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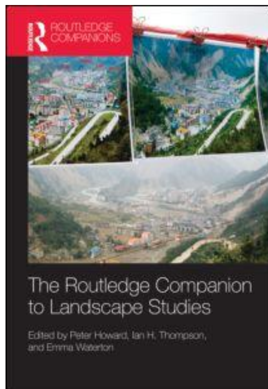

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38

Landscape and environmental ethics

Ian Thompson

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One might expect the field of environmental ethics, which has developed over the past forty years, to have much to say to landscape architects, environmental planners and all those, such as foresters, engineers, land managers, developers, etc., whose professional practice has often very direct impacts upon land and environment. As will be shown, an argument over anthropocentric versus non-anthropocentric theories of value and a fixation upon non-humanized environments (supposed wildernesses) has, until recently, pushed consideration of landscapes and the built environment to the periphery of ethicists' concerns. However, as the latter part of the chapter will show, new lines of thought from pragmatism, continental philosophy and virtue ethics are taking the subject in promising new directions, as ethicists engage with the humanized places where we work and dwell.

A new ethic

In 1973 the Australian philosopher Richard Routley (who later changed his name to Sylvan) published a paper entitled 'Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?' (Routley 1973), which picked up the call, made over two decades earlier by Aldo Leopold, Professor of Game Management at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, for a 'Land Ethic' which would cover 'man's relationship to land and the animals which grow upon it' (Leopold 1949). Routley argued that traditional ethical theories, even if extended, would be incapable of saying what was morally wrong about the harm which human activities were causing to the environment. This was so, Routley argued, because they assigned intrinsic value and moral standing to human beings alone. This criticism could be levelled at both consequentialist theories (concerned with the outcomes of our actions) and deontological theories (concerned with rights and duties). Out of these beginnings, alongside the work of other pioneers such as Holmes Rolston III (often regarded as the founding father of the subject in the United States), grew a whole sub-branch of philosophical ethics known as environmental ethics. When I surveyed the ethical beliefs of British landscape architects (Thompson 1998), I suggested that, unlike the majority of environmental ethicists, most were anthropocentric in their thinking and that this was understandable, even inevitable, in a profession whose *raison d'être* was to intervene in the landscape on behalf of a client or users.

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Routley's paper contains a now-famous thought experiment in which we are invited to consider the behaviour of the last person surviving the collapse of the world. Before he dies, the Last Man lays about him, killing and destroying every living thing within his reach. His imminent death means that there will soon be no one left to appreciate or assign value to whatever remains, so a human chauvinist might think he has done nothing untoward, but anyone with environmental leanings would be inclined to say that such behaviour must be wrong. Routley's point was that his actions could only be wrong if things like plants, animals or ecosystems had intrinsic value, as opposed to any instrumental value they might have in meeting human needs.

This opened up a debate about the sorts of things which could have intrinsic value, a list which variously included individual plants or animals, species, ecosystems, the biotic community and the whole biosphere, but interestingly landscapes did not generally appear in this literature and it is not difficult to see why. Whether 'landscape' is taken in the sense of 'a view over land' or in the sense of 'a tract of land', it is clearly something which involves both natural processes and human interventions. Landscapes were compromised in the eyes of those philosophers who emphasized the moral qualities of naturalness in the sense of untouchedness.

Anthropocentric versus non-anthropocentric

Those ethical theories which attribute moral standing and intrinsic worth to non-human entities can be described as non-anthropocentric and in the early development of environmental ethics the majority of environmental philosophers identified themselves as non-anthropocentrists. Some of the earliest critics of a purely human-centred ethics were those, such as the utilitarian Peter Singer, who argued for the moral considerability of all sentient animals (Singer, 1975, 1993). Then biocentrists, such as Paul Taylor (1986) and Gary Varner (2000), argued that all living things have a good of their own which should be respected, and thus that they all count for something in moral terms. Expanding moral considerability still further, others, such as Rolston (1975, 1986), thought that individual sentience or life was not the limit of what should be valued and proposed that whole ecosystems or the biosphere itself were morally considerable. The idea of 'deep ecology' promoted by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (Naess, 1973; Naess and Rothenberg, 1989) is also ecocentric, as are various interpretations of Buddhist and Native American beliefs. For deep ecologists there is no ontological distinction between humans and nature, so that in some sense for humans to harm nature is to harm themselves.

This emphasis upon non-anthropocentric theory was inevitable given that environmental ethics arose in response to a conspicuous lacuna in traditional ethics, which seemed to pay little attention to non-human nature at all. However, not all environmental philosophers have been non-anthropocentrists. In *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, John Passmore (1974) argued that nature should be valued in terms of what it contributed to the flourishing of sentient creatures (including humans) and advocated an ethic of human stewardship. The role of steward, it is worth noting in passing, was a role which the landscape architect, Ian McHarg, thought belonged uniquely to *homo sapiens*. Humans were, for McHarg, uniquely perceptive creatures who were thus able to act as 'agents of symbiosis' (McHarg,1969). To some social theorists, meanwhile, environmental problems went much deeper than might be addressed through any notions of stewardship or environmental management. The polemical social ecologist Murray Bookchin (1980, 2005) argued throughout his life that environmental devastation was the unavoidable consequence of the hierarchical organization of human society and that the only way to escape our ecological nightmare was to reform society on saner, more egalitarian and more sustainable lines.

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Not everyone has been happy with the anthropocentric/non-anthropocentric terminology, or seen much purpose in the struggle between these points of view. Mary Midgley (1994) objected to the pejorative use of 'anthropocentric', saying that we should not try to get rid of the sense that we are at the centre of our own lives. The failings that have led to environmental destruction have been 'human chauvinism' and 'narrowness of sympathy'. She also suggested that 'the measures needed today to save the human race are, by and large, the same measures that are needed to save the rest of the biosphere'. Echoing this thought, Bryan Norton (1997: 99) advanced his convergence hypothesis which stated that policies designed to protect nature from an anthropocentric point of view will 'do as much good in protecting the moral commitment of deep ecologists as any other policy that could be undertaken given what we know now'. This did not end the debate between non-anthropocentrists and anthropocentrists, but it did take much of the heat out of it. Many could see that this dispute was not doing much to aid the environmental cause. Philosophers began to look for other approaches which did not lead to such an impasse, and found them in continental philosophy, pragmatism and virtue ethics. We will return to these.

Nature and wilderness

By focussing upon nature – and what they took to be, but perhaps were not always, natural places – environmental philosophers were reacting against the dominance of human-shaped environments. They hoped to bring about a radical decentring, a change of consciousness whereby, to employ a quotation from Leopold (*A Sand County Almanac*), the role of *Homo sapiens* would change 'from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it'. This move involves the capacity to respect nature as it is, rather than as we have altered it, and this explains the attention paid by these philosophers to the concept of wilderness. Conversely, it is by no means a coincidence that the three most important geographical locations for the development of environmental philosophy have been Scandinavia, North America and Australia, all places where there are large areas with little or no human population. Although Bill McKibbin argued in *The End of Nature* (McKibben 1989) that nature could no longer be thought of as independent of human influence because it is now directly affected by human actions, it still remains easier to believe in such independence and to dream of wilderness in places where very few human beings actually live.

For some philosophers, nature remains foundational. It is something which predates and is more powerful than human civilization. Eric Katz thinks that the idea that humans can restore natural systems demonstrates hubris, based on false assumptions of ability and power. Once we begin to restore natural environments we impose anthropocentric purposes on areas that exist outside human agency. From this he goes on to argue that a restored habitat is an artefact and will remain one forever, thus it will have lesser value than undisturbed nature. Restoration is driven by anthropocentric concerns and thus is a symptom of human domination, i.e. part of the problem, not part of the solution. In 'Faking Nature', Robert Elliot (1982) argued that what make wildernesses important is their provenance, an uninterrupted continuity with the past. No constructed or restored landscape, he argued, can have this quality of naturalness. Elliot's frequently cited paper makes specific reference to the role of landscape architects, along with other professionals such as engineers and biologists, in restoring nature after human disturbance. He asks us to imagine situations where such restoration is successful (though he thinks it often is not); even in these best-case situations, says Elliot, the restored environment cannot have the full value of the original. Drawing parallels with the art world, he suggests that at best the restored landscape is a replica or a good fake. Elliot and Katz oppose restoration

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because it seems to give comfort to those who would cause disturbance in the first instance and open the way to a managerial approach to the environment which is fundamentally anthropocentric.

Thinking of wildernesses as places that are untouched and unaltered, however, raises the question of whether they should, in any sense, be managed. As Michael Soulé (2001) has pointed out that a concern for wild nature can lead both to passionate demands for wilderness to be actively managed and, from 'wilderness purists', a complete prohibition on any form of intervention, even if ecologically informed and well-meaning. As Glenn Deliège (2010) has observed, this debate between managers and purists seems exotic from a European point of view, since there are no wildernesses in Europe and all nature is humanly mediated – and it has mostly been that way for more than two millennia (for a macroscopic view of human development see Diamond, 1997 and Morris, 2010):

> The need for nature management is more or less self-evident to most European conservationists, few have problems with the enormous amounts of mowing, burning, cutting, and grazing that go on in European nature reserves. Indeed, it is precisely the lack of traditional management that is lamented, as that lack leads to the loss of species, habitats and characteristic landscapes.
>
> *(Deliège 2010: 18)*

The degree to which nature should be allowed to run its course, and the extent to which it can be offered a helping hand is still hotly debated, even in Europe, as Deliège's paper goes on to show. He objects to practices which reduce the management of nature reserves to a kind of gardening or zoo-keeping, and opposes the reintroduction of species unless a 'material bond' exists between the restorations and their originals (as might be provided, for example, by the use of authentic seed-banks).

Donna Ladkin (2005) takes issue with Katz's assertion that restoration is a form of domination. No one, she says, is suggesting that the ability to restore land is an argument for its being degraded in the first place. Developing an argument first made by Sylvan (1994) she says that the restoration of a landscape is different from the replication of an artwork because in the latter case humans are entirely responsible, which in the former case they are not – they can only help the process along. Following Alastair Gunn (1991) she argues that those undertaking the restoration do not intend to deceive. Landscape restoration is more like art restoration than forgery. In art restoration, the original is still the basis for the restored piece.

Ladkin, following Sylvan, suggests the word 'rehabilitation' rather than 'restoration' for projects where humans attempt to heal damaged land and she sees this as a co-operative venture, between rehabilitators and nature, with nature entirely essential and doing much of the work. She also quotes, with approval, Stephanie Mill's alternative concept of 're-inhabiting', which implies an intimate relationship between humans and nature (Mills, 1995).

Ladkin's paper suggests four touchstones for a non-dominating approach to restoration. First, humans should see themselves as facilitators or co-creators. Their role is to assist nature's own healing process; indeed, not to do so would amount to gross negligence. Second, humans must commit themselves to learn from the land. This means paying attention to evolving patterns of flora and fauna, not making decisions of the basis of pre-formed 'scientific' ideas of what 'should' be happening. Third (which perhaps amounts to the same thing), nature has its own agency, its own projects, and its human helpers must become attentive to these. Fourth, the aim of any restoration should be to achieve healthy land, i.e. an ecosystem with the capacity to regenerate itself. Historical accuracy should not be the overriding determinant.

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This debate about wilderness was part of, or overlapped with, a larger debate about the place of humanity in nature. On one view, humans are a part of nature, which makes it difficult to say that anything they do is unnatural. For humans to build motorway flyovers is as natural as for ants to build ant-hills. Others take the opposite line and say that everything human beings produce is artefactual, which is to say unnatural. William Cronon (1995: 69–90), however, upset many environmentalists when he published 'The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature' in which he suggested that wilderness itself was something unnatural, a product of civilization which 'could hardly be contaminated by the very stuff of which it is made'.

He traced the history of the idea of wilderness, showing that it had meant different things at different times. Going back 250 years, Europeans were describing wildernesses as wastelands, using adjectives like 'savage', 'barren' and 'desolate' – and the thought that these useless wastes included such places as the English Lake District or the Scottish Highlands, which would one day be valorized by poets and crowded with tourists, might here prompt an ironic smile. In the United States the list of places that underwent this transformation includes Niagara Falls, the Catskills, the Adirondacks, Yosemite, and Yellowstone. The central paradox, for Cronon, is that the notion of wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural. Thus, says Cronon,

> the place where we are is the place where nature is not. If this is so – if by definition wilderness leaves no place for human beings, save perhaps as contemplative sojourners enjoying their leisurely reverie in God's natural cathedral – then also by definition it can offer no solution to the environmental and other problems that confront us.
>
> *(Cronon 1995)*

Cronon thought that McKibben had got it wrong. His 'end of nature' depended on the premise that nature had once been pristine, remote and unsullied by contact with humanity, whereas all the evidence suggested that 'people have been manipulating the natural world on various scales for as long as we have a record of their passing.' Idealizing a distant wilderness takes our attention away from the landscapes in which we actually live, which are the places where our environmental problems actually begin.

Continental Philosophy and the idea of nature

Some philosophers, notably Steven Vogel, have drawn upon continental philosophy to critique the view that nature is foundational, that it represents a stable pre-human world, a sort of substratum which both supports and can be contrasted with the human world (Vogel: 1998). Vogel would find himself in sympathetic company with cultural geographers in thinking that when our ideas of nature are taken apart, they are revealed to be linguistically and socially constructed. Moreover, when so-called 'natural' landscapes are scrutinized, it often turns out that they are cultural landscapes which are being managed by humans. While this must be upsetting for anyone committed to a foundational account of nature, Paul Keeling offers a Wittgensteinian argument which salvages our use of the terms 'natural' and 'unnatural' by showing how they are used in various language-games (Keeling, 2008). The word 'nature', says Keeling, does not name an ontological category. We do not need to know what wildness *is*, just how to use the word 'wild'. We use it, for example, in those cases where we want to contrast human agency with non-human agency.

Nevertheless all of this troubles many environmental philosophers who are uneasy with the idea that, though humans are clearly the product of nature, nature is both conceptually and

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physically our product too (Vogel, 1998). If this is how things are, they worry, it will not be easy to rein in human hubris. Keeling, however, suggests that nature's separateness and otherness is part of its meaning, and that this otherness can be affirmed in our language games (Keeling, 2008). Vogel, drawing once again on deconstruction, suggests another possibility, that nature is a name for the 'otherness' of the world. He finds this more congenial, because on this view nature always avoids or eludes complete human control. Whenever humans intervene in nature there will be unforeseen side-effects and this should teach us humility. However, Vogel, in turn, is worried lest this view of nature might lead to the sort of quietism that prevented Heidegger from formulating environmental policies because to do this would have presupposed a project of managing nature, of treating nature as a 'standing reserve', which would have been at odds with his philosophy of 'letting-be' (Vogel, 1998: 262; Stone, 2005: 288). For those whose profession involves intervening in the environment, such passivity is not an option, though humility is certainly a virtue worth enshrining in any professional code of ethics.

Like Cronon, Vogel wants to direct our attention away from the problematic concept of wilderness in favour of an engagement with the built environment, 'which for most of us is the environment', recognizing that the world we inhabit is the result of our own practices. Our environing world is something we build for ourselves, but we do not build it from nothing. Vogel calls this a 'philosophy of practice' and he reflects that:

> the realness and resistance of the world, the difficulty of labor, call us toward a modesty with respect to our practices, deriving from them a sober and even chastened recognition of the inevitable limits to planning and of the essential unpredictability of the consequences of our actions.
>
> *(Vogel, 1998: 265)*

This account, which grasps the active nature of the relationship between humans and the environment, is one which – I suggest – easily commends itself to environmental professionals, including architects, landscape architects, planners and managers. The significance of the relationship between the natural and built environments and the need for an 'ethics of building' was recognized by the agenda-setting collection *Ethics and the Built Environment* (Fox, 2000).

Environmental pragmatism and pluralism

'Pragmatism,' says Anthony Weston (2003), 'sounds like just what environmental ethics is against: short-sighted, human-centred instrumentalism.' Some philosophers, such as Callicott (1989, 1999), want to ground environmental ethics in incontrovertible theory. They are value monists who believe that a coherent environmental ethics must be built upon a single moral philosophy or value theory, usually involving non-anthropocentrism, holism and a belief in some form of intrinsic value in nature: for Callicott the one true approach is a version of Leopold's Land Ethic. This sort of purist view requires us to develop a strong theory to support the moral consideration of nature and then stick to our guns. However, a number of philosophers, particularly Weston, Norton, Andrew Brennan and Andrew Light, have objected that this approach is dogmatic and limits the influence which environmental ethics can have on policy and practice, where a plurality of values is to be found. In 'Beyond Intrinsic Value: Pragmatism in Environmental Ethics', Weston (2003) argues that 'the experience of nature can awaken respect and concern for it' citing the lives of Muir, Thoreau and Leopold as exemplars. Such feelings, says Weston, are essential starting points for a defence of environmental values

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and they are not 'second-best' weak anthropocentric[1] substitutes for the sort of foundational intrinsic value sought by the monists.

Light (2003) suggests that, 'as long as our different moral frameworks are oriented toward the same environmental priorities, we can ignore for the time being, many of the issues of the truth about which reason for valuing nature is actually right.' He gives the example of saving old growth forests in the United States for the spotted owl. A non-anthropocentric argument would invoke direct duties to the owls based upon their intrinsic value, but a weak anthropocentrist would wish to protect the owls on the basis of the benefit their continued existence would have for future human generations. Both arguments would be helpful to the owls. 'We don't have time to wait for agreement all the way down,' says Light. 'We should work within traditional moral theories and direct them to environmental ends.'

Support for the pragmatic approach comes from experimental philosophy (the controversial movement which suggests that philosophical problems might be amenable to resolution through the methods of science and social science). Van den Born (2008), for example, investigated the 'folk-philosophy' of lay persons in the Netherlands and asked how these related to professional philosophical discourses. He found that people held four basic images of the human relationship to nature, which he labelled 'master', 'steward', 'partner' and 'participant', of which the most favoured were 'steward' and 'participant'. Respondents thought that human beings should not stand above nature – the notion of mastery was unpopular – but that while they were part of nature, they also had a responsibility for it. While there is clearly a tension here, this widely held view of the nature-human relationship is consonant with Passmore's argument in *Man's Responsibility for Nature* and also with many of the attitudes expressed in McHarg's *Design with Nature*. When Van Den Born asked about reasons for valuing nature he found only one – 'space for animals and plants' – which could be considered ecocentric. The rest were overwhelmingly anthropocentric and instrumental, including such things as human recreation and enjoyment. People found the idea of 'intrinsic value' difficult to understand. Some philosophers would baulk at the idea that philosophical truth could be discovered by sociological survey, but this research does show the obstacles that any environmental ethics based purely upon the intrinsic value of nature would have in influencing the world outside the academy. Hargrove (2003: 177) doubts that the attempt to persuade people that environmental values exist independently in nature is a 'wise long-term environmentalist strategy'. Although some environmental professionals who take decisions regarding the planning, design or management of landscapes might espouse non-anthropocentric values, many would not (my research in the late 1990s found very limited non-anthropocentric thinking among British landscape architects of that period). If we adopt a pluralistic and pragmatic approach to environmental values, then this is not, I would argue, a cause for concern and indeed it might be seen in a positive light because a mixture of anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric values is likely to be more effective in guiding policy and practice.

Responsive cohesion

Perhaps, though, there is something unsatisfying about the pragmatic compromise. Warwick Fox has developed a theory of general ethics based upon the ways in which things can be structured which seeks to overcome the anthropocentric–non-anthropocentric divide (Fox, 2006, 2011). He identifies three basic forms of organization, *fixed cohesion*, *responsive cohesion* and *discohesion*. In his axiology it is responsive cohesion which is mostly to be valued, as this is manifested by structures which are flexible, flowing, adaptive, organic, or indeed alive. Rigid cohesion, on the other hand, can be described as stuck, frozen, forced, mechanical or dead,

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while discohesive structure can be portrayed as chaotic, anarchic, out of control, exhausted, decaying or dead. There is some correspondence here with Ian McHarg's idea that the value of human creativity lies in its power to resist entropy, or, as McHarg put it, to produce negentropy (McHarg, 1969). Fox's theory is interesting because it is intended to apply not just to the traditional sphere of interhuman ethics, nor indeed to the expanded field of environmental ethics including the ethics of ecosystem integrity, but also specifically to the built environment where value judgements must often be made between new buildings and an existing context. It is a theory which has aesthetic implications as well as ethical significance. Fox believes that his theory is:

> tailor made for application to landscape issues, whereas those approaches that are limited to animals, living things in general, or ecosystems qua ecological self-renewing systems won't make the grade because landscapes per se are not sentient, alive (in any straightforward biological sense), or limited to ecological self-renewing functions.
>
> *(personal communication)*

Virtue ethics

During the course of the past forty years much effort has gone into the search for a reliable ethical touchstone which would give us the basis for deciding which actions are right and which are wrong in our dealings with the environment. This search has included both consequentialist approaches and deontological approaches, but perhaps, if human beings were habitually virtuous, they would not need rules to keep them on the right track and they would not need to worry all the time about consequences. This is a central contention of what is called 'virtue ethics'. What offends us as preservationists, says Harley Cahen, 'is that anyone who would damage an ecosystem for inadequate reasons falls short of our "ideals of human excellence"' (Cahen, 2003). This is why we recoil from the despoliation carried out by Routley's hypothetical Last Man: we are shocked not just by the actions themselves, but that anyone would have the character and inclinations to carry them out. Virtue theory suggests that people should be encouraged and trained to develop good moral character, because such people will act morally, in which case there will be less need for ethical rules, and presumably less need for coercive legislation. Ronald Sandler (2010) observes that an ethic of environmental virtue would be concerned with norms of character rather than norms of action. How should one live? What sort of person ought one to be? Virtue ethics are far from new, indeed this was the prevalent way in which moral matters were considered in both ancient and mediaeval philosophy.

Non-anthropocentrists, says Hargrove, often look for rules because they fear that anthropocentric values are entirely dependent on culture. Any society might, for example, decide to value plastic trees over real ones. This is not such a far-fetched idea: in *Dogs and Demons*, journalist Alex Kerr (2002) laments current Japanese attitudes towards nature and landscape, citing examples of city trees being pollarded because of complaints about messy leaves, pressure on the authorities to kill croaking frogs in paddy fields, and huge public projects to 'tidy up' hillsides and riverbanks with expanses of concrete. This is happening, he points out, in a culture which once paid great respect to nature. However, the virtue ethics response would recognize that values are formed collectively and that the appropriate response to the situation described by Kerr would be to seek reform of these values, in this case, perhaps, a revival of the attitudes of an earlier age.

What might restrain the Last Man or the Japanese local authorities would be their preservationist intuitions and their ecological consciences, and, if they currently lack these faculties, they

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might yet be cultivated. Sandler (2010) suggests four ways in which we can discover environmental virtues. The first is by extending the familiar interpersonal virtues. So, for example, if compassion is the appropriate response to a suffering human, by extension should we not also be compassionate to a suffering nonhuman animal? If gratitude is the appropriate response to a human benefactor, should we not also feel gratitude towards the natural environment for all it provides? Sandler's second approach plays on enlightened self-interest by asking what dispositions allow their possessors to gain benefit from the natural environment. For example, the natural environment – and similarly the humanized landscape – offer opportunities for aesthetic appreciation, but only to those who have the disposition to appreciate such aesthetic benefits. His third strategy is to ask what makes a good human being, noting that humans are social animals and that individuals who disrupt social cohesion and poison relationships are not usually held up as virtuous. By extension, human beings can be located not only as members of a human community, but also as part of a larger ecological community. It follows, Sandler argues, that those who endanger species or destroy habitats are not behaving virtuously and that a disposition to oppose such harms can be regarded as virtuous. Sandler's last strategy resembles Weston's approach (mentioned above) whereby the lives of exemplary figures such as Carson, Muir and Leopold can be examined and learnt from. The possible environmental virtues he identifies from this source include: 'fortitude, compassion, wonder, sensitivity, respectfulness, courage, love, appreciation, tenacity and gratitude' (Sandler 2010: 252). Sandler believes that in many situations the sort of prescriptive action guidance given by sets of rules will often prove to be inadequate, because such rules can never cover all eventualities, However, amongst an indefinite set of environmental virtues, one would certainly include wisdom and sensitivity and these are indispensible virtues for the identification of environmentally right action.

In similar vein, Dale Jamieson (2003), after casting doubt on the efficacy of a managerial (i.e. economic) approach to environmental issues, suggests that we should shift our attention from calculating the probable outcomes of our actions towards the cultivation of good character. Economics can never tell us what our values should be. Although Jamieson shies away from providing a recipe for the values that are needed, he does indicate some of the virtues which need to be revived if we are to tackle such problems as climate change, and his list overlaps with some of Sandler's suggestions: 'we need to nurture and give new content to some old virtues such as humility, courage, and moderation and perhaps develop such new virtues as those of simplicity and conservatism' (Jamieson 2003: 378).

Implications for practitioners

Environmental ethics matter to everyone, and the sort of virtue ethics approach outlined in the preceding section has implications for everyone alive. However, in terms of scale and impact, it is those who take managerial decisions about land, whether they are politicians, policy-makers, farmers, planners, landscape architects, property developers or foresters, who ought to examine their characteristic values and reflect on their actions the most closely. Those ethicists who have argued in favour of plural sources of values and who have been willing to embrace anthropocentric reasons for protecting the environment, are surely closer to the thinking of the majority of such professionals, as well as to that of the wider public. Recognizing this however, we should never allow ourselves to slip into the sort of resourcist thinking which sees the environment with its multitude of component landscapes as a warehouse of reserves solely for the use of human beings, a point made powerfully by Heidegger in his later writings. The main message of environmental ethics is that environmental problems are not just managerial or resource

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problems but are moral issues, which, as Jamieson observes, 'brings them into the domain of dialogue, discussion and participation' (Jamieson 2003: 377).

Note

1 Weak anthropocentrism is a position advocated by Bryan Norton, Eugene Hargrove and others, and can be regarded as the forerunner of environmental pragmatism. Whereas a strong anthropocentrism only recognizes values that are related to the satisfaction of human appetites and preferences, a weak anthropocentric theory recognizes values which are based upon human experiences in nature. Such experience contributes to the formation of values, giving sense to the idea of nature as teacher.

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