certain properties of an object that could be called morally neutral or nonmoral. In most cases, these are features that are perceived by the agent's senses. The agent then has a sentimental reaction towards the thing perceived, such as a feeling of approbation, approval, or admiration. The sentimental reaction yields a certain kind of belief, an evaluation, that the object is good or worthwhile. Conversely, the agent may feel a negative sentiment, such as disapprobation or disapproval, and come to believe that the thing perceived is bad or of disvalue. The agent then desires that the thing be regarded or treated a certain way, for example, preserved, protected, benefited, and so on (or ended, prevented, or harmed, in the case of bad things). This desire becomes a dispositional mental state that remains with the agent in the future. The agent also forms an intention to generally preserve, protect, or benefit the thing in question. The intention, likewise, is filed away among the agent's dispositional mental states.

Situational – Moral motivation on the situational level begins when the agent has what is called a moral perception. Lawrence Blum describes moral perception as the ability of an agent to recognize whether a perceived situation is morally relevant, an ability which varies by degree among different people.[77] For example, imagine that John and Joan are riding on a subway train. There is a woman on the subway who cannot find a seat and is overburdened by heavy bags of groceries. John is aware of the woman, but overlooks the fact that her well-being is at stake. Joan, on the other hand, notices that the woman is uncomfortable and that she is not faring well. In this scenario, Joan is demonstrating moral perception, while John is not.[78] Some people are better than others at moral perception—we might call these people sensitive. It is not necessarily the case that those with less developed faculties of moral perception are insensitive or callous, but only that they are not as discerning as those whose faculties of moral perception are better.[79]

Once the agent has perceived the moral relevance of a situation, she then retrieves her dispositional intention to better, further, or protect those things she regards as valuable. Determining

---

77 Lawrence Blum, "Moral Perception and Particularity," *Ethics* 101, no. 4 (1991): 701.
78 Ibid., 702-703.
79 Incidentally, it is possibly the case that moral perception is another kind of truth-selective faculty.

what the particular situation calls for, the agent then comes up with a hypothetical imperative, a directive, to resolve whatever issue led to her moral perception. For example, the agent might notice that a person is crying, decide that the person needs to be comforted, and resolve that something ought to be done about it. This then yields an *occurrent desire* on the part of the agent to do something about the other person's distress. Unlike a dispositional desire, an occurrent desire is contextual, local to a specific situation, and manifests itself within the agent's state of consciousness.

The situation can then culminate in one of three ways, depending on the agent and on other, external circumstances. First, the agent might form an intention to help the crying person and then act upon that intention, asking the person if she is all right and if there is anything that can be done for her. Conversely, the agent might form the intention yet not act on it due to being prevented; for instance, the crying person might walk briskly away and enter her dorm. Or, in other cases, the agent might desire to assist the person, but have no intention to do so, in which case, the agent is irresponsible.

The picture of moral motivation that I have sketched is an attempt to put the components discussed throughout this chapter into perspective, explaining how perceptions yield evaluations, how a general intention to act morally comes about, and how these intentions are called upon in morally relevant situations, resulting, if circumstances are ideal, in morally motivated actions. I now turn to a particular component of this scheme, evaluations, and address the issue of whether and how they can be known.

(4) The Truth and Justification of Values

I would like to begin this section by making a few more remarks on moral psychology, remarks which lead directly into a discussion of moral epistemology. I conceive of moral motivation as having the same structure as prudential motivation. That there is a difference between the two seems intuitive, even if it might be difficult to describe or precisely pinpoint that difference. The difference might be that moral motivation does not have the same phenomenology as prudential motivation—the experiences involved in the one often feel qualitatively different from the other— and this might be an indication that there is some distinction between the two. Still, whatever their differences, moral and prudential motivation are both alike in that they involve a relation between reasons and actions. On my view, if an agent *ought rationally* to do something, it is because she possesses and is cognizant of reasons to do it. Call this view *rational internalism*: it is the view that what it is rational for an agent to desire, intend, and do depends on her beliefs. The opposite view could be called *rational externalism*, on which those reasons exist, but are not necessarily possessed by the agent.[80] On an internalist view, if Jones believes that setting himself on fire will cure his cold (and does not believe it will kill or maim him, and so on) then for Jones, it is rational to set himself on fire. On an externalist view, setting himself on fire is not rational, even if Jones does not realize it. The essential difference between the two views is that according to internalism, an agent's rational obligations are determined by her beliefs, while according to externalism, those obligations are determined by propositions that may or may not belong to the agent's set of beliefs.

Even though it is not in Jones' best interest to set himself on fire, it does not follow from this that he has no reason to—he *does* have a reason to set himself on fire; it just happens to be a false belief. Setting oneself on fire does not cure colds, but Jones is ignorant of this. Nevertheless, given

---

80 Bernard Williams is regarded as the philosopher who popularized the terms "internalism" and "externalism" among the literature in practical reasoning. My use of the terms here differs slightly from his: according to Williams, internalism is the view that claims about what a person has a reason to do imply that the person is motivated to act thusly. Externalism is any view that denies this condition. See Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: UP, 1981), 101. On the other hand, my view, rational internalism, is about what it is rational for a person to do, and does not specify that a all person's motivations, but only her beliefs, are what dictate her rational obligations. Rational externalism, which I reject, is the view that those reasons need not be believed.

that Jones thinks fire would cure his cold, it would be irrational of him to try another remedy if he saw no reason to. Jones' epistemic problem in this case is not that his motives are irrational; the problem, rather, is that his motive is backed by a false belief: fire cures colds.

Let us take another example. Suppose that George wants to make money, and George believes that cutting down redwood trees will make him a lot of money.[81] Unlike Jones', George's belief may well be right: cutting down redwood trees might indeed have all sorts of monetary benefits. George therefore has a reason to cut down redwood trees, and it is rational for him to do so. Suppose, on the other hand, that Jane wants to preserve redwood trees, and Jane believes that making it illegal to cut down redwood trees will preserve them.[82] Jane now has a reason to campaign for the protection of redwood trees, and it is rational for her to do so. From all of this, there follows a conjunction that it is rational for George to cut down redwood trees and that it is rational for Jane to campaign for redwood trees. On the rational-internalist view, this statement involves no contradiction. Jane can even agree that it is rational for George to cut down redwoods, and George can agree that it is rational for Jane to protect redwoods, and neither of them would be lying or speaking hypocritically. Jane and George both believe different directives, and by no means does this violate the principle of contradiction. Where George and Jane differ is on their evaluations. Jane regards redwoods as worth preserving, while George does not. If Jane can convince George that redwoods are worth preserving, then for George, cutting down redwoods would no longer seem rational in light of his new belief. If George can get Jane to realize that they are not worth preserving, it would not be rational of her to try to save them, and, seeing no reason to continue, she would stop trying. The point of this thought-experiment is to demonstrate that people can disagree morally yet still be rational in holding their respective views.

Moral disagreements like the kind between George and Jane should not—and cannot—be resolved by comparing directives (ought statements), supposing that what one ought to do is really

---

81 And also believes that deforestation of redwoods is preferable to other ways of making money, such as internet poker.
82 And also believes that leglislation is preferable to other means of protecting redwoods, such as planting spikes in them, chaining herself to them, assassinating George, and so forth.

just the upshot—the intuitive consequence—of what it is most reasonable to do. This is because George and Jane disagree on certain evaluative statements about redwoods, and it is logical that their different evaluations should lead them to adopt different directives. Though directives can be constructively disputed between agents who do share the same values with regard to a certain matter, such is not the case for George and Jane. Furthermore, George and Jane *certainly* cannot resolve their dispute by resorting to the claim that others person's directive is irrational. People can disagree morally and yet nevertheless be perfectly rational[83] in holding their respective views. If this point is obvious to the reader, it nevertheless seems neglected in much of our day-to-day moral discourse. Who can deny having walked away from a moral debate thinking to oneself that the other person was irrational? Perhaps this is sometimes the case, but it often isn't. If we are to engage in more fruitful moral discussion, then this must be acknowledged.

The dispute between George and Jane concerns evaluations, not directives. The question at issue is not "Ought we or ought we not to cut down redwoods?" The question, rather, is "In what sort of way should redwoods matter to us?" George thinks they matter merely instrumentally, while Jane thinks they matter as ends-in-themselves. If we wish to determine whose belief is right (an ambitious goal) then we must address (1) the conditions on which beliefs of this kind are true and (2) the conditions on which believing those kinds of statements is justified.

When are we justified in making claims about a thing's value? My answer to this question begins with the rejection of two assumptions which I believe are implicit in Regan's intrinsic-value view. The first is what appears to be a kind of epistemological foundationalism. Though Regan's view does not involve the claim, typical among contemporary foundationalists, that certain beliefs are basic or self-justifying, it does resemble foundationalism in that it requires a starting point for moral knowledge, specifically, knowledge that there are certain specific features in the world, intrinsic values, that are there independently of human awareness. The second assumption I reject is its apparent reliance on a correspondence theory of truth, in that the truth-conditions of values are

---

83 Or at least imperfectly rational, assuming—and I do—that justification for one's beliefs can vary by degree.

the existence of objective, inherent properties that belong to those objects independently of human awareness. Thus, Regan would have it that in order to possess any justified moral beliefs, we must first possess beliefs that correspond to states-of-affairs in the world, states-of-affairs that would obtain even if no person existed to acknowledge them. That this should be the way in which we learn how we should behave—how we should conduct ourselves, what we ought and ought not to do, how we should act rightly, in sum, how we are to live morally—this, I think, is an unappealing starting point, both philosophically and practically.

I argue instead that the best way to determine the truth of an evaluation is by reference to the truth of other propositions, and that an agent's current set of values needs to set the standard by which claims about the value of something are to be judged (including those claims which belong to the current set). My theory of value is not "property-oriented," so to speak, in the way Regan's is—that is to say, it does not attempt to explain value primarily in terms of a property that a thing possesses. Rather, it is motive-oriented: if something is morally worthy, it is worthy of an agent's moral attention—it is worth caring about and ought to motivate her desires and actions. Propositions of this kind, then, not propositions about what things possess what metaphysical properties, are the ones whose truth-conditions we will try to determine.[84]

4.i. Coherentism in Truth and Knowledge

Propositions require support. Coherentism, broadly construed, is the idea that a set of propositions can provide such support for each other mutually. The term is employed in both epistemology and truth-theory.[85] In epistemology, a coherence theory of knowledge is one whose proponents argue that justification can be achieved by having a set of mutually supportive beliefs. Justification, on the coherentist's view, is holistic and recursive. The metaphor of a web or tapestry is often evoked to portray this idea: if the threads are numerous enough and arranged in the right way, the structure stays together. Removing them or rearranging their connections causes the

---

84 I said truth-conditions, not truth! It is far beyond the scope of this project to argue for which objects have moral standing. I have my own opinions, of course.

85 My own term for the branch of philosophy (and the various views associated with it) that deals with the nature of truth.

structure to come apart. The coherentist looks for the best way to gather and arrange them, trying to acquire a robust number of beliefs that are logically compatible, while eliminating those that are contradictory. In this respect, a coherentist generally thinks of justification as something that varies by degree: the larger and more compatible a set of beliefs is, the more justified it can be (though numerous coherentists maintain that compatibility is not all that matters). Certain beliefs may therefore be reasonable, even if their justification is imperfect, and beliefs may be subject to continuing scrutiny and evaluation. Finally, coherentists often believe that their views reflect the structure of human belief: a person's number of beliefs is taken to be finite, and her inferential processes are themselves recursive. Though there are many different versions of coherentism, all of them tend generally to have these characteristics.

Objections to such theories understandably follow. One is that there may be different sets of beliefs that are coherent, yet mutually incompatible.[86] One person may believe *P,* another, *-P.* If both beliefs belong to a coherent set, then, the objection goes, both would count as instances of knowledge, yet such a claim would violate the principle of contradiction. A second objection is that if beliefs are to be justified only on the basis of other beliefs, then coherentism allows for no connection to the real world. Thus, justification depends only on facts about the believer, not on the things which the beliefs are about. This either commits the coherentist to relativism or renders her view (ironically) incoherent.[87] Another, similar objection, noted by Laurence Bonjour, is that an acceptable epistemology must be "truth-conducive," i.e., "that one who seeks justified beliefs is at least as likely to find true ones," but that a coherence theory of knowledge "can do this only by adopting a coherence theory of truth and the absurd idealistic metaphysics which goes along with it."[88] Other objections exist, but these three are the most common.

---

86 Lawrence Bonjour, "The Coherence Theory of Empirical Knowledge," in *Contemporary Readings in Epistemology,* ed. Michael F. Goodman and Robert Alan Snyder (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 75. Bonjour himself is a defender of coherentism, but he notes this and other objections. Though Bonjour considers these objections only with respect to a coherence theory of *empirical* knowledge, they seem no less applicable to a theory of moral knowledge, and hence, I bring them up as well.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid. Bonjour would think me absurd, then, as I do adopt a coherence theory of truth, though not necessarily idealism.

The second use of the term "coherentism" describes certain theories of truth. In a manner similar to how a coherence theory of knowledge construes justification, a coherence theory of truth maintains that the truth of a proposition depends upon the truth of other propositions. Many do not accept that a coherence theory of knowledge requires a coherence theory of truth. Indeed, as Bonjour's remark might indicate, coherence theories of truth are somewhat unfashionable; they are often associated with the logical positivists of the early twentieth century, such as Rudolph Carnap, Otto Neurath, and Carl Hempel, who were dissatisfied with the correspondence theory of truth maintained trenchantly by Ludwig Wittgenstein. For the logical positivists, the project of a coherence theory of truth was to denounce metaphysics as a pseudo-problem and conceive of truth merely in terms of properties belonging to statements. Summarizing his contemporaries' views, Hempel makes a distinction between a "formal mode of speech" and a "material mode of speech." In the formal mode of speech, statements, when uttered, assert "certain properties and relations of scientific propositions only" within a given logical system (specifically, the "Logic of Science" devised by Carnap, which I will not dare attempt to summarize).[89] The material mode of speech, on the other hand, is what a speaker uses when she talks about the world as though it were real.[90] On the logical positivist's view, the material mode of speech tends to lead to a sort of reification fallacy, where the thing fallaciously assumed is a genuinely real word existing independently of the speaker:

> indeed, the phrase that testing a statement is comparing it with facts, will very easily evoke the imagination of one definite world with certain definite properties, and so one will easily be seduced to ask for the one system of statements which gives a complete and true description of this world, and which would have to be designated absolutely true.[91]

Hempel and his colleagues deny the necessity of discussing such a hypothetical world, and therefore reject the pursuit of a theory of truth that would assume its existence to be a condition of true statements. The idea, basically, is that one cannot get beyond or outside one's beliefs, so talk of a real world is meaningless and unconstructive. The logical positivists are not skeptics, as they are

---

89 Carl Hempel, "On the Logical Positivists' Theory of Truth," *Analysis* 2, no. 4 (1935): 54.
90 Ibid., 55.
91 Ibid.

uninterested in what the skeptic thinks impossible.

Richard Rorty has made similar remarks. He rejects the possibility that there can be "privileged representations, ones which are automatically and intrinsically accurate."[92] He argues rather that "nothing counts as justification unless by reference to what we already accept, and that there is no way to get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence."[93] Some might find this sort of anti-realism bleak, and a coherence theory therefore unappealing, assuming that coherence and nothing more is all there is to truth.

On the other hand, Donald Davidson, in a famous paper called "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," defends a more idiosyncratic coherence theory of truth, one that goes hand-in-hand with a coherence theory of knowledge and which tries to rescue the idea of a real world from destructive theories like those of Rorty and the logical positivists. Davidson's weapon of choice is language. "Setting aside aberrant cases," writes Davidson, "what brings truth and knowledge together is meaning."[94] Davidson notes that meanings, like sentential propositions,[95] have "objective truth-conditions" and therefore demand a theory of truth. Like Rorty and the logical positivists, Davidson agrees that there can be no "confrontation" between one's beliefs and reality —"the idea of such a confrontation is absurd."[96] Nevertheless, maintains Davidson, "if coherence is a test of truth, then coherence is a test for judging that objective truth conditions are satisfied, and we no longer need to explain meaning on the basis of possible confrontation. My slogan is: correspondence without confrontation."[97]

Davidson's view is particularly interesting. To begin with, we must note that he makes a distinction between truth-conditions and the definition of truth. Although coherence in one's beliefs, according to Davidson, is a truth-condition, truth itself

---

92 Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: UP, 1979), 170.
93 Ibid., 178.
94 Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowldge," in *Epistemology: An Anthology*, 2nd ed., ed. Ernest Sosa, Jaegwon Kim, Jeremy Fantl, and Matthew McGrath (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 124.
95 And presumably including them, since sentences have meanings, and since, as was noted by Davidson's mentor, W. V. O. Quine, names can be recast as sentences—to call something "milk," for example, is no different from saying "it's milk" See W. V. O. Quine, *Theories and Things* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981), 3.
96 Davidson, "A Coherence Theory," 124.
97 Ibid.

is beautifully transparent compared to belief and coherence, and I take it as primitive. Truth, as applied to the utterance of sentences, shows the disquotational feature enshrined in Tarski's Convention T[98] . . . . What Convention T, and the trite sentences it declares true, like "'Grass is green' spoken by an English speaker, is true if and only if grass is green," reveal is that the truth of an utterance depends on just two things: what the words as spoken mean, and how the world is arranged.[99]

For Davidson, the very idea of truth—indeed, the very idea of a truth-condition—implies a real world, yet Davidson argues that one can get at the truth of things without having to apprehend that world. This is counterintuitive, yet if it were possible, it would be highly appealing. To support his argument, Davidson introduces his theory of "radical interpretation." On this view, when one person speaks to another, the meaning of her sentence must be determined by the listener; furthermore, belief depends upon the meanings of the words in the sentence one believes.[100] "As a matter of principle, then, meaning, and by its connection with meaning, beliefs also, are open to public determination. . . . What a fully informed interpreter could learn about what a speaker means is all there is to learn; the same goes for what the speaker believes."[101] Davidson's theory of radical interpretation therefore requires what he calls a "principle of charity."[102] As he writes, "the principle directs the interpreter to translate or interpret so as to read some of his own standards of truth into the patterns of sentences held true by the speaker." The principle is employed by the listener, and its purpose "is to make the speaker intelligible, since too great deviations from consistency and correctness leave no common ground on which to judge either conformity or difference."[103] The principle is essentially required if the listener is to assume that the speaker believes what she is saying. The meaning of a sentence is therefore determined, in part, by interpretation. The other part is the way things are in the real world.

Davidson argues furthermore that the evidential relationship typically assumed to exist

---

98 Alfred Tarski is famous for developing the "semantic conception of truth," which is embodied in the following example: "'Snow is white'" is true if, and only if, snow is white," or, even more basically, "P" is true if and only if P. See Alfred Tarski, "A Semantical Conception of Truth," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4 (1944): http://www.ditext.com/tarski/tarski.html.
99 Davidson, "A Coherence Theory," 125.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid., 130.
103 Ibid.

between speakers and the world should be abandoned, suggesting instead that the only relationship we can assume is a causal one..[104] Furthermore, meaning and belief can only be understood in terms of a speaker's assent to a sentence, which, in turn, can only be understood in terms of the relation between the speaker's assent and the causes of that assent.[105] If we lack this conception of how a speaker assents to a sentence—Davidson calls it "prompted assent"—then we have no conception of meaning and, therefore, no conception of belief.[106] Yet we *do* have such a conception:

> anyone with thoughts, and so in particular anyone who wonders whether he has any reason to suppose he is generally right about the nature of his environment, must know what a belief is, and how in general beliefs are to be detected and interpreted . . . . All that is needed is that he recognize that belief is in its nature veridical.[107]

The point I distill from Davidson's difficult (yet illuminating) paper is that correspondence, meaning, and belief are each mutually dependent, much in the same way as the propositions in the theory that Davidson is arguing for, and furthermore, that these mutually dependent relationships cannot exist without causality; only if meanings and beliefs are caused by something do they yield correspondence. The problem with this view should be obvious: it assumes that there *are* causes, and if Davidson is to support the claim that such causes exist, he must presumably have evidence for his view. Unfortunately, Davidson provides no such evidence. Furthermore, Davidson's view does not allow for any such evidence, since Davidson, as has been noted, does not allow for the possibility of any justificatory or evidential relation between a belief and reality. Hence, Davidson's view is not only unsupported, but contradictory.

I am certainly not the first to note the failure of Davidson's argument; Davidson himself admitted to it five years after the publication of "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge."[108] He recanted not only the claim that coherence yields correspondence but the idea of correspondence altogether.[109] It was Rorty who convinced Davidson that these were his views—that, rather than

---

104 Ibid., 128.
105 Ibid., 129.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Donald Davidson, "Appendix: Afterthoughts," in *The Essential Davidson*, ed. Ernie Lepore and Kirk Ludwig (Oxford: UP, 2006), 238-241.
109 Ibid., 239.

solving skepticism, he was merely ignoring it. Davidson acknowledged this and, in the end, found it preferable:

> I agree with Rorty to this extent; I set out not to "refute" the skeptic, but to give a sketch of what I think to be a correct account of the foundations of linguistic communication and its implications for truth, belief, and knowledge. If one grants the correctness of this account, one can tell the skeptic to get lost.[110]

Thus, Davidson, reputed for the constructive views presented through the corpus of his philosophical writing, became an anti-realist.

In the past, I have also attempted to take on skepticism.[111] I argued, first off, that there is no difference between methodological and philosophical skepticism—that in either context, doubt means the same thing: suspending judgment about the truth of a proposition. I added to this the argument that it is impossible to doubt every single one of our beliefs, including certain beliefs about the external world.[112] Finally, I argued that this alone can be used to logically refute the skeptic's claim that our senses are unreliable, not to "kick over the lectern," so to speak, but to actually prove skepticism unsound.[113] I claimed that our senses were *reliable*, however, not that they yielded correspondence. In fact, I even conceded at the end of the argument that though our senses are reliable, it might still have been the case that knowledge of an external world was impossible—bizarre as this may have sounded—but that Cartesian skepticism failed to show how such an impossibility could be.[114]

If it is true, as I think it is, that some of our beliefs are reliable, does it entail that truth requires correspondence with reality? The skeptic would say that it has to. I am still inclined to say that it does not have to, and that, in agreement with Rorty and perhaps even the logical positivists, the best test for reliability we can devise is coherence. However, I shall make some concessions on

---

110 Ibid., 241.

111 Kevin Powell, "Skepticism and Human Psychology," *Prometheus: The Johns Hopkins University Journal of Undergraduate Philosophy* 2 (2010): 3-11. By juxtaposing my own work with Davidson's, I do not pretend to compare my own with the rigor and ingenuity of his; I only wish to note briefly my own views on skepticism, which, if laid out more thoroughly, would go well beyond the scope of this paper.

112 Ibid., 5-8.

113 Ibid., 9-10.

114 Ibid., 10.

this matter.

4.ii. The Appeal of Coherentism in Ethics

Before even making these concessions, however, I wish to discuss some intuitions about why it might be appealing to employ a coherence theory of both truth and knowledge (I shall have to occasionally vacillate between discussing one or the other) to moral philosophy. The theories I have discussed in the previous section are all concerned predominately with empirical knowledge. Still, I see no reason why the problems they deal with are any less relevant to moral knowledge. Fundamentally, both kinds of knowledge concern propositions—statements about what is true or false, is or is not—and therefore require justification. In this regard, a coherence theory might be just as relevant to ethics as it is to empirical knowledge (and, potentially, just as problematic).

But, problems aside, the reason I believe a coherence theory in ethics is appealing is because of our desire for consistency in our moral lives. We want morals that we can endorse and act upon without contradiction. After all, when we feel a sense of guilt or self-blame, more often than not, we feel that way because we have done something we knew was incongruous with our other moral beliefs—to wit, because we have acted hypocritically. We do not feel that way because we realize that our moral beliefs were false at the time we acted. Our moral practices and beliefs are often worked out not through the attainment of foundational or self-justifying facts, but through cognitive dissonance: when we realize that we have done, desire to do, or believe something inconsistent with our other moral beliefs, we are called upon to resolve the internal quarrel with ourselves that results. More often than not, we settle that quarrel with weak excuses. We sometimes even acknowledge that they are excuses yet still choose to make them. But in other cases, we may actually rise to the occasion and recognize that our moral framework contains a logical contradiction that must be resolved. In this respect, I think that a coherence theory in ethics speaks strongly to ordinary moral experience.

John Rawls understood the importance of coherence in practical moral life, which led to his coinage of the term "reflective equilibrium." Rawls' idea, very (very) roughly, is that moral and

political discourse among members of a community begins with a set of assumptions about what principles count as just.[115] The justification of these assumptions is routinely called into question when an occasion demands it; when this occurs, the members of a community need to engage in a process of deliberation about which principles are most rational.[116]

> By going back and forth, sometimes altering the conditions of the contractual circumstances, at others withdrawing our judgments and conforming them to principle, I assume that eventually we shall find a description of the initial situation that both expresses reasonable conditions and yields principles which match our considered judgments duly pruned and adjusted.[117]

Rawls' remarks here on reflective equilibrium incorporate several of his other assumptions. First, Rawls places the demand for reflective equilibrium within a community that, presumably, has already adopted a social contract. Second, he discusses reflective equilibrium as a process which settles principles of justice. Finally, he notes that reflective equilibrium need not always result in a change of these principles, but may sometimes result in a change of the material circumstances that brought about the need for reflection to begin with.

I believe that we may incorporate elements of Rawls' theory of reflective equilibrium without assuming that the method must take place in the circumstances Rawls describes (and I do not claim that he argues otherwise). I believe that at the core of reflective-equilibrium theory is simply the idea that our set of moral beliefs may be altered, e.g., by rejecting some of those beliefs (and thereby accepting their negations) or by accepting new ones that had previously been unconsidered. These moral beliefs need not necessarily be limited to principles, but may also include evaluations—ascriptions of value. In this respect, the idea of reflective equilibrium seems amenable to a coherence theory of moral knowledge. As Geoffrey Sayre-McCord comments,

> [t]he practical value of the method is reflected in the fact that most effective forms of moral argumentation appear to work by revealing to people that their own views need shoring up or changing if those views are to cohere with others they are unwilling to jettison.[118]

---

115 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999), 11-12.
116 Ibid., 16.
117 Ibid., 18.
118 Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "Coherentist Epistemology and Moral Theory," in *Moral Knowledge?*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Mark Timmons (Oxford: UP, 1996), 10.

Thus, coherentism within moral epistemology is relevant not only to the domain of an agent's private set of beliefs, but to the public domain as well, and, in this respect, is discursive. Furthermore, it construes justification as something that varies by degree and which by nature involves a process of continual revision. These facts are enough to compel me to adopt it.

4.iii. Concessions

At the end of 4.i., I claimed that I might accept Rorty's view that coherence is all that matters for justification and that we should give up talk of a real world completely, effectively telling the skeptic to "get lost." How far should we take this view? Should we side with Rorty and abandon the idea of a real world on practical grounds? Perhaps, but only if this move were in fact practical, which might not be the case. We must at least allow for meaningful talk of a real world— meaningful in the sense that we can speak *about* something when we claim that it is real. Though the attempt to rigorously and definitively prove the existence of the external world might be an artifact of the Cartesian tradition in philosophy, normal discourse still seems to depend on some sort of conception of real things. Thus, my concession, ironically, requires me to put forth some sort of positive view.

I also think that my earlier remarks on the idea of truth-selective faculties demand that I at least briefly confront the dilemma between realism and anti-realism. For the very idea of a truth-selective faculty like perception or sentiment implies a causal relationship. But to maintain that such a casual relationship takes place between ourselves and a supposedly external world requires that we justify the existence of that external world. If we fail to do so, then we shall fall into precisely the same trap as Davidson when he wrote "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge." Let us see if we can somehow work around this problem.

Davidson's error in "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge" led to a position that could be described roughly as anti-realist. I am not crazy about this term, nor do I particularly like its antonym, "realism," at least not as it is typically employed. Realism is the view that there is a

genuinely external world of the kind that skeptics think we must demonstrate in order to possess any knowledge. Anti-realism refers to a broad set of views that hold that there is no such world, that talk of such a world is meaningless, or that such talk is, at the very least, pointless. I suppose that if I had to choose a side, it would be anti-realism. Yet I believe that the term is misleading; the anti-realist need not deny that humans have a substantial and often very rich concept of an external world, and that the concept is most certainly real. So perhaps a better name for my view would be something along the lines of "representational realism."[119] The idea is that our experience of the world comprises mental representations and that those representations exist. Such representations are mind-dependent, at least necessarily. *If* in fact if there is an external world, then possession of a mind is not sufficient for us to have those representations; there must be some source of input that allows us to form them. Yet absolute knowledge of things-in-themselves is not necessary in order to agree that those representations exist and can be meaningfully employed by us. Hence, I choose to use the term "realism." Though it might not be the traditional usage, it does imply that there are real things. A comparison with projectivism might help explain the idea I am trying to describe: whereas the projectivist construes our experience of the world as something that is projected upon or, to use Hume's terminology, "gilds and stains" some sort of antecedent structure—a wall, for instance—representational realism is better captured with the analogy of a hologram that is displayed in three-dimensional space and which constitutes the structure itself.

I have already described some elements of this view in 3.ii. On the representational-realist view, the world can be likened to a sort of map or guide, one that is continually drawn and edited in order to better assimilate new information (perceptions, for example). Novel information often requires us to modify our concepts of things, and our concepts establish the conditions by which we recognize, identify, and, in short, make sense of the various objects and entities of which we have concepts. New concepts modify what we mean when we speak of those things, and meanings have

---

119 This term has been used to describe other philosophical views, though I am not drawing on any of them, nor am I familiar with them.

implications for both the sentences in which we employ them and for the beliefs that we have about those sentences.[120] The beliefs that we have therefore require that certain conditions be met—if I am to believe that there is a tennis ball on the floor, I must perceive a thing that is light green, three dimensional, has two white grooves, feels velvety, appears to be on the floor, and so on. If these conditions are met, then, for all intents and purposes, the belief is true.

The belief, however, depends on numerous other beliefs. For instance, I must believe that there is a floor. To believe that there is a floor, I need to believe that the thing I am standing on is level and that it be opposite to the ceiling and perpendicular to the walls. This, in turn, requires that I believe a host of things about my body, the walls, the ceilings, and so on and so forth; an entire network of beliefs must exist if I am to believe even the mere proposition that there is a tennis ball on the floor. And if I am to regard that belief as true largely by reference to other beliefs, then, for all intents and purposes, I am relying on a coherence theory of truth.

How is this view different from Rorty's? Perhaps it is not. But it is an attempt to help alleviate the feeling of emptiness that Rorty's position might evoke, and to show why it is practical to speak of things as though they existed in some sense or another. Representational realism allows for the possibility that our language refers to things, and it allows for the idea that we have truth-selective faculties, assuming that there is a connection between faculties such as perception and our coherent set of beliefs. The point of representational realism is to show that even if there is no world to be proven, there is nevertheless a world to be understood, and that as long as it is possible for our sentences to mean things and for our beliefs to be more or less coherent, then such understanding is possible.

One objection needs to be considered, then we shall move on. The objection is the problem of relativism. If, hypothetically, two agents may hold completely coherent and yet contradictory sets of beliefs, then a coherence theory of truth must render all of those beliefs true, effectively violating the principle of contradiction and resulting in a *reductio-ad-absurdum.* Representational realism

---

120 I am silent, however, on the question of whether all beliefs are propositional.

might ignore the problem of an external world, but are we prepared to ignore the principle of contradiction as well? My reply is as follows:

If one is to devise a hypothetical situation in which two agents hold conflicting but coherent sets of beliefs, I feel one should be required to provide an example, not merely claim that the scenario is conceivable. Such an example must enumerate the propositions that each agent believes, and those propositions must be mutually supportive in the way the coherentist prescribes. But a person's number of beliefs is immense, so much so that it might be beyond anyone's ability to list all of them. One might try to list a small yet coherent set of beliefs to support the thought-experiment, but I believe such an attempt would fail. The beliefs in the set must be mutually supportive, i.e., the set must be recursive, and it must include *every single belief* to which the members in the set are logically connected. It seems impossible to attempt this without ending up with a vast number of beliefs. Merely arguing that the hypothetical situation is conceivable, I think, is not enough. The situation must also be imaginable.

My position with regard to relativism is to therefore remain agnostic about it. Even if relativism is a threat in hypothetical situations, I doubt it is a threat among real people. No one, I believe, possesses a completely coherent set of beliefs. Coherence is such as to allow that the greater it is, the more reasonable it is to assume that most of what one believes is true. Given that people, inevitably, overlap in most of their beliefs, I do not think the threat posed by the thought-experiment is terribly urgent.

4.iv. Sentiment, Coherentism, and Values

The motives behind my view might be called metaphilosophical. I do not regard skepticism as a worthy philosophical problem to refute, nor do I think it needs to be solved if we are to understand why things are the way they are. This project, ultimately, is an attempt to find a more practical, workable alternative to intrinsic value for environmental ethics, and I believe that the pragmatic standpoint I have taken, along with the theory of justification that it embraces, is the key to finding that alternative. I wish now to discuss how coherentism is instrumental to determining

what things are valuable. I have made a distinction between evaluations (beliefs about what is good or bad, valuable or disvaluable) and directives (beliefs about what one ought and ought not to do). I have argued that if we are to solve moral disputes, then in some cases, we need to examine evaluations rather than directives. Two people may hold conflicting evaluations and yet still be perfectly rational in holding conflicting directives. If George thinks endangered trees are valuable only instrumentally, it is reasonable for him to think they ought to be cut down for various purposes. If Jane things they are valuable as ends in themselves, then it is reasonable for her to think they ought to be protected. The roots of this dispute (no pun intended) lie in the fact that the two people have different evaluations. I now wish to argue how evaluations can be more or less justified in light of the coherence theory I have adopted and the idea that sentiment is a truth-selective faculty.

As a truth-selective faculty, sentiment tells us something about both ourselves and another object; it tells us how it makes sense to regard it and how to be motivated with regard to it. If the sentiment is deeply positive, such that it would cause shock and great distress for me to see something harmed, then this is probably enough to incite the belief that it is morally worthy. The same probably applies if the idea of a thing's betterment or preservation calls forth my admiration or approval. Jane, for instance, would probably feel shocked to learn that George has cut down all the redwood trees. She would feel fulfilled knowing that the redwood trees are alive and flourishing. She therefore believes that redwood trees are good as ends in themselves.

Such beliefs, however, once they exist, have logical implications. They may require us to value things even if we do not have any particular sentiment towards them, or even if our sentiments towards them are negative. An analogy can be made with perception: I might see, for instance, that the campus center is next to the church. Once I am no longer near the campus center or the church, I still possess the belief that the former is next to the latter. Beliefs linger, even when the stimuli that brought them about are gone.

In the remainder of this section, I wish to show how justification in values[121] involves a

---

121 From this point on, I shall be using the term "values" interchangeably with both "evaluations" and "value as an

certain state of equilibrium (to echo Rawls). To believe justifiably in the goodness or worthiness of something, the following two conditions are necessary: (1) the belief must be coherent with other evaluations and (2) the belief cannot be repugnant to our sentiments. I would add a third condition, that the belief must be inferentially connected to sentimentally formed beliefs, but I do not believe this is necessary, as I think that this is the case with any evaluation. Let me illustrate two simple examples about how both conditions work.

Example 1 - Suppose one adheres to some version of strong contractualism, one which regards as ends-in-themselves only those people who can contribute to the common good of society, and which regards anything else as expendable or exploitable. We need not go into the details of why she believes this or how she arrived at this belief, but let's just assume that she holds it.

Let us now assume that someone raises the following question (a famous objection to contractualism): "What about disabled persons? They cannot contribute to society. Are they not ends in themselves, and consequently, might we not exploit them?" The following process of deliberation then occurs: if our contractualist is to remain consistent with her initial belief, she must say yes. But the thought that we can do whatever we wish with disabled persons is repugnant to her, so condition (2) is violated. Therefore, she probably does regard disabled people as in some way worth our moral attention, so she needs to reconsider whether her version of contractualism is coherent in light of this belief. She may yet find some way to justifiably conclude that contractualism is still right (it is a complex issue); on the other hand, she may have to reject it. The important point, however, is that sentiment can be used to reveal that there is a possible inconsistency in her beliefs that needs to be resolved.

Example 2 - Suppose one thinks that all humans are ends in themselves, but feels great contempt for disabled people and regards them as worthless. She is then asked to explain how this belief is compatible with the belief that *all* humans are ends in themselves. If she concedes that there is an

---

end."

inconsistency in her beliefs, then she is in violation of condition (1) and needs to either reject the view that all humans are ends-in-themselves and accept that some are not, or she needs to hold that people with disabilities are ends-in-themselves as well.

It seems that the first option is easier. But suppose, however, that she regards other things as good or valuable as well: she might, in addition, hold that things like equality, tolerance, and compassion are good—that the first represents a good ideal while the second and third represent virtues. She is now asked to justify her contempt for disabled people in light of these other beliefs, since they would seem to imply or require that all humans be regarded as worthwhile, and that her intolerance and callousness are bad and disvaluable. She now needs either to reject her beliefs in the goodness of equality, tolerance, and compassion, or concede that disabled persons are of value and, furthermore, that her attitude needs to be adjusted.

In this lengthy chapter, I have attempted to search for a way in which we can more or less confidently believe that our evaluations are true. Needless to say, epistemology is a difficult subject, and the conclusions I have arrived at might be somewhat bleak. Throughout his life, Rorty's project was, in large part, a refutation of two-thousand years of philosophical literature which he characterized as an ongoing attempt to prove or demonstrate some kind of metaphysical realism without success. His only conclusion was to throw the idea of a real world out the window. The outcome of this move gives us reason to be both despondent and hopeful. We are understandably despondent upon learning that the goal of finding some sort of real world is an aspiration we must reject. On the other hand, we can be hopeful that, now that such an obstacle is out of the picture, we can pursue philosophical concerns that are more relevant to day-to-day life and social progress. Indeed, this was Rorty's goal.

(5) The Metaphysics of Value

Thus far, I have been characterizing value in a largely non-metaphysical and perhaps even diminutive way. In chapter three, I almost tried to bypass the issue and argue that evaluations are just a part of—and nothing more than—how we decide what it is reasonable or desirable to do. I argued that a belief that something is good or worthwhile means something straightforward and unembellished: that the thing merits my moral attention. If the reader finds this dissatisfying, I should note that there is a distinction between the psychology of value and the metaphysics of value. I have been working largely with the psychological aspects. Perhaps addressing the metaphysical side of things can help us form a more substantial concept of what value is.

I have already addressed some metaphysical concerns in previous chapters. For instance, I argued that it is not possible to understand how intrinsic value and moral motivation can share any causal relation, and I also argued that Regan's intrinsic-value theory seems to rely on a stringent notion of the correspondence theory of truth. In voicing my criticisms of noncognitivism, I also critiqued Blackburn's "projectivist" view of value, noting among other issues that it, too—in no small part because of the noncognitivism it endorsed—relied on a correspondence theory as well. I have already rejected the latter, along with the kind of metaphysical realism it assumes. To compensate for this, I introduced the theory of representational realism, the idea that the world is better understood as a construction brought about by the way in which we apply our own concepts to the information we encounter in our day-to-day experience in order to form a meaningful picture of the world. The best way to address the metaphysics of value, I think, is to contextualize it within representational realism; it is a part of the way in which we conceptualize—and perceive—the various things we encounter.

The resultant picture, I believe, construes value as another condition of how we understand things. When we make an evaluation about something, the property we attribute to it is added to our repertoire of various descriptions of that thing. Once we have done this, the motivational nature of value exerts a certain influence on us, affecting the way in which we judge, respond to, and relate to

various parts of the world. The map analogy is once again instructive; when we value things, not only does it affect how we perceive those things, but how we navigate and respond to those things. The claim that we "perceive" value is a metaphysical one, to be sure, so I now turn to an explanation of the nature and content of the supposed perception. In what follows, I consider two perspectives on the metaphysics of value, and I then explain why I find them amenable to representational realism. I then address the kinds of properties which warrant our valuing attitudes and—at last—begin to break into the field of environmental ethics.

5.i. McDowell and the Secondary-quality Analogy

John McDowell has famously likened values to secondary qualities such as color. McDowell's view construes values, like colors, as entirely extrinsic properties, ones that are better placed within the domain of phenomenology than in an objective world of intrinsic features. McDowell notes that to posit values as "brutely and absolutely *there*" requires us to subscribe to some sort of ethical intuitionism, the notion that moral facts or properties can be known without any explicable relation between the agent and the facts or properties themselves.[122] The problem, on McDowell's view, is not merely that intuitionism seems to fail to explain the epistemic relation between agents and values, but that it also construes values as primary qualities, inherent in objects and independent of us. McDowell asks rhetorically why we simply cannot replace the primary-quality model with a secondary-quality one. [123]

The context in which McDowell raises this question involves an argument with John Mackie, the philosopher who coined the term "error theory" (the view that there are no objective values and that all moral statements are false). Mackie is dubious that the secondary-quality analogy refutes his aforementioned theory. As McDowell explains, Mackie likens secondary-quality perception to a "projective error," the error being that we tend to conceive of secondary qualities as though they were primary qualities.[124] For example, we tend to regard things we perceive as red as

---

122 McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities," 202.
123 Ibid., 202.
124 Ibid.

really red, even if we are not there to see them. On Mackie's view, if we were to take the same stance towards value, we would end up making the same mistake. Thus, likening values to secondary qualities is a doomed enterprise, according to Mackie.[125]

McDowell, however, believes that Mackie's take on secondary-quality experiences "is seriously mistaken."[126] McDowell's subsequent goal is to demonstrate how we can conceive of the persistence of secondary qualities without falling into the "projective error" described by Mackie. According to McDowell, a secondary quality (redness, for example) is possible in virtue of an object *being such as to look red*, even when the observer is not there and that this is enough to call it red: "What would one expect it to be like to experience something's being such as to look red, if not to experience the thing in question (in the right circumstances) as looking, precisely, red?"[127]

Mackie, on the other hand, claims that to ascribe redness to an object is to erroneously ascribe a completely objective property; for example, to ascribe redness to something is to say that it would be qualitatively red even if nobody were around to observe it.[128] This is no doubt an absurd claim, but Mackie nevertheless maintains that we make such a claim when we ascribe any property to something, even perceptual properties like color. McDowell calls Mackie's position "naive" and doubts that this projective error is necessary for us to conceive of secondary qualities.[129] According to McDowell, Mackie's error is that he defines "objective" as "there to be experienced," and "subjective" as "being a mere figment of the subjective state that purports to be an experience of it." [130] This results in the assumption that primary qualities are real while secondary qualities are illusions. McDowell, on the other hand, thinks we should understand secondary qualities as "qualities not adequately conceivable except in terms of certain subjective states, and thus subjective themselves in a sense that that characterization defines."[131] In contrast, a primary quality

---

125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid 203.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.

should be understood as "objective in the sense that what it is for something to have it can be adequately understood otherwise than in terms of dispositions to give rise to subjective states."[132] McDowell believes that by making this distinction, the confusion implicit in Mackie's view is resolved.

Having made that distinction, McDowell then likens values to secondary qualities as he has construed them; subjective experiences brought about by features or properties of an object and which are to be understood partly in terms of that object's propensity to bring about those experiences, properties which we can assume persist in our absence. "Values are not brutely there," explains McDowell, "any more than colors are: though, as with the colors, this does not stop us supposing that they are there independently of any particular apparent experience of them."[133] Thus, we can practically and effectively conceive of things as being valuable, or worth valuing, even when we are not around.

However, McDowell notes an important difference between values and mundane qualities like colors. It is usually enough to say that the relation between an object and an experience like color is a *causal* one. But in the case of value, notes McDowell, this analogy is just not strong enough. We need to conceive of the object not merely that it is such as to cause our valuing experience, "but rather such as to *merit* it."[134] Hence, it would follow from this that we must conceive of objects as not only valuable in our absence, but also as in some way worthy of our valuation due to certain features or properties. Is a theory of intrinsic value about to muscle its way back into the picture? This question I shall get to in the course of this chapter.

5.ii. Wiggins and Sensible Subjectivism

David Wiggins gives an account of value similar to that of McDowell's; it relies on the idea that things are valuable if they are such as to elicit the right kind of experiences from us. Wiggins, however, unlike McDowell, gives sentiment an important role in his account. Wiggins' account is

---

132 Ibid.
133 Ibid., 208.
134 Ibid., 207.

presented alongside an objection to noncognitivism, emotivism in particular. The emotivist, explains Wiggins, argues that claims such as "*x* is good" or "*x* is right" or "*x* is beautiful" mean that the speaker approves of *x* or that *x* brings about "a certain sentiment of approbation" within the speaker.[135] Wiggins wants to steer away from this view and towards a view that, firstly, specifies the conditions rather than the meaning of goodness, and, secondly, is cognitivist. Wiggins argues instead that a better account of "good," "right" or "beautiful" involves conditions rather than semantics, and prefers to say that "*x* is good/right/beautiful if and only if *x* is such as to make a certain sentiment of approbation *appropriate*."[136] (A *certain* sentiment of approbation is of course distinct from *any* sentiment of approbation. Finding something beautiful or finding it good presumably involve different kinds of sentimental responses.)

Like McDowell, Wiggins draws an analogy between values and colors.[137] However, and like McDowell, Wiggins takes the analogy beyond the merely phenomenal aspects of color and includes a description of the dispositional features of the object: "*x* is red if and only if *x* is such as to give, under certain conditions specifiable as normal, a certain visual impression . . . ."[138] Wiggins then considers why this should occur in the case of values. He rejects Hume's view that values are "merely phantasms of the feelings, or gildings or stainings with the colours borrowed from internal sentiment," for, argues Wiggins, were this the case, then we could never refer to the actual objects or properties themselves when discussing good or bad taste or moral judgment.[139] Rather, Wiggins argues that there is something about the nature of the object—some feature or set of features—designed to call forth our sentiment.[140] This, assumes Wiggins, is the proper condition upon which we may call something good (or right, beautiful, valuable, and so on).

---

135 David Wiggins, "A Sensible Subjectivism" in *Moral Discourse and Practice*, ed. Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 227.
136 Ibid., 228.
137 Ibid., 229.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid., 231.
140 Ibid.

5.iii. Appropriate Sentiments and Meriting Value

The views put forward by McDowell and Wiggins can both be described as "sensibility theories," and both are similar in the following respects: they construe value as a mind-dependent and subjective phenomenon, yet they argue that we can reasonably call things valuable even when they are not there to be experienced. Both philosophers support this argument with the claim that those objects possess properties which bring about our evaluative responses and that for a person to state that an object is good or valuable[141] is, for all intents and purposes, to ascribe those properties to it. Finally, Both McDowell and Wiggins agree that there are certain things that *merit*, rather than merely *bring about*, those responses. How is this idea useful for representational realism?

Likening our conception of the world to a map or guide goes hand-in-hand with our tendency to attribute physical continuity to objects and to assume that some circumstances or states of affairs endure in our absence. The way in which McDowell and Wiggins characterize secondary qualities allows us to employ this idea without succumbing to the inconceivable metaphysical view that the secondary qualities we perceive in things are there whether we apprehend them or not, and it also allows us to avoid the impractical, idealist view that objects cease to exist in our absence. Of course, one might at this point object that the idea of object-permanence assumes a correspondence theory of truth, but I do not think this necessarily follows. For the sense in which I am employing the term "exist" is not the same sense that the skeptic uses when she tells us that we need to prove the existence of an external world. When we say that things in the external world exist, it is better to assume that we are speaking either of what we perceive or what we can anticipate perceiving given certain conditions, with varying degrees of justification.

However, the claim that certain things "merit" our valuing responses, or that it is "appropriate" to value them, raises a puzzle. For "merit" and "appropriate" are themselves both evaluative terms. What are we to say now? Have we committed ourselves to a sort of regress—that to effectively claim that "*x* is good" is to say that "it is good to regard *x* as good" or that "one should

---

141 Or right or beautiful or worthy and so on.

regard *x* as good?"

Both McDowell and Wiggins treat the question as one which must resolve itself through discourse, one which is, in many ways, open. McDowell assumes, for lack of a more feasible alternative, that finding the standards by which to rationally judge something as worthy of our valuing attitudes is, in the end, "a search for a *theory* of beauty or goodness."[142] "I take it," he writes, "that my hunch poses a question for moral and aesthetic taste, which—like other questions of taste—should be capable of being argued about."[143] Similarly, Wiggins writes of the kind of sentiment aroused in us by certain things that

> it counts as nothing less than an act of judging a content; it is a judgment indispensably sustained by the perceptions and feelings and thoughts that are open to criticism that is based on norms that are open to criticism. It is not that by which we tell. It is part of the telling itself.[144]

Hence, according to both McDowell and Wiggins, the faculties by which we perceive values are by no means infallible, nor is our assumption that they are the right faculties. I agree. As I said in chapter three, my theory that sentiment is a truth-selective faculty is just that: a theory, one that is based on the most plausible role that I could provide for sentiment in a scheme of moral motivation. Since it is a theory, we have the following privileges: first, we may question the scheme itself. Second, we may question the extent to which sentiment should constrain our beliefs about what is valuable (as I argued in chapter four, our sentiments can be overruled by concerns related to coherence). Finally, even if the scheme is right, we may ask ourselves which kind of sentiments it makes sense to cultivate and where they are best directed. Such matters are not out of our hands, and nothing is immune to second thoughts.

5.iv. What Are the Appropriate Properties?

What kinds of properties merit our admiration or approval? One view is that to consider something valuable as an end in itself involves valuing it for its intrinsic properties—if an agent finds that something is worthy of admiring, preserving, or promoting, it is because of the thing's

---

142 McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities," 209.
143 Ibid., 209.
144 Wiggins, "Sensible Subjectivism," 238.

intrinsic properties that the agent regards it this way. Perhaps this is what is meant when one suggests that to value something intrinsically is to value it "in itself" or "for its own sake"; it means valuing it for what it is, not for its contingent relations with other things. Shelly Kagan has argued strongly against this view through the use of several counterexamples. Kagan cites instances in which one may value something as an end for reasons other than its intrinsic properties. Uniqueness is one such example; people tend to value things that are rare or precious. "Obviously enough, however, uniqueness is not a property that an object has independently of whatever else may exist in the world; it is a relational property, rather than being an intrinsic one."[145] We might also value things for their causal properties: Kagan has us imagine "an elegantly designed racecar, one capable of driving at extraordinary speeds while still handling with ease."[146] Someone might very well value such a car as an end; "they might think the world is better off . . . for the existence of such a car; they might think they have reason to bring such a car into existence, or to preserve or care for it."[147] Nevertheless, Kagan reminds us, the person values the car at least in part for a causal property—its speed—which is an extrinsic property.[148] Even instrumental value might factor into our valuing something as an end: to use two other examples from Kagan, we may value someone very talented in the culinary arts, or we may value the pen used by Abraham Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation.[149] If Kagan's counterexamples are sound (and I think they are), then certainly one can value something as an end in virtue of its extrinsic properties.

Christine Korsgaard has also argued that we may value things as ends for their extrinsic— and, in particular, instrumental—properties. Korsgaard has us imagine a mink coat: "One hardly wants to say that it is valuable only as a means, to keep the cold out." Yet, adds Korsgaard, "it is also odd to say that it is valued simply for its own sake. A coat is essentially instrumental: were it not for the ways in which human beings respond to cold, we would not care about them or ever

---

145 Kagan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," 283.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid., 283-284
149 Ibid., 284-286

think about them."[150] Korsgaard's point is that a thing's instrumental value may factor into our valuing it as an end: "Mink coats and handsome china and gorgeously enameled frying pans are all things that human beings might choose partly for their own sakes under the condition of their instrumentality: that is, given the role such things play in our lives."[151]

It is easy to imagine other examples of things that we might value as ends due to their extrinsic properties. Beautiful artworks are one example; we may regard them as worth preserving as ends in themselves, even if in part because of the aesthetic beauty they have for us (an extrinsic property, on my view). So are family members; one may value her spouse for his emotional support, attractiveness, and contributions to the household income, yet still value him as an end, even though the attributes just described are extrinsic properties. A dog may be valued as an end in part for the shared enjoyment and bonding it promotes among family members. The list goes on; it is plain that to value something as an end is by no means to value it only for its intrinsic properties.

It would be largely futile to come up with a list of every single property that somehow merits or yields our valuation. One reason for this is because the list is not fixed; the discursive method by which we determine what is of value means that the items on the list are dynamic and tentative. Furthermore, the sort of subjectivist view I espouse means that the contents of the list differ across cultures and among individuals to varying degrees. Another reason why the endeavor is futile is because it would be highly impractical to describe some of these properties without using evaluative language. Take, for example, the Grand Canyon. I may value it as an end in part because it is beautiful. Yet "beautiful" is itself an evaluative term, and to try and seek some reductive description of the attributes that contribute to its beauty would be a bizarre endeavor. Does it include the canyon's width? Its length? Its colors? The sounds one hears as she stands out over the canyon? The same thing goes for people who really appreciate horses. Are we to list the possession of hooves as a feature which merits valuation, or the approximate number of hairs on a horse's body,

---

150 Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions," 185.
151 Ibid.

or the top speed at which a horse gallops? Is it some combination of these? The endeavor, as we can quickly see, becomes both an uninteresting and unpromising one.

Fortunately, I think it is an unnecessary endeavor. There are ways to discover and determine what attributes might merit valuing responses without merely listing them; indeed, this is a rather unconstructive way to actually reveal the import and potential such features have for our own attitudes. The best method is to show someone, not to tell her, what those features are. Consider the following two passages. Both list certain properties of things that might merit our own approbation, yet they do so holistically, not reductively, and in highly evocative language. The first passage is by Dale Jamieson:

> Many people think of deserts as horrible places that are not worth protecting. I disagree. I value deserts intrinsically[152] and think you should too. How do I proceed? One thing I might do is take you camping with me. We might see the desert's nocturnal inhabitants, the plants that have adapted to these conditions, the shifting colors of the landscape as the day wears on, and the rising of the moon on the stark features of the desert. Together we might experience the feel of the desert wind, hear the silence of the desert, and sense its solitude.[153]

In this passage, Jamieson demonstrates how calling someone's attention to certain features of a desert might produce a sentiment of approbation and bring about the belief that it is valuable. The features described by Jamieson are not communicated in reductionistic terms, but through an integrated combination of experiences that might lead to novel insights about how it makes sense to care about a desert. The passage also shows how these features may be illuminated or called to one's attention through a process of communication, shared perceptions, and guidance; by being in the company of someone who is aware of certain features that I may have taken for granted—or that I might have acknowledged but failed to consider in a certain way—those features may be called to my attention, and my concept of what a desert is may be subsequently modified. Likewise, the passage shows how different kinds of value—aesthetic value and value as an end—may overlap.

Consider another passage from an anonymous personal narrative related by Karen Warren:

---

152 Here, Jamieson is using the term "value intrinsically" to mean the same thing as "value as an end."
153 Jamieson, *Morality's Progress*, 237.

> On my second day of climbing, I rappelled down from about 200 feet from the top of the Palisades at Lake Superior to just a few feet above the water level. I could see no one—not my belayer, not the other climbers, no one. I looked all around me—really looked—and listened. I heard a cacophony of voices—birds, trickles of water on the rock before me, waves lapping against the rocks below. I closed my eyes and began to feel the rock with my hands—the cracks and crannies, the raised lichen and mosses, the almost imperceptible nubs that might provide a resting place for my fingers and toes when I began to climb. At that moment I was bathed in serenity. I began to talk to the rock in an almost inaudible, child-like way, as if the rock were my friend. I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for what it offered me—a chance to know myself and the rock differently, to appreciate the unforeseen miracles like the tiny flowers growing in the even tinier cracks on the rock's surface, and to come to know the sense of *being in a relationship* with the environment. . . . I realized then that I had come to care about this cliff which was so different from me, so unmovable and invincible, independent and seemingly indifferent to my presence. [154]

By being made aware of certain features of the rock that she had previously overlooked, the protagonist in Warren's narrative finds herself feeling a strong sentiment towards the rock that manifests itself as a profound feeling of care, affection, and humility. These features include a combination of sensible properties: sounds and textures. They also include an instrumental property: "the almost imperceptible nubs that might provide a resting place for my fingers and toes when I began to climb." The narrator begins to appreciate the rock in a new way and subsequently experiences a paradigm shift; she regards the rock as good for its own sake, not merely for its recreational value.

Thus, the metaphysical question of which properties of things merit our admiration, approbation, and evaluation is best answered through experience, not by meticulously listing necessary and sufficient conditions. The properties are those that belong to things with which we are uniquely situated, things which might be able to evoke our appreciation and admiration in particular and unique ways. As we engage in this process, we gradually come to develop a more complete picture of what things are good for their own sake. As these pictures develop, they are exchanged among individuals through a process of discourse, and gradually become embodied in a dynamic and contestable set of conventions and frameworks. The answer therefore recommends a

---

154 Warren, "The Power and the Promise," 218.

constructivist view of ethics.

Let us return to the question posed at the end of 5.i: if we are to say that being good or valuable entails that a thing is such as to bring about or merit a certain sentiment, then are we endorsing an intrinsic-value view? It does not appear so, for several reasons. First, this statement does not commit us to the view that the thing's value is intrinsic. The valuing stances we take towards things do indeed depend on properties those things possess, but value is not one of them; value itself is still mind-dependent and therefore extrinsic. Furthermore, "being such as to bring about or merit a certain sentiment" is also an extrinsic property; it depends on a sort of potential or counterfactual relation between us and the object. Finally, as we have noted, many of the properties that might bring about our approbation are extrinsic properties: instrumental value, aesthetic value, causal relationships, uniqueness, and so on. With all this in mind, it is not the case that our valuation depends merely on a thing's intrinsic properties.

One final point worth noting is that if we are to value something as an end in part due to its instrumental value, then the means-end distinction has effectively been called into question. I do not perceive this as a major problem. The distinction *should* be questioned. It represents a sort of dualistic mode of thinking which I think is better done away with, as it inaccurately reflects the way in which we are situated with regard to the world around us. We may value something as an end in part due to its value as a means, yet still not value ii as a *mere* means; this is a point I think we can reasonably agree on.

Conclusion: A Lush World of Values

Throughout the preceding chapters, I have attempted to address several questions pertaining and peripheral to metaethics. My goal has been to find answers that compensated for the issues I took with Regan's intrinsic-value view. I began by noting that there was no way of explaining how the concept of intrinsic value could work as a source of moral motivation, so in chapter three, I attempted to devise a scheme of moral psychology, one that included both valuation and moral motivation and that could provide a place for sentiment without committing us to some sort of anti-rational view of ethics. In chapter four, I showed how people can have different values while still being perfectly rational in holding conflicting directives, and I argued for the appeal of coherentism as a test for the truth and justification of those value-claims. I discussed the problems posed for epistemology by the demands of a correspondence theory of truth, and in response I sketched a metaphysical theory, representational realism, which I believe provides a pragmatic way of working around these problems. I then gave some brief examples of how a person's values and general moral framework can be modified by balancing sentimentally-formed evaluations with coherence in one's beliefs. In chapter five, I discussed the metaphysics of value, arguing that values should be understood as extrinsic properties, yet that they can also be spoken of as properties that persist in our absence in that they are both caused and merited by other features of an object. Finally, I argued, using examples, that whatever features qualify a thing for our valuation are best revealed through personal experience and interpersonal discourse.

Naturally, many of the views I have endorsed have ramifications outside of environmental ethics and moral philosophy in general; for instance, the coherentism I defended pertains no less to empirical knowledge than it does to moral knowledge, and the rational-internalist view that I endorsed at the beginning of chapter four, if true, has implications for action theory. I have addressed these topics only in the interest of answering the question I posed at the outset of this project: can we defend a nonanthropocentric environmental ethic without defending a theory of intrinsic value? We are now equipped with all the tools I think necessary to produce a reply to that

question.

What I have tried to defend is a completely holistic take on how values are to be conceptualized, justified, and developed, rather than the kind of linear foundationalist model assumed necessary in Regan's intrinsic-value view. Values are not fixed and localized in some particular entity or class of entities; rather, they are artifacts, generated and exchanged both personally and interpersonally. They play a role in how we form concepts of things, and those concepts influence how we perceive and represent those things: if I believe that redwoods are good, then when I apprehend a particular redwood, I perceive it as good. There is something in my concept of a redwood that might not be present in yours, so that to me, a redwood seems different than it does to you. If I can get you to assimilate my concept of a redwood, then it will seem different to you as well.

There is no easy answer to how I go about convincing you that my view on redwoods is right. For one thing, I need to demonstrate to you that my faculties of value-discernment—my "sensibilities," as it were—are reliable and functional. I need to reveal to you in some way what it is about redwoods that I perceive by means of those sensibilities. I need you to realize that my concept of a redwood tree as good as an end is more coherent than a concept which omits this quality. You and I need to compare our large sets of beliefs and assumptions, seeing what many differences exist that lead to our discrepant beliefs. These steps are not necessarily pursued in that order; indeed, some are required for the others. For instance, showing you that my sensibilities are reliable requires me to show you that my evaluative beliefs are coherent, and getting you to agree that I form generally coherent evaluations requires me to demonstrate that my sensibilities are reliable. In the process, I do the same: I learn about your sensibilities, your own values, and the warrant with which you hold them. In the process, both our common ground and our disagreements are exposed. Discourse about values is not an easy process, nor should it be, and it is unrealistic to demand otherwise. A person's values cannot be changed by a few deft strokes of a philosopher's pen; the process requires time, experience, and, more often than not, luck.

A question now probably on the reader's mind is what kind of environmental ethic the view I have developed attaches itself to. Does it grant moral standing merely to sentient animals, those capable of pain, perhaps, or those that can be called "subjects of a life"? Is it a kind of biocentric view, one that attributes moral standing to all living things, animal, plant, and unicellular? If so, is it individualist—does it consider only individual organisms valuable—or is it holistic, ascribing that kind of value to collectives such as ecosystems and species? It is hierarchical or egalitarian? Does it place the interests of wild animals above those of domestic animals? Does it allow or even demand us to harm certain organisms to preserve ecosystemic integrity? Does it include nonliving or not entirely living objects, systems, or features under its purview—rocks, rivers, mountains, oceans, or the planet itself? Does it include celestial bodies like the moon? To what extent and with what priority does it account for human interests? Is it deontological, consequentialist, rights-based, communitarian, a virtue ethic, theological, secular, or some combination of the above?

The answer is that my take on value implies none of these ethical views—or any particular ethical theory, for that matter, and, incidentally, that I myself am not certain where I stand with regard to these questions, save for a few scattered opinions, some of which I hold more trenchantly than others. The metaethical view that I have outlined in this project does not prescribe values; it describes them. Prescription is left up to people, who are free to make use of or neglect the full potential of their evaluative faculties and who will always disagree in some way or another. However, I will make the following remarks:

We value a diverse number of things, and in the end, I think our values point us in the direction of some sort of nonanthropocentrism. We value things that are beautiful and things that are complex and diverse. We value things that can inspire in us feelings of delight, awe, terror, excitement, wonder, immersion, tranquility, and peace. Many of us value things that grow and flourish, or else we would not have gardens in our back yards and potted plants in our houses, and many of us find ourselves intrigued by and deeply enjoy animals; some of us possess an uncanny ability to bond with them. Many of us value the new knowledge, experiences, and discoveries that

nature can provide us, or we would not study topics like biology, ecology, and natural history—nor would we adventure in wooded areas next to our towns and off of our campuses, sometimes by ourselves, in the hope of suddenly running into a deer or catching sight of a garter snake or a frog; nor would we climb trees for the novel sensation of looking down at things from above. We value things that are good instrumentally—that provide for us, and that play a helpful and nourishing role in our lives—though not necessarily *merely* instrumentality. We value character traits like sensitivity, compassion, and erudition, and we disvalue destructiveness, callousness, indifference, and ignorance; we value ideas such as happiness and freedom, both in the abstract and as genuine experiences that make our lives richer, and we enjoy watching others experience these things as well. We value justice, tolerance, equality, nonviolence, friendship, and gratitude. We value nature not merely for intrinsic properties or features—if at all—but for its extrinsic properties as well, including the admiration and appreciation it evokes for us. All these things considered, we are quite capable of and indeed have good reason to value the nonhuman world, in some way or another, as an end in itself. And if we reflect on this, a purely anthropocentric ethic suddenly seems like not enough.

Perhaps sometimes—even oftentimes—we express our valuation the wrong ways—wrong, in that they are not the most prudent or most rational ways to act in accord with our values or that they are inconsistent with other values we hold. Our enjoyment of animals might lead us to keep them in cages in our houses or confined in zoos, despite our appreciation of freedom, and our admiration for the wilderness might lead us to disrupt or erode natural habitats with gift shops and paved roads, despite our appreciation of integrity. But if it is the case that, in the end, we do value nature for its own sake in some way or another, then an ethic that construes the nonhuman world as more than just a mere means is likely to emerge *and* to be rationally prescribed by our own evaluative beliefs, and if we are rational, and take into account the needs, the integrity, and the teleology of the things we value, principles will emerge that fit those values.

It is considered tasteful to conclude things with a quotation, so I shall:

No two trees are the same to Raven.
No two branches are the same to Wren.
If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows
Where you are. You must let it find you.[155]

---

155 David Wagoner, "Lost," in *Riverbed* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1972), 75.

Addendum: Act As If?

In his *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant presents the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative in the following words (or, I should say, their German equivalent): "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature."[156] Those first three words, "act as if," are of crucial importance to Kant's idea. It is not that Kant expects us to know for sure whether our maxim is, in fact, a law of nature, viz., a law whose legitimacy is in some way supported by demonstrably true facts or states of affairs of reality. The implication, rather, seems to be that we *cannot* abide by the Categorical Imperative *unless* we regard it as an objectively true law of nature. Can the same be said for intrinsic value? Even if the theory, ultimately, is not verifiable or even coherent, should we nevertheless act as if it were true in order to regard nonhuman beings—or any beings, for that matter—as morally significant? Could it even be that we *cannot possibly* regard something as though it has moral standing *unless* we believe that it possesses intrinsic value?

Paul Taylor has made certain remarks that might mean something to this effect. In "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," he argues that in order for us to regard living things as entitled to our moral respect, we must abide by what he call the *attitude of inherent worth*.[157] "Indeed," writes Taylor, "it is only because they [living things] are conceived in this way that moral agents can think of themselves as having validly binding duties, obligations, and responsibilities that are owed to them as their *due*."[158] Whether we can prove that such inherent worth exists is a question that does not interest Taylor. Similarly, Tom Regan's philosophy of animal rights relies on a theory of intrinsic worth which, throughout the corpus of his philosophical work, he calls "the postulate of inherent value" and which he assumes necessary if humans and nonhuman animals, namely, those who meet the "subject-of-a-life" criterion, possess moral rights. "To view certain individuals . . . as having

---

156 Kant, *Grounding,* 30. As mentioned and cited on page 8, footnote 21 of this paper, the Formula of Humanity As an End is often called the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative, when it is in fact the third.

157 Taylor, "Ethics of Respect," 127.

158 Ibid.

equal inherent value is a *postulate—that is, a theoretical assumption.*"[159] Regan does not endorse the claim that inherent value *follows* from being the subject-of-a-life, nor does he attempt to prove where it does follow from. Rather, Regan is looking for a view that is coherent: if moral agents are to be treated as though they had moral standing, so should moral patients, and the postulate of inherent plausibly describes why.[160]

Both Regan and Taylor believe that a theoretical assumption of inherent value is needed if we are to regard any kind of being or entity as worth our moral consideration; to deny such an assumption just seems impractical if we are to regard anything as morally considerable. In this respect, both views seem to remotely resemble the idea in the second formulation of Kant's Categorical Imperative in that we must "act as if" certain claims are true if we are to be moral at all, even if those claims cannot be proven. What about my view? In 5.iii, I argued that although values are better likened to secondary rather than primary qualities, still we may speak of them in the same way that we speak of primary qualities in that the things which merit our approval do so because they are *such as to do so,* i.e., they possess qualities which bring about our approval, and therefore can be pragmatically described as valuable without any reference to secondary qualities. In saying this, have I, too, unwittingly recommended that we act as if a thing's value is intrinsic? Here is what I think:

First, I wish to return to the distinction made in chapter one between the two different senses of the phrase "intrinsic value." Some philosophers, when they use the phrase, are using it in a normative sense; they are referring to value that is noninstrumental, that is to say, value as an end rather than value as a means. Other philosophers use the phrase in a metaphysical sense to refer to value that is an intrinsic property of something, independent of any relations that the owner of the property might have to other things, so that if the object were the only thing in the universe, it would still possess intrinsic value. Some philosophers, of course, believe that intrinsic value is both

---

159 Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights,* 247.
160 Ibid., 248.

of these things. Others do not, or at least do not specify whether they endorse both senses of the term. The question this section of the paper addresses therefore turns out to be *two* questions. One is whether we must act as if something is good as an end if we are to respect it morally. The other question is whether we must act as if that thing possesses a metaphysical property of a certain kind.

Regan's idea of inherent value very explicitly includes the first sense of the term: value that is independent of a being's utility.[161] Nowhere in the *Case for Animal Rights* does he discuss whether such value is an intrinsic or extrinsic property, though his remarks throughout "The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic" might imply that he would maintain as a necessary condition that the property be intrinsic. Paul Taylor is also silent on whether such a property is intrinsic or extrinsic, but rather, argues that anything with inherent value is "prima facie worthy of being preserved or promoted." Both philosophers therefore appear to abide by the normative definition; they argue that in order to regard certain beings as morally considerable, we need to regard them as possessing inherent worth, even if such worth is only a postulate or attitude whose truth we assume theoretically rather than prove.

Can we regard something as morally significant without using terms like "intrinsic" or "inherent" to describe its value, seeing as how such value is not necessarily an intrinsic or inherent property (I take the terms to mean the same thing)? Should we rather exchange it for a term like "value as an end" or "terminal value"? Shelly Kagan says no. Even though he argues that value as an end need not be an intrinsic property, he is hesitant to ditch the phrase in favor of another term and use "intrinsic value" only to describe value in the metaphysical sense. "I am not at all sure there is anything of interest that would be worth saving the label for. Meanwhile, a perfectly important category—value as an end—would go lacking a familiar and evocative label."[162] Do I agree with Kagan? I am reluctant to. If we retain the term "intrinsic" to describe something that is not an intrinsic property, then we run the risk of committing fallacies of equivocation. Philosophers may

---

161 Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, xxi-xxii.
162 Kagan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," 293.

forget which sense of the term they are using, and critics of intrinsic value might erroneously address views that employ the normative sense as though they employed the metaphysical sense. So I am somewhat hesitant to agree with Kagan's claim. On the other hand, if we can manage successfully to employ the term to mean value as an end without succumbing to fallacies of equivocation, then I suppose we can use it. If we are to use the term merely to mean that something possesses value as an end, it goes without saying that I think we should and that we would need to.

What about the metaphysical sense of the term? Do I believe we can only regard things as morally significant if we believe that their value is an intrinsic rather than extrinsic property? In agreement with McDowell and Wiggins, I believe we can say that they "have" or "possess" value and that we can conceive of them as having or possessing it in our absence and in virtue of the fact that they are such to merit our approbation and, subsequently, our valuation. But I should like to point out two things: first, there is nothing contradictory in saying that a thing "has" or "possesses" an extrinsic property, and second, a thing's being such as to merit our valuation does not depend on intrinsic properties alone, as I argued in 5.iv. I think that we can acknowledge these facts and still very easily value things. I certainly do.

Furthermore, the everyday sense in which we call things valuable, worthwhile, or good does not, in my opinion, seem to involve claims about the metaphysics of those properties; nothing in the claim commits us to the view that its goodness is intrinsic. Generally, when we call something good, we are using the term primitively to express nothing other than the view that the thing is worth caring about. So I think it is entirely possible to regard things as good in themselves without regarding that goodness as intrinsic—and that we generally do this. The latter is, of course, an empirical claim, one whose truth is difficult and perhaps impossible to prove or research, but I think it to be plausible.

In any case, I do not think we need to "act as if" a thing's goodness is an intrinsic property in order to think it good. Of course, pragmatically speaking, when we say that a thing is good, we do believe it to be true, and we believe claims to the contrary to be false. I have argued that coherence

is the right test to apply to such claims, if not a difficult one, and that a correspondence theory of truth cannot help us with regard to this kind of matter. Still, in order to navigate and conceive of the world around us, we do have to conceive of it as objective or real independently of our thoughts and sensations, and if we are to think of a thing's value as real in this way, then we do need to act as if that were the case. If this means embracing the idea that such value is intrinsic, then perhaps a postulate or theory of intrinsic value is necessary. If so, then we have come full circle.

Bibliography

Aristotle. *Nichomachean Ethics.* Translated by Martin Ostwald. Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999.

Ayer, Alfred Jules. *Language, Truth, and Logic.* New York: Dover, 1952.

Blackburn, Simon. *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language.* Oxford: UP, 1984.

Blum, Lawrence. "Moral Perception and Particularity." *Ethics* 101, no. 4 (1991): 701-725.

Bonjour, Lawrence. "The Coherence Theory of Empirical Knowledge." In *Contemporary Readings in Epistemology*, edited by Michael F. Goodman and Robert Alan Snyder, 70-89. Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993.

Callicott, J. Baird. *In Defense of the Lanf Ethic: Esssays in Environmental Philosophy.* Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.

Davidson, Donald. "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge." In *Epistemology: An Anthology*, edited by Ernest Sosa, Jaegwon Kim, Jeremy Fantl, and Matthew McGrath, 124-133. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008.

---. "Appendix: Afterthoughts." In *The Essential Davidson,* edited by Ernie Lepore and Kirk Ludwig, 237-241. Oxford: UP, 2006.

Foot, Philippa. "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives." *The Philosophical Review* 81, no. 3 (1972): 305-316.

Hare, R. M.. *The Language of Morals.* London: Oxford UP, 1952.

Hempel, Carl. "On the Logical Positivists' Theory of Truth." *Analysis* 2, no. 4 (1935): 49-59.

Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.* Edited by J. B. Schneewind. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983.

---. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, vol. 2. Edited by T. H. Greene and T. H. Grose. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898.

Jamieson, Dale. *Morality's Progress.* Oxford: UP, 2002.

Kagan, Shelly. "Rethinking Intrinsic Value." *The Journal of Ethics* 2, no. 4 (1998): 277-297.

Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals.* 2nd ed. Translated by James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993.

Korsgaard, Christine. "Two Distinctions in Goodness." *The Philosophical Review* 92, no. 2 (1983): 169-195.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

Lewis, David. "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Properties." *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 44, no. 2 (1983): 197-200.

Light, Andrew. "Contemporary Environmental Ethics: From Metathics to Public Policy." *Metaphilosophy* 33, no. 4 (2002): 426-449.

Locke, John. *The Second Treatise of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration.* Edited by Tom Crawford. Mineola, NY: Dover, 2002.

McDowell, John. "Values and Secondary Qualities." In *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches,* edited by Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton, 201-213. Oxford: UP, 1997.

Moore, G. E.. *Philosophical Studies.* London: Oxford UP, 1965.

Nagel, Thomas. "From the Possibility of Altruism." In *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches*, edited by Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton, 323-340. Oxford: UP, 1997.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* Translated by Thomas Common. New York: Random House, 19--.

Norton, Bryan. "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism." *Environmental Ethics* 6 (1984): 131-148.

Powell, Kevin. "Skepticism and Human Psychology." *Prometheus: The Johns Hopkins University Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy* 2 (2010): 3-11.

Quine, W. V. *Theories and Things.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999.

Regan, Tom. *The Case for Animal Rights.* 2004 ed. Berkely: UC Press, 2004.

---. "The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic." *Environmental Ethics* 3 (1981): 19-34.

Rolston III, Holmes. "Are Values in Nature Objective or Subjective?" *Environmental Ethics* 4 (1982): 125-151.

Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.* Princeton: UP, 1979.

Sayre-McCord, Geoffrey. "Coherentist Epistemology in Moral Theory." In *Moral Knowledge?*, edited by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Mark Timmons, 2-57. Oxford: UP, 1996.

Stevenson, Charles L.. *Ethics and Language.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1944.

Sylvan, Richard. "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?" In *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology.,* edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, III, 47-52. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003.

Tarski, Alfred. "The Semantic Conception of Truth." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*

4 (1944), http://www.ditext.com/tarski/tarski.html.

Taylor, Paul. "The Ethics of Respect for Nature." In *People, Penguins, and Plastic Trees.* 2nd ed., edited by Christine Pierce and Donald VanDeveer, 125-139. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995.

Wagoner, David. "Lost." In *Riverbed,* 75. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1972.

Warren, Karen J. "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism." In *People, Penguins, and Plastic Trees.* 2nd ed., edited by Christine Pierce and Donald VanDeveer, 213-227. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995.

Weston, Anthony. "Beyond Intrinsic Value." In *Environmental Pragmatism,* edited by Andrew Light and Eric Katz, 285-306. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Wiggins, David. "A Sensible Subjectivism?" In *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches,* edited by Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton, 227-244. Oxford: UP, 1997.

---. "Truth, Invention, and the Meaning of Life." In *Essays on Moral Realism*, edited by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, 133. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1988.

Williams, Bernard. *Moral Luck.* Cambridge: UP, 1981.