Animal Liberation, Land Ethics and Deep Ecology

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Animal Liberationism

The Western anthropocentrism that divides humans from nature (and accordingly inherent values from instrumental ones) was unknown to East Asian traditions. In this essay we shall take up three important movements on environmental ethics that emerged in the advanced countries of the Western world and played a major role in eliminating this anthropocentrism: that is, animal liberation, land ethics, and deep ecology. We shall discuss them in order to allow their points to be critically understood. Our aim in this critical inheritance is to create an integrated ethics from these different sorts of environmental ethics; an integrated ethics that would hopefully bridge some of the gaps between the two traditional ethics of East and West.

Let us examine the new environmental ethics that have emerged in the Western advanced countries. The purpose is to find, in critically inheriting them, a way of reconciling some of the contradictions raised earlier. Let us start by examining two opposing views among them: animal liberationism and land ethic.

Animals, in Singer’s view of animal liberationism, can suffer and therefore have interests, like ourselves. If they have interests, their interests must be considered morally (that is, animals have their own inherent moral values). His basic ethical thesis is to consider impartially the interests of sentient beings impartially, as distinct from non-sentient beings that have only instrumental value (this view is therefore called sentientism). This dichotomy of inherent/instrumental value coincides well with the dichotomy of traditional Buddhism (where the sentient world and the non-sentient world are divided, and where only sentient beings are believed to reincarnate into another sentient being).

We know that in laboratory experiments animals are used as tools for experiments, which often caused unnecessary suffering for them. Yet, if they are similar to us in that they can suffer and if we think that suffering is morally relevant, then we must reconsider such experiments. To
take up another example: the factory farm, which causes much suffering to animals, not to mention environmental degradation, is deeply problematic. And excessive meat eating will, apart from the suffering of animals, cause a shortage of grain. This is because using grain for raising animals, which eat much grain, consumes probably five or more times grain than would eating it directly. In other words, if the meats we eat were reduced and foods were distributed impartially, world hunger and desertification would be proportionally reduced.

Taking all these questions into consideration, one can derive general principles such as, 'All animals are equal', 'Animals are not to be treated as tools for experiments', 'Animal factories are to be prohibited', and 'we should not eat animal meat!' Simple principles such as these are very useful for moral education and could be effective in appealing to the public and changing their attitudes; that is, they are, as general principles that govern the intuitive moral thinking, useful for both practical and educational purposes. Such general principles seldom contain in themselves any exceptions, otherwise they would not be very useful for forming the consciences of our children. We must, therefore, treat as equals, without exception, all animals, applying the principles to all animals.

Singer takes up, as an example, the problem of whether a dam should be constructed or not in a forest ravine. “A river tumbles through forested ravines and rocky gorges towards the sea. The state hydro-electricity commission sees the falling water as untapped energy. Building a dam across one of the gorges would provide three years of employment for a thousand people, and longer-term employment for twenty or thirty.” Now seeing the remnants of wilderness being too scanty in this planet, preservation of the wilderness has become an urgent task for us. Singer’s argument for preservation depends on his basic utilitarian view; that is, to compare and weigh the interests of participants in deciding on one of two courses of action.

In case of constructing a dam, some people will be profited by being employed and the state by helping the energy-intensive industry. The alternative course, of letting the river run intact, will keep the air clean, the surroundings green, and will enable people to enjoy hiking. It might also save some rare species. On the other hand, it would affect the state budget by not producing the necessary energy for industry, which might contribute to an increase in tax. When people affected by the project begin to consider the interests of future generations, they themselves might prefer to retain the environment as it is, forfeiting a rich and luxurious life. At such a time, the balance will tilt towards not constructing the dam. (If they prefer rich lives with deteriorated environment and at the sacrifice of future generations, they may decide to make the dam; but this
is a wrong decision, because they are not impartial in comparing the interests of all participants.)
To take it one step further, if one were to consider the interests of participating animals, the deci-
sion to preserve nature will become even easier. (Cf. Singer, *PE*, Chap.10.)

Animal liberationism, which support the environmental ethics of Singer, has for the first time
in the modern history of Western thought, broken down anthropocentrism. That paved the way
for south-eastern traditional thoughts to enter into the arena of emerging global ethics. Animal
liberationism, secondly, has made environmental problems practical; it is not so difficult for
everybody to reduce the quantity of meat eating so that everybody will reduce animal sufferings,
and eventually save forests and world hunger. If Singer’s proposals were generally practiced it
would certainly contribute to restoring the global environment. The third merit of Singer’s animal
liberationism as sentientist view is that he has made the suffering of millions of starving people an
urgent practical problem of ethics. He has bridged the gap between sovereign nation-state, as he
bridged the gap between species, and made environmental issues one of the central concerns of
global community. (Cf. Singer, *PE & OW*.)

The above-mentioned general principles, however, often clash with each other because they
are general; moreover, in particular situations, we have to admit exceptions to these principles.
For example, there are cases where experiments on animals would help to save many people
from lethal diseases. Or there might be some cases where eating animals would save, at least tem-
porarily, the lives of many people (for example, those people living near the Pole cannot but eat
seals.) In such exceptional cases, where general principles are not applicable, we must do some
critical thinking, putting aside our intuitions as crystallised in such general principles. This means
that some general principles derived from animal liberationism may be overridden at times by
other considerations: it means that they could not be self-supporting moral principles.

If we find that general principles sometimes mutually clash, there must be some way of
resolving such a conflict by thinking critically. Where the interests of the participants are equal,
they must, according to Singer, be given equal weight. (Singer, *PE*, Ch.2.) In other words, where
human and non-human animals have interests that are similar in some way, as in the case of
avoiding physical pain, we must regard violations of the interests of animals as on a par with viola-
tions of human interests. We can imagine how much animals are suffering, just as we can imagine
how much our fellow human beings are suffering. If we can imagine the extent of the animals’ suf-
ferring, then we can compare relative interests. Rough and vague as the comparison may be, it will
usually be sufficient to find which way the balance lies. By adopting such a thought process, we
are comparing and weighing different interests in order to choose between them.

Next, let us examine Singer's views more specifically. Suppose there are two possible courses of action for inhabitants of small islands. One course is to continue eating fish, the inhabitants being careful not to diminish the population of fish, and another course is to become vegetarians and cut down the forest and plant vegetables. When the forest is kept, the leaves from trees will decompose and increase insects that will attract birds. The nourishment will be washed into the sea, and will feed plankton, which again feed fish, and fish feed birds as well as other animals, such as bears that are fed by salmons. The droppings of birds and other animals will in turn make the land fertile. Thus the forest nourishes fish and fish nourish the forest. (Murota, 1998.) We must, in this situation, consider the interests of all participants in order to choose the right course of action; if we balance the interests of fish-eating people and of animals, against the interests of vegetarian people and of animals, then the well-being of the ecosystem will tilt the balance towards fish-eating.

In this scheme we are choosing between the general principle of eating fish and the general principle of not eating fish, and we are making this choice on the level of critical moral thinking. We are choosing and deciding using general principles for practical purposes. What we must consider in this case are the long-term interests of the people and of the animals, and the long-term welfare of the eco-system on which the lives of the humans and animals depend. Consideration of the eco-system might well be the decisive factor.

In case of whales, the Japanese have been much reproached for eating whales. In the Edo-era, whales were thought to be fish; not mammals. However, eating whales has been banned and for these fifty years Japanese people have not eaten whales (with the exception of a few special restaurants). Suppose that in a small island in ocean, the population of fish in the coast was extraordinarily increased as people enriched the sea with nourishment; then the enriched sea attracted whales. Suppose further that people are all vegetarians and don’t like to eat fish. Suppose finally that the bad harvest has come and that people are dying from starvation. Now, the ethical choice such people confront would be whether to eat whales or not.

In this case, people might confront such a difficult choice as follows: ‘which suffering is weightier, starvation of people or death of a whale?’ or ‘how many people’s suffering from starvation would justify the killing of the whale?’ Such questions would induce us to consider not only the interests of individual sentient beings, but also the eco-system (that is apparent in the food chain.) We cannot consider the biotic community (in which we are involved as participants) as
only of instrumental value. This means that animal liberationism needs the support of some eco-holistic philosophy.

The Land Ethic

Next, let us take up a view which opposes Singer’s individualist sentientism. This is the more holistic, eco-centred environmental ethics of Leopold’s land ethic, as Callicott has interpreted it. (Callicott, 1989, Ch.5.) According to the land ethic view, there were not, in the Western tradition, ethics that treated the relationship between humans and nature; there were only ethics concerned with the relationship between individuals, and between individuals and society. Leopold, therefore, proposed what is called ‘land ethic’, which changes the role of *homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to a part of nature. *Homo sapiens* becomes simply a “plain member and citizen” of its community. Land ethic implies respect for the whole, that is, for the biotic community. It takes into consideration plants, soil, water, and the land itself, and directs people to take seriously the welfare of nature and the health of the land.

While animal liberationism expanded moral concern to encompass all sentient beings, land ethics expanded the moral concern to the whole biotic community and ecosystem. The general intuitive principles to be derived from the land ethical view included, ‘Respect nature’, ‘Preserve the forests’, or ‘Prevent distinguishing species.’ These principles are certainly useful and important for the purpose of restoring nature. Although they cannot be a force for change on their own, they may be effective for the purpose of educating people towards ecology-literacy; — for the purpose of making them change their attitude towards nature.

The land ethic morally considers and respects not only our fellow-members, but also the biotic community as a whole. The land ethic could, therefore, be divided into two versions: one is the *eco-holism* that contains moral consideration of fellow-members and also of the biotic community; the other, is the *eco-centrism* that is concerned about biological and ecological wholes — populations, species, communities, ecosystems, — not about their individual constituents. The golden rule for the latter version of land ethics is, according to Leopold, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” It is this kind of eco-centric version of holism that is, according to Callicott, ‘precisely what makes the land ethics the environmental ethics of choice among conservationists and ecologists.’
However, there is a problem: if the whole always outweighs its parts, and if the moral maxim of the land ethic, as Callicott puts it, drops the individual out of the picture altogether, then it will leave only the biotic community as the object of respect and moral consideration. It follows, then, that the individual becomes only a part of the organic whole, without importance or value of its own.

In order to make clear the implications of such a position, let me introduce a kind of eco-centric view from the ancient Chinese tradition and compare it with the land ethic. According to the Taoist philosopher Chuang Tse, human beings are not considered as especially important among other beings. And death is only a form of change and does not really alter anything fundamentally. When Chuang Tse’s wife died, his friends were horrified to find him pounding on a tub and singing. Chuang Tse explained that at first he grieved like any one else. But he soon looked back to her beginning and the time before she was born. He saw it as follows: a change took place and she had a spirit and a body; another change took place and she was born; a third change took place and she was dead. All this is like the progression of the four seasons. Now she’s going to lie down peacefully in a vast room. If I, bawling and sobbing, were to follow after her, it would show that I didn’t understand anything about fate. R. Goodman explains this series of changes, comparing it to the ecological cyclical change of nitrogen. (Goodman, 1980, p.74f.) Nitrogen is present in the protein of plants and animals, and, when they die, their nitrogen is broken down by various animals and bacteria, some going to plant roots to re-enter plants and the animals which eat them. Nitrogen is, like Chuang Tse’s wife, transformed but never lost. The story of Chuang Tse might be a legend. But if eco-centrists can believe in respect for the whole – can think that the value of the holistic community actually outweighs human values – then they can think of Chuang Tse’s attitude as the result of their own eco-centrism in the narrow sense of the word (compared with the eco-holistic view that contains the interests of individuals in its moral considerations.)

Furthermore, however right the biotic community might be in preserving the integrity, stability, and beauty, who actually judges it as right? If the biotic community or ecosystems do not contain any sentient being, then who is going to judge something right or wrong, good or evil? Apart from the moral agent who values (a valuer) nothing is valuable, inherent, or instrumental. If our ultimate purpose of doing ethics is to restore the natural environment, this is because it is the natural environment that will make our existence viable. If there were no moral agent sentient enough to be sympathetic to other beings, there would be no attempt to restore the environment. A natural biotic community by itself would not be useful.
What Leopold calls the biotic community or ecosystem must, therefore, contain in it ‘fellow-members’. Apart from fellow-members, *eco-centrism* in the strict sense of the word is not consistent; in other words, the land ethic must be a sort of *eco-holism* considerate of humans as individual constituents. Land is, according to Leopold, ‘a community to which we belong’; and we are but ‘plain members and citizens’ of the biotic community. Yet, this eco-holist version of the land ethic is open to criticism. For example, when a population of deer or some other species interrupts or threatens the stable ecosystem of an area, we can reduce it by some one means or another. Today, in this human global village more than six billion people have become a burden on, and a destroyer of, the biotic community as a whole. In this case, we should reduce the population by whatever means necessary until its numbers are optimised.

Herein, lies the main problem with land ethics. “[M]assive human diebacks would be good,” writes Aiken (Cf. Callicott, 2001, pp.210 ff.) “It is our species’ duty, relative to the whole, to eliminate 90 per cent of our numbers.” “Anything we could do to exterminate excess people — would be morally ‘right’! To refrain from such extermination would be ‘wrong!’” Land ethics requires individual organisms to pay such sacrifices for the good of the whole; Tom Regan calls this a kind of “environmental fascism”. (Regan, 1983, p.262.)

From a Leopoldian perspective, though, such criticism doesn’t, however, seem to be fair for Leopoldian view. This is because aside from drastic population reduction there are also other ways of repairing the harm humans have imposed on the natural environment. However, I don’t find Callicott’s own answer to these criticisms very clear; his answer is, briefly, that we are citizens of a republic, but at the same time we remain a member of an extended family and a resident of a municipality. Duties attendant upon citizenship in the biotic community do not cancel or replace the duties attendant on membership in the human global village. This pluralistic solution doesn’t, get to the core of the problem, the problem caused by separating human values and eco-holistic values. I must beg the forbearance of environmentalists for arguing, instead, the similar sort of problems related with deep ecology. (Cf Callicott, 2001.) The solution we are searching for is not of the utilitarian sort regarding moral conflict among duties originating from increasing human interests, nor is it the degree of our relatedness with some familiar natural environment. Rather the heart of the problem lies in the conflict between different sorts of principles, — between holistic principles originating from the biotic community and other sorts of principles originating from individualistic interests. In other words, it is the moral conflict between principles originating from a human-centred view and other principles originating from an eco-holistic
view. There are some examples of solutions to such practical problems.

Suppose there is, in a closed society, a forest that has been kept intact since an ancient age, the forest being kept wild enough to be integral, stable and beautiful as a biotic community. Suppose that people are considering making this forest more productive by planting fruit trees in order to save people from shortages of food because of increasing population, trees such as chestnut, almond, apple, and other sorts. Assuming all other things are equal, then our choice would be between increasing the interests of human society with a more productive forest on the one hand and the integrated, stable and beautiful forest with infertile products on the other.

Suppose further that interests of a certain human community clash with the welfare of a certain biotic community, — in such a case as developing a mountainside forest and making it residential area for poor people who live in a slum like factory area. They could replace the forest with another by planting trees in the mountains remote from city centre. Utilitarian principles would support the development. But the land ethicist answer must be for the preservation of the present forest, which might contain precious species. Suppose further that too many people live in a refugee camp without enough food, energy, and fuels, and that they cannot but cut trees from nearby bush for fuel, — the genuine land ethicist would solve the dilemma by leading refugees to refrain from cutting trees. In this respect Callicott’s solution (if different from that of the land ethicist) is not clear enough to persuade us that land ethics is not just a kind of “eco-fascism”.

As we saw, the two views of sentientism (expressed in the shape of animal liberationism) and eco-centrism (in the narrow sense of the word) are, in various ways, conducive to restoring nature. The preservation of wilderness is, as long as it neglects human values, not enough for restoring nature. This same can be said for animal liberationism.

While animal liberationism considers nature as having instrumental value, land ethics considers the biotic community as having intrinsic value. What both views share is the existence of something that is objectively valuable; that is, sentient beings themselves or biotic communities themselves. However, there is no objective value that exists irrespectively of our desire, wish, preference, interests, or whatever. If the ‘inherent/ instrumental’ value dichotomy, (originating possibly from the Platonic division of the intellectual and sensible worlds), is not useful in unifying ethics, then the second best strategy for us may be to put aside that tool and to refer to different views from the main Western and Eastern traditions. For our purpose of restoring nature,
what is most important in a given choice situation is not the problem of what is objectively valuable but which course of action ought to outweigh, or override, the alternative courses of action.

**The Deep Ecological Solution**

Let us next examine some aspects of deep ecology as a sort of eco-holistic view, taking it up as a new way of understanding the relationship between humans and nature. Arne Naess characterizes *deep ecology* in terms of seven principles, saying that ‘the inspiration from ecology has shown remarkable convergences.’ (Naess, 1973, p.7.) His first principle is, “Rejection of the man-in-environmental image in favour of the relational, *total-field image*.” Put a different way, this sees the “Organism as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations. As intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things.” (Naess, 1973, p.3 f.) This thesis of metaphysical *interconnectedness* is, according to Professor F. Mathews, the basic and primary metaphysical axiom of deep ecology. (Mathews, 1994, p.240.)

Callicott interprets the axiom as follows: “relationships are ontologically upgraded, and classical entities, proportionately, ontologically downgraded. From an ecological point of view, relationship becomes the primary realities and entities the subordinate realities.” (Callicott, 1994, p.84.) “All exponents agree that individuals, to the extent they can be identified at all, are constituted out of their relations with other individuals”, writes Mathews, “they are not discrete substances capable of existing independently of other individuals. The whole is understood to be more than sum of its parts, and the parts are defined through their relations to one another and to the whole.” (Mathews, 1994, p.236.)

Everything is, in the eco-holistic worldview, so closely interrelated that it is hardly possible to divide humans from nature or sentient beings from non-sentient beings. The whole contains the sentient beings within it, so we cannot say that ‘there is nothing that corresponds to what it feels like to be an ecosystem flooded by a dam, because there is no such feeling.’ (Singer, *PE*, p.183.) Only on one sort of intuitive levels of moral thinking can we divide sentient and non-sentient beings.

“From a systems-theoretic viewpoint, the world (particularly the biological world) appears as a field of relations, a web of interconnections, which does indeed cohere as a whole, but within which a genuine form of individuation is nevertheless possible.” (Mathews, 1994, p. 239.)
Individuals are so much in the continuous interactions with their environment that their existence is a function of their relations, their interconnections. In this view the reality of the world is seen as both a seamless whole and a multiplicity of individuals.

According to such a systems-theoretic viewpoint, the world appears as a field of relations – ‘a web of interconnections’ – in which the relation between individuals and the relation between individuals and the whole cohere as a whole. If we apply this picture to the relationship between humans and nature, then there emerges quite a new view of nature (different from the view that humans can dominate over nature). In this new perspective, humans are to be seen, not as the aggregate of entities but as something interrelated with the natural environment. Each person is seen not as entity, but rather as the centre of relationships between person and persons, and between humans and nature.

The relationship between humans and nature is central to deep ecology: terms such as ‘interconnectedness’, ‘interdependent’, ‘relationality’, and ‘human-earth relation’ dominate the literature. This basic view of the human/nature relationship corresponds with the view of nature that considers humans as a part of nature, — humans interrelated, interpenetrated, and interdependent with nature. This image is reflected in one of the catchphrases of deep ecology: ‘nature knows best’.

In the deep ecological view, humans and nature were originally interrelated. Thus, only by identifying with nature can we realize our true self. This self-realization can be attained by the identification of self with wider and wider circles of being, — with our family, our community, our land, and our cosmos. Naess promises that the joy and meaningfulness of life are increased through self-realization. This central tenet of deep ecology has revolutionary meaning for Western philosophy, by bringing it one step closer to traditional Eastern philosophy. However, this metaphysical or religious aspect of the self-realization thesis is not, from the viewpoint of our final purpose of restoring nature, particularly useful. Before examining more practical ethical aspects of deep ecology, let us first examine this thesis a bit more.

In the case of deep ecology, there are strong tendencies to see a certain biotic community or eco-system as something intimate, respectable, and irreplaceable for people. However, we can move from our beloved old place to a foreign land and also change the wilderness to fields and vice versa. Although we cannot replace one place with another, we can make our land fertile or infertile; accordingly, we can unify ourselves with a green mountain or a bare mountain, with a pure river or a dirty river. If we give priority to some familiar or intimate environment rather than
the wider biotic community, we are judging from an intuitive, but nevertheless partial standpoint.

We are so deeply connected with nature that we cannot be separated from nature, in the same way that our mind cannot be separated from our body. Consequently, it would seem important to have, and teach our children to have, the ability to intuitively feel at one with nature in order to realize our true selves. It would also seem important to foster in our children some kind of religious or aesthetic feeling of unification. Yet it must be on the intuitive sort of level, because unification with nature could not be effective in restoring nature, although the unification might be metaphysically right. Scientists, for instance, who were raised in refugee camps and educated in schools without much green environment, might contribute to restoring nature, much more than people who were educated in ideal circumstances, surrounded with mountains full of green, and who become salespersons or entrepreneurs.

Naess’ concerns with the ethical and practical nature of the deep ecology saw him propose, together with George Sessions, a new set of principles. Naess argues that this framework can provide a common starting point for supporters of various deep ecology movements. The following are what Naess and Sessions have called the eight points of the deep ecology platform:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human Life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary change.
All these points are most important and plausible in this age where human-centred values are given priority over eco-centred values. Eco eco-centred values are more important than ever and are of vital importance to restore an ecology-oriented society.

‘The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth’ in (1) suggests that Naess’ position is not an eco-centred view in the narrow sense of the word; rather it is a sort of eco-holism, because it considers human life as well. Notice that Naess expresses his theory in terms of inherent values. People who think that only human beings have intrinsic values might disagree with the idea that non-human beings also have intrinsic values, and not merely instrumental value. In order to make these points acceptable to people from various backgrounds, a range of different interpretations will be given. They are as follows:

In the points from 1 to 3, eco-holistic values are expressed in the bio-centric form. Though these points appear agreeable in practice, they might hide some theoretical problems. First, in order to aim for ‘the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth’, it would be debatable whether or not the notion of inherent value is necessary because alleged values inherent to certain life forms can easily be overridden by those of other life forms. For example, in order to satisfy their vital needs, humans cannot help eating animals and plants, and animals eat other animals and plants. While humans cannot help but live using the natural environment as resources, humans can work to enrich nature by planting trees, facilitating irrigation, feeding animals, and so forth. Sometimes we value natural resources more than other things, and sometimes we value things other than them.

To say that some beings have intrinsic value is the same as saying that we confer values to them. Since some beings must have more inherent value than others, the problem of how to solve conflict between these values arises. Some beings that have intrinsic values have been used by humans, and some are still being used; that is, their values are overridden by other beings that are thought to have still higher values. The notion of ‘overriddingness’ must then, though not making much practical difference, be more fundamental than the notion of inherent value. (Cf. Hare, 1981, pp.50 ff.)

In order to restore a sound environment in which humans and non-humans may live together, the most urgent task seems to be to reduce the human population and to decrease industrialization in order to decrease pollution as well as consumption. The principles that motivate these purposes are embodied in the above-mentioned points 4 to 7.

While considering the well-being of human life, one needs to balance it with the well-being of
non-human life, something which can cause theoretical difficulties. How can one balance, or choose between, the well-being, flourishing and interests of both the human and natural world? Which must assume primacy? Some people, or groups of people, might think that energy usage for industry satisfies their vital needs, while some may think that eating meat is more important than the pain it causes to cows. Others may, on the contrary, argue for the superiority of non-human life over the vital needs of humans.

We are choosing between two courses, A and B. Course A involves surplus human interests causing degradation of the natural environment, and course B satisfies only human vital needs and brings about the flourishing of non-human life. Both humans and nature could survive without satisfying the surplus needs of humans. But without a sound natural environment, both human and non-human life could not survive. In other words, in order for the whole to thrive, including humans and nature, a well-balanced harmonious relationship between these two domains is necessary. One could solve some problems by allowing, for the wellbeing of the whole, a stable relationship between humans and nature to override the values inherent in human and non-human life respectively. Both may have inherent values. Sometimes, however, these need to be overridden by the importance of realising a good relationship between humans and non-human life, for the sake of the whole.

Thus, our choice is to facilitate the 'thriving of the whole' by sacrificing surplus human interests. The result would be the enrichment of non-human life, including the eco-systems of, say, rivers and mountains. In this scenario, people would be destined to live very simple and poor lives. But there is hope for a sustainable society, one that enriches people by way of enriching nature through human endeavour. For example, people can enrich forestry by planting wood in the mountains. The nutrition from the forests can increase useful products such as fruits, birds, animals, and even fish, shellfish, and seaweeds in the river and sea. Such a way of enriching nature based on its reproductive aspects will not cause pollution. One of the key problems of excessive industrialization would be addressed by a return to the subsistence traditions of settled horticultural community characteristic of indigenized Japanese Confucianism. We need a new environmental ethics that would help justify and establish subsistent gardening or agricultural culture. Sustainable technology, if any can be developed, may too be welcome. Indeed, it might provide a way of eating one's cake and having it too, so to speak. We can find plenty of examples of such wisdom in traditional East Asian society, because this society was based on a stable natural environment, backed by a comparatively balanced view of nature. The method of 'let nature
live and humans live’, as found in Edo-era Japan, would be one such example of traditional wisdom.

**From Relational Self to Moral Agent**

Finally, let us examine an organic view of nature that assimilates the earth and organism. Certainly there is symmetry between our bodies and the body of the planet. (Cf. Drengson & Inoue, 1995, p.95.) If we assimilate the earth to our body, then we humans could be assimilated to the mind. Consequently, the human/nature relationship would be paralleled with our mind/body relationship. If this parallel is possible, we would be concerned with the earth having the following images: moral agents who can change the earth for better or for worse in the same way as we change our body for better or for worse. Just as our minds (moral agents) are interconnected with our bodies (moral patients), so we (moral agents) are interconnected with the earth (our moral patient). In this image, it would not be far-fetched to say that we can change and replace a part of our body, in the same way that we can change and replace a part of our earth. As we cannot replace our whole body without becoming another person, we cannot replace our earth wholly with another sort of earth.

In analogy, Mathews, citing quantum mechanics, argues that light shows both aspects of particles and waves which are called wavicle: “[light] looked at from one point of view, a ray of light manifests as a stream of particles (photons), while from another point of view it manifests as a wave phenomenon (a pattern in a field). Light cannot be reduced to either photons or field. Ontological ambivalence is thus intrinsic to its nature.” (p.240.) This physical ‘wavicle’ thesis suggests that there is another aspect of individuals beyond the notion of field. The image of our self is more than something in the relational, total-field.

The image of humans as part of nature tends to appear mainly in the literature on ecology as science, metaphysics, religion, education or literary intuitions, not especially in practical ethics. If we are only a part of nature, then, there would not have arisen the moral question of ‘how are we to restore nature?’ or ‘how are we to live in the age of a deteriorated environment?’ If we are solely earthbound natural beings in the centre of various relations, we could not much change the world. From such a view of humans and nature, action or movement towards restoration of environment would hardly emerge.

It is our very ability to be able to change the environment for better or for worse, which give
rise to moral questions. We are asking moral questions and making decisions because we are involved in a relationship and, moreover, can change the relationship. Here, in this sense, the questioning and decision-making self is a being something apart from nature. This aspect of us humans, as the subject who values, judges, chooses, and acts accordingly, could be called the **moral agent**. Humans thus have two aspects, the moral agent who can choose freely, and the **moral patient** interrelated with nature as a part of nature. (Cf. Regan, 1983, p.151ff.)

There is still a tendency to consider moral agents as humans who conquer, control, or dominate nature. People who criticize such views have tended to go to the opposite extreme and think that humans are originally, as a part of nature, interrelated and interconnected in the webs of relationships with nature. In other words, they tend to attain mystic unification with nature, making elimination of self-ness their ideal. Naess writes, “Here is a difficult ridge to walk: to the left we have the ocean of organic and mystic views, to the right, the abyss of atomic individualism.” (Naess, 1989, p.165.) In order to avoid falling for either extreme, it would be helpful and useful to introduce the moral agent/patient dichotomy into our discussion.

A moral agent is a person who can unify with nature. Accordingly, they must be distinguished from the dominator or conqueror of nature. On the other hand, the moral agent must also be distinguished from that kind of Zen master who recommended either mystic enlightenment or ‘the non-interference with nature’ (wu wei) which appears in Taoist versions of deep ecology. If one can establish the moral agent who is able to change nature for better or for worse, leaving intuitive moral principles aside for the moment, then one would find the third way between anthropocentrism (of conquering nature) and eco-centrism (of unification with, or embodiment of, nature). This would seem to represent a big step towards convergence between the Western human/nature **dualism** and Eastern **monism** of humans and nature. The moral agent thus established could be free to choose the best view path among paths located between anthropocentric and eco-centred tendencies.

Once the notion of moral agent is established in eco-holistic environmental ethics, it will make possible the alteration of the world. We saw that industrial society is not sustainable. Therefore, industrialism can not be generalized on a global scale without destroying the global environment. It could be permissible only as a exceptional course for exceptional countries; that is, unlimited industrialism means partialism from an ethical viewpoint (that is, it is not universalizable.) Compared with industrialism, the traditional subsistent cultures were sustainable and the practice could be generalized for all within the global village; it is therefore impartial.
One of the most urgent tasks in restoring nature is the restriction of industrialism and urbanism and the revival of subsistent cultures. Although animal liberationism, land ethics, and deep ecology are not consistent with industrialism, they have not shown us yet the practical way to cope with industrialization. Subsistent cultures would, therefore, seem to be much more promising for the purpose of restoring nature, as they could be mixed with, and temper, industrialism, if they cannot be the alternative course to industrialism. In any case, to look back to subsistent cultures in the fresh light of environmental ethics would offer new ways towards restoring nature.

Deep ecologists should, as Mathews recommends, regard the subsistence traditions as furnishing experiential sources of ecological selfhood. “To work with nature via the domestic activities of growing food and husbanding animals is to enter a relationship with nature arguably as profound as that of the hunter-gatherer. For the farmer or gardener becomes a nurturer of non-human life, as well as a consumer of it, and is likely to develop a profound identification with the plants and animals that she has tended. She is also likely to become deeply invested in the land she cultivates, especially since she embodies it by virtue of the fact that she consumes its produce.” (Mathews, 2001, p.229.)

In order to reconcile the various views in environmental ethics, allocating zones in the global village would be necessary. There must be urban districts, villages, industrial zones, agricultural or subsistence cultural zones, national parks, wilderness and other areas. Dr. Eckersley suggests three-tiered communities: the biotic community, the mixed community, and the human community. My own tentative division is this: natural wilderness, mixed society, and the industrial society.

In the wilderness, in the intact natural condition, animals and plants form a kind of biotic community. It is here that animal liberationism and holistic eco-centred views apply most appropriately. The moral principles derived from their views are most useful in order to preserve, for example, such a wilderness as a national park.

Next, as a typical example of the mixed society, I take the agricultural and horticultural society. Agricultural society depends on eco-systems, using and changing the wilderness into a symbiotic community of humans, animals, plants, and the natural environment. It is in such symbiotic systems between human beings, animals, and plants that the interests of sentient beings and the welfare of eco-systems become interrelated and interdependent.

Then comes the industrial society, which has, it must be emphasized, brought global environmental degradation. The huge amount of animal suffering in laboratories and animal factories was
caused originally by industrial society. The principles derived from animal liberationism are applicable here most obviously, because the main targets of animal liberation movements are, among others, animal experiments and animal factories.

When we see the earth from space, we can consider the global biotic community as a whole entity. In this case, utilitarian thinkers would consider the interests of the global community as a whole as a criterion of good and evil. The interests of the global community could not, however, be separated from the global biospheric ecosystem, or from the earth as such. If we could live in a plastic world, the plastic world might have only the instrument value. Without the earth there would be no existence for any sentient being, so tightly interconnected are we with the biotic community and with the earth.

We can use our body to realise goals through the use, for example, of tools or robots. We can replace parts of our body with some other materials, retaining their integrity and stability. When we use our body partly (not wholly) as an instrument, then our body has an instrumental value; when we feel our body as our self, then our body has an intrinsic value. Nature as a whole, like our parents, could not be considered as tools or instruments for some other purposes. It is only parts of nature can we use and misuse for our humanly purposes.

There remains the problem of locating zones optimally. But by what criterion? When two kinds of moral principles derived from two different views cause conflict, there arises the problem of how to solve such conflict. To these problems we could, dividing levels of moral thinking, find a solution by shifting the arena onto another level, one governed by the whole welfare of humans and nature. By making the ‘thriving’ of the global community of humans and nature the ultimate criterion of environmental ethics, we would hopefully find a way of allocating zones optimally.

References

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