

Hume on Animals and the Rest of Nature

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“Like Darwin after him, Hume has a powerful way of demythologizing the idea that humans have some magical capacity that distances them as a species from the rest of creation.”¹

Introduction

The concept of intrinsic value, roughly that a thing has value for its own sake, has traditionally and controversially² been central in environmental ethics. It is often held that a satisfactory environmental ethic rests on whether a defensible concept of intrinsic value can be articulated to ground human obligations toward elements of non-human nature as well as to nature as a whole.³ According to J. Baird Callicott, whether or not nature has intrinsic value is “the defining problem for environmental ethics.”⁴ For if there is no intrinsic value attached to nature and the value of nature consists only in its instrumental value to human beings, then environmental ethics itself is not a distinct domain or discipline. Instead environmental ethics is a species of applied ethics, just another particular “application of human-to-human ethics” like that of bioethics or business ethics.⁵

Callicott’s account of intrinsic value draws from David Hume and Charles Darwin in an effort to develop Aldo Leopold’s holistic ‘land ethic.’ Leopold’s land ethic “implies respect for fellow-members” and for the ‘biotic community’ that includes soils, waters, plants, and animals.⁶ Leopold extends moral consideration not only to individual members of the natural world, but also to ecosystems as wholes.⁷ Callicott argues that Leopold’s land ethic has “philosophical foundations” and a “pedigree” in the history of Western moral philosophy.⁸ In a series of influential works, Callicott elaborates a “Humean/Darwinian bio-empathetic moral metaphysic” that is grounded in moral sentiments that are naturally selected.⁹ The upshot is that there is no

objective intrinsic value in the world; rather, value is grounded in the subjective feelings of observers that are then “projected” onto the relevant “natural objects or events” in the world.¹⁰ That is, we project value not only onto fellow humans, but also onto non-human animals as well as the ecological system as a whole. Callicott argues that this type of subjectivism will not be radically relativistic because humans’ common evolutionary heritage will ensure that differences in valuing will be limited.

Callicott’s view has been subject to many criticisms. A number of commentators have argued that Callicott’s Humean/Darwinian metaethic fails to support his first-order claims favoring environmental preservation.¹¹ Many critics have also claimed that there is little basis in Hume’s work for this interpretation.¹² We claim that although Callicott’s account does need supplementation, it is nevertheless on the right track. This paper develops a Humean metaethic to apply to the animal world and, given some further considerations, to the rest of nature. Our interpretation extends Hume’s account of sympathy, our natural ability to sympathize with the emotions of others, so that we may sympathize with not only human beings but also animals, plants and ecosystems as well. Further, we suggest that Hume has the resources for an account of environmental value that applies to non-human animals, non-sentient elements of nature as well as nature as whole even without the appeal to sympathy. One consequence of this approach is that the reasons for promoting animal welfare need not be restricted to ‘sentientist’ reasons.

Callicott focuses primarily on giving a Humean metaethic for a holistic environmental ethic. Our own route proceeds first through animal ethics, which is an obvious candidate for a Humean view since it is not hard to see that humans may have sympathy for sentient animals. After doing so, we give considerations that extend this Humean animal metaethic to the rest of nature. It is perhaps unsurprising that Callicott fails to take this route in developing his Humean

account. In his early work, Callicott argues explicitly against individualistic animal ethics since it conflicts with holistic environmental ethics.¹³ For instance, a concern for ecosystemic flourishing is fully consistent with (and in many cases requires) gruesome killings of predators by prey. Thus, in line with Callicott's early position, one who is overly sympathetic with the wellbeing of individual animals may be unable to properly respect the ecosystem as a whole. Even though in later work Callicott argues for common ground between environmentalists and animal rights activists, he remains skeptical of the fundamentality of claims that we should respect individual animals.¹⁴ But his first-order communitarian commitments make Callicott's development of a Humean metaethic more difficult than it need be. By beginning with animal ethics, our development of a Humean environmental metaethic takes an easier route.¹⁵

Callicott's Humean/Darwinian Account

Callicott's main idea is that a Humean-Darwinian account of human feelings of benevolence can explain how we can feel sympathy for both individuals within nature as well as the whole of nature. The starting point is Darwin's account of the origin and evolution of ethics in the 1871 work *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. Darwin thought that social instincts lead an "animal to take pleasure in the society of its fellows, to feel a certain amount of sympathy with them" and to help them out.¹⁶ Ethics first arises to promote the solidarity of human societies, upon which depends the human survival and reproductive success of the individual members of society. As Darwin says, "No tribe could hold together if murder, robbery, treachery, etc., were common" and the disintegration of the tribe means that the survival and reproductive success of its members would be doomed.¹⁷ As such, "actions are regarded by savages [...] as good or bad" only insofar as they "affect the welfare of the tribe - not that of the species, nor that of an individual member of the tribe."¹⁸ Darwin thinks that this conclusion

backs up the belief that ethics is “derived from the social instincts, for both relate at first exclusively to the community.”¹⁹

Callicott then traces Darwin’s view back to Hume’s theory of the moral sentiments in which “there also runs a strong strain of holism.”²⁰ On Hume’s view we have “sympathy for our fellows” and we are also “naturally endowed with a sentiment the object of which is society itself.”²¹ In support of his interpretation, Callicott quotes a passage from the 1751 *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*²² when Hume insists that “we must renounce the theory which accounts for every moral sentiment by the principle of self-love” and that, we “must adopt a more publick affection, and allow that the interests of society are not [...] entirely indifferent to us” (EPM 5.2.17).²³ Callicott interprets this to mean that we ought to have concern for the well-being of society as a whole as well as concern for the individual members of society. Callicott also emphasizes passages in which Hume says things such as the “benevolent principles of our frame engage us on the side of the social virtues” and that “Everything that promotes the interests of society must communicate pleasure, and what is pernicious give uneasiness.”²⁴ Both Hume and Darwin, he points out, recognized that some moral sentiments, such as loyalty and patriotism, relate exclusively and specifically to society.²⁵

The Humean/Darwinian framework provides a subjectivist sort of intrinsic value that ultimately depends upon human valuers and their feelings or sentiments.²⁶ Callicott claims that, “There can be no value apart from an evaluator [...] all value is as it were in the eye of the beholder [and] therefore, is humanly dependent.”²⁷ He says that terms such as good, evil, beauty, ugliness, right, and wrong would cease to apply if all human consciousness happened to be “annihilated at a stroke.”²⁸ That is to say that all intrinsic value is “anthropogenic,” that is,

generated by humans and “humanly conferred” although it is “not necessarily homocentric” as value extends beyond human beings.²⁹

Callicott recognizes the concern that an account of intrinsic value grounded in human sentiments may lead to relativism. Certainly, not everyone values old-growth forests. Some see no value in an old-growth forest except for its lumber value – one might say that they miss the forest not for the trees, *per se*, but for the board-feet of timber. However, if value is based upon human reactive attitudes, then are there interpersonal grounds upon which one claims that it is wrong to exploit a forest for its maximum timber value and destroy an ecosystem in so doing? Callicott responds to this kind of criticism by claiming that differences in attributions of intrinsic value are due to differences in individuals’ factual understanding of ecological processes. Callicott discusses at length how reading Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac* gave him a greater understanding of mountain ecology and changed his attitude toward wolf hunting. Wolves kill deer, and when deer population increases, flora becomes severely depleted. After seeing these effects, Leopold decided that it is wrong to hunt wolves. This kind of conversion is important for Callicott’s purposes, because it shows that making the wrong judgments about how to treat the non-human world can be reduced (at least in this case) to committing an error in factual judgment about the consequences of one’s action. Hence, there is still a genuinely normative aspect to his theory.³⁰

It is plausible to suppose (and *A Sand County Almanac* provides a good case-study) that those who have studied the complexity of biotic systems are likely to have an appreciation and respect for them. Just as learning more about the lives of people in distant places often has the effect of making one more respectful of them, learning more about complex ecological relationships will make one more inclined to view biotic systems as being morally considerable.

If this is correct, then those who believe that biotic communities have no value have either false beliefs or an inadequate understanding of how the biological world, of which they are a part, works, and this is why Callicott's account can be taken to be genuinely normative. Moreover, Callicott believes that Leopold provides reasons why non-human species, biotic communities, and ecosystems should be valued intrinsically. Of wildflowers and songbirds, Leopold writes that "these creatures are members of the biotic community, and if (as I believe) its stability depends on its integrity, they are entitled to continuance."³¹

Callicott's view requires considerable convergence of human judgment under circumstances of good understanding of natural ecological processes, and this might be overly optimistic. If appreciation for nature is a natural feature of all humans, then why has there been such enormous variation between different people in different places, or different epochs, concerning their valuing of nature? To respond, Callicott invokes a Darwinian moral psychology.³² The basic idea is that individuals in the far past who destroyed their natural environments would have been unable to pass their genes down through the generations, and so those who have the greatest reproductive fitness are those who did not destroy their environments. And so somehow, it is encoded into our genes for us to wish to promote the flourishing of the environment.

The majority of the criticism directed at Callicott's environmental metaethic concerns the use of Hume's theory of moral sentiments and not his Darwin's evolutionary account, and the former will be our focus as well. As stated above, many commentators have claimed that Hume's philosophy does not support the land ethic. Partridge even thinks that Humean moral sentiments actually "alienate humans from nature."³³ While we can extrapolate from sympathy with concrete others to consider the public interest at large, it is difficult to conceive, on Hume's

view, how we can sympathize with, or take moral concern in society as a whole, over and above its individual members.³⁴ Critics have also pointed out that it is difficult to see how we can extend moral concern to inanimate objects such as trees, soils and waters. According to Valls, these simply are not the sorts of things for which we can have an independent moral concern and so it seems difficult to incorporate such things under the Humean progress of sentiments.³⁵

Despite all these concerns regarding Callicott's assumptions, the Humean environmental ethic approach is promising. The next section develops a Humean metaethic for the specific case of animal ethics. To situate our position, we survey first Hume on animals and the relevant interpretive options.

Hume on Animal Morality

Hume makes frequent comparisons between human and animal nature. Sometimes he emphasizes the similarity between them. He says that animals are “endowed with thought and reason as well as men,” that the mechanism of sympathy “takes place among animals, no less than among men,” and that animals are capable of the same passions of love, hatred, fear, anger, courage, grief, envy, malice, and pity as humans (THN 1.3.16; 2.2.12/EMPL 592). At other times Hume emphasizes the differences between humans and animals.³⁶ Animals have no moral sense or the capacity to make moral judgments. In the *Treatise* he says that “incest in the human species is criminal” but that the same actions in animals “have not the smallest moral turpitude” (THN 3.1.1.25). In another notorious passage, Hume says that animals are exempt from the rules of justice. He imagines a species of “creatures, intermingled with men, which, though rational, were possessed of such inferior strength, both of body and mind, that they were incapable of all resistance” and claims that “we should be bound by the laws of humanity, to give gentle usage to these creatures, but should not, properly speaking, lie under any restraint of justice” (EPM

3.1.18/EMPL 467-8).³⁷ At the end of the passage he says that this is “plainly” the situation of humans with regard to non-human animals (EPM 3.1.18/EMPL 467-8). This suggests that the rules of justice can only apply to relations between equal persons and are not applicable in the relations between human and purportedly inferior creatures. For Hume, then, justice does not apply to non-human animals. Since Hume understands the scope of justice so narrowly to include only property rights, then all he really means is that animals cannot own property; although, by the law of humanity³⁸ animals require our mercy and compassion.³⁹

It seems reasonable enough to suppose that a general Humean framework provides an extensive conception of justice which can be applied to animals. After all, Hume thought that “the boundaries of justice” will continue to expand in accordance with the expansiveness of our viewpoints, and that history, experience and reason “sufficiently instruct us in this natural progress of human sentiments” (EPM 3.1.21).⁴⁰ The inclusion of moral duties toward animals might naturally be considered as part of the “gradual enlargement” of the domain of justice (EPM 3.1.21). However, it might be questioned as to whether the sentiment of humanity would be enough to develop a genuine account of justice required for an animal ethic. Korsgaard notes that on Hume’s view there are no obligations towards animals although the law of humanity may “retrain us from treating them too badly.”⁴¹ In “Just like All the Other Animals of the Earth,” Korsgaard argues that while “most people seem to hold that we should not kill or hurt the animals unless we have a good reason, but also that any reason except malicious fun is probably good enough” and that “in the same way, Hume’s “laws of humanity” do not clearly forbid us to use the other animals in any way that we might find convenient.” In response to Korsgaard, Driver provides a Humean defense of humanity. Extending Hume’s “framework”, she notes that animals “have a kind of society with us” and “we interact with pets and other domesticated

animals.”⁴² This relationship sets up a “separate class of artificial norms” that governs the interactions between humans and animals.⁴³ On the Humean view then, we may extend our positive duty to aid those who are suffering to include animal suffering, but this duty is confined only to those animals closely connected to us. There is no positive duty to aid animals that do not have a connection with us such as wild animals although we do at least have a negative duty not to cause animal suffering.⁴⁴

On Hume’s account, moral sentiments for others are based in sympathy. Sympathy is a natural mechanism in human nature by which we “receive by communication” the “inclinations and sentiments” of others resembling us so that one’s idea of another’s emotion, say my idea of your happiness, when vivid enough, is actually converted into the experience of the emotion itself (THN 2.1.11.2, 4-8). Hume recognizes that it is natural for us to sympathize more greatly with those closest to us, meaning that it is easier to relate to and connect with someone who is similar and close to you. Our ability to sympathize thus varies with the differences in the relations between our self and to others: our spatial and temporal distance to other persons, the degree of resemblance others have to us, and whether relations of causality exist between our self and others, such as our being related as family members or as close friends. Recent research has supported the notion that it is also much easier to sympathize with someone you recognize, understand and identify with.⁴⁵

To compensate for variation in the observer’s sympathies resulting from physical or temporal closeness to or distance from the person judged, Hume recommends contemplation of the person or action from a common perspective or general point of view (EPM 9.1.6). These sorts of corrections are “common” to all of our senses (THN 3.3.1.16). If we did not correct our own perspective and assume some sort of common standard in our everyday interactions with

others, communication would be difficult and we would run into constant conflicts with others (THN 3.3.1.16). So we consider a general point of view in which the character or action of the person is examined from the standpoint where it appears the same to every person “without reference to our particular interest” (THN 3.1.2.4; 3.3.1.30). As Elizabeth Radcliffe explains, if we understand that “our sentiments are influenced by our particular perspectives” we can “compensate for our relation to others by considering how we would feel when the influence of relations eliminated.”⁴⁶ It is only when “we fix on some steady and general point of view” that in fact moral sentiments are felt (THN 3.3.1.15-16). The consideration of person or action in general is what “causes such a feeling or sentiment as denominates it morally good or evil,” or produces “that particular feeling or sentiment, on which moral distinctions depend” (THN 3.1.2.4; 3.3.130). Sympathy allows us to continue to feel pleasure or displeasure from the consideration of the characters of persons or actions considered from the general point of view. We must take up the general point of view for the sympathetic pleasant or unpleasant feelings to cause a corresponding pleasant or unpleasant moral sentiment that marks the presence of virtue or vice.⁴⁷

As previously noted Hume thought that the strength of the sympathetic communication of sentiments is subject to variation and depends upon the degree of resemblance as well as the distance between the observer and the person with whom he or she sympathizes. Hume does emphasize the resemblances between humans and animals: both experience pain and pleasure, possess reason⁴⁸ and the passions, and are capable of sympathy.⁴⁹ Given this, along with the fact that because of sympathy we infer the feelings of others by their behaviors and the fact that animals express their feelings in ways similar to those of humans, we can sympathize with animals when they experience pain or pleasure. Increased understanding of our similarity to

animals will heighten our feelings of sympathy towards animals. Studies indicate that our sympathy for different species tends to increase with phylogenetic relatedness to humans.⁵⁰

Even though Hume acknowledges that we do sympathize to a greater degree with those close to us than we do with those that are further removed, the fact remains that we can and do sympathize with those that are further removed from us, including animals. According to Hume, this is done by taking up the general point of view. When we adopt the general point of view and from that position contemplate the quality or character of another which has a tendency to produce good for others or humanity itself or non-human animals, and whose operation produces, or is expected to produce, pleasure, we approve of it, as we sympathize with the feelings of those affected.

Further, given that humans and animals both strive to avoid pain, we feel disapprobation towards those who are malicious, i.e., those who inflict or condone the infliction of pain and suffering on both humans and animals, we deem their motives and character to be vicious, and consider them morally blameworthy. From a Humean point of view then, it is morally wrong to inflict pain and suffering on any animal whether close to us or far away, domestic or wild. The only relevant differences between our relationships with domesticated and wild or distant animals are those of degree of distance, resemblance and causality, and thus we can still sympathize with animals that are exploited far away from us and deem poor treatment of them to be immoral. In sum, if we allow that our sympathy extends to animals, and if we are capable of taking up the general point of view, then we can be moved by the plights of animals suffering whether those animals are domesticated or wild, or close to us or far away from us. Since this concern can be seen as an intrinsic valuing of these animals, this view provides the groundwork for humans to have positive duties to relieve such cases of animal suffering, like a duty to do

something about some of the unnecessary suffering of rabbits used in experiments in human cosmetics. We might broaden the scope of sympathy and our resulting moral emotions are what ultimately move us to act compassionately towards animals on the Humean view.

One problem for a Humean account of value in animals ethics is that it is questionable exactly *which* sentiments play the proper role in determining one's moral judgment. Many natural processes are distasteful to many humans in many ways, and many humans take delight in many natural processes.⁵² But this problem may also be overcome by appealing to the general point of view. Hume thinks sympathy also "has a great influence on our sense of beauty" and recommends we "fix on some steady and general points of view" to correct our judgments about beauty. While we may not immediately delight at the appearance of certain sorts of creatures, it is certainly possible that a greater understanding of how the animal's unique physical features help it to survive and its integral role in the system of nature might alter our judgment about their appearance.

Concerns have been raised that Callicott's Humean environmental ethic may not provide the kind of convergence needed for a proper environmental ethic. But in the case of animal metaethics, if the foregoing is correct, such concerns are lessened. Of course, not every person values non-human animals. The degree of variation, given the right kinds of information about non-human animals, is not as extensive as the difference in how much different people value non-sentient aspects of nature. There is considerable convergence among people that non-human animals matter. For instance, a prominent study of American attitudes shows widespread agreement that non-human animals matter.⁵³ In the next section, we consider whether a Humean account can extend sympathy so as to embrace not only other human beings and animals, but also non-sentient things like plants and ecosystems as well, and we suggest that a Humean

account of value may even extend to non-human animals, the non-sentient parts of nature and ecosystems without sympathy.

A Humean Environmental Ethic?

We have focused primarily on providing a Humean metaethic which shows that non-human animals are, in principle at least, morally considerable. However, there are other resources in Hume's sentimentalism – resources to which Callicott and others do not appeal – which support an extension of moral consideration to other aspects of the non-human world.

As Valls has shown, several of Callicott's critics have pointed out that aesthetic considerations are morally relevant from a Humean point of view.⁵⁴ If we do value and appreciate these aesthetic aspects of nature, they may provide "reasons and motives for preserving it."⁵⁵ Hume allows that we are affected with pleasure by inanimate objects in the world such as houses, ships and chimneys (THN 2.2.5.16). He pays special attention to features of the natural world that "delight us" such as rich soils and a "happy climate" (THN 3.3.1.20). Sunshine or "well-cultivated plains" communicate to us a "secret joy and satisfaction" (EPM 6.1.22). Grand features in the natural world such as a vast ocean, an "extended plain," a "wide forest" or "a vast chain of mountains" do "excite in the mind a sensible emotion" and this "admiration [...] is one of the most lively pleasures, which human nature is capable of enjoying" (THN 2.2.8.4). The advantages attached to natural objects increases our admiration. He says "that nothing renders a field more agreeable than its fertility" and that a "plain, overgrown with furze and broom, may be, in itself, as beautiful as a hill cover'd with vines or olive-trees" (THN 2.2.5.18/3.3.1.8).

This is all made possible by sympathy. Hume gives the example of a person who shows us with particular care the layout of a convenient house. The beauty is evident in the house and

this gives us pleasure but also by the communication of sentiments we also sympathize with the proprietor of the house: we “enter into his interest” and “feel the same satisfaction, that the objects naturally occasion in him” (THN 2.2.5.16). Hume extends this observation to objects such as tables, chairs, coaches, saddles, and ploughs. The beauty of these kinds of objects is “chiefly derived from their utility” and this advantage concerns the owner alone and interests the spectator via sympathy only (THN 2.2.5.17). Features of nature such as the fertility of soils, bright sunshine and the vast plains “delight us by a reflection on the happiness they wou’d afford the inhabitants” (THN 3.3.1.20). The Humean view can allow that sentiments to preserve or destroy certain kinds of inanimate objects and features of nature are the sorts of things that can be morally considerable given their fundamental relations to humans.

Furthermore, sentiments toward the preservation or destruction of society as a whole can themselves be morally considerable given that society is necessary for the subsistence of the human species. Human life relates to and depends on the elements of nature and the ecological system in fundamental and complex ways. Hume argues that we depend on society to survive and we want to advance it (EMPL 480/THN 3.2.2.24). Accordingly everything “that promotes the interests of society must communicate pleasure” and moral approval, whereas “what is pernicious give uneasiness” and is morally blameworthy (EPM 5.2.46). All the virtues that have a “tendency to the public good,” such as justice and loyalty, “derive all their merit from our sympathy with those, who reap any advantage from them” (THN 3.3.6.1).

The non-human components of our environment – animals and natural features such as the rivers, soils, oceans, even the societal system as a whole – are then capable of engaging our sympathy via pleasure and becoming objects of moral standing on the Humean view. A Humean view might even allow, as Haught suggests, that “we are warranted in projecting some kinds of

intrinsic values to objects that have instrumental value or are subjectively satisfying.”⁵⁶ Even if the origin of our interest in such objects is entirely instrumental, our interest can and in many cases does extend to an intrinsic valuing. This is not due to any necessary connection between usefulness and intrinsic goodness, but even if the intrinsic valuing does owe its origins to instrumental valuing, this does not comprise any sort of mistake.

There may even be resources in Hume’s account to develop a sentimentalist account of moral regard to nature *without* extending sympathy to it. To explain we draw on Frierson’s compelling case that sympathy with non-sentient nature is possible within Adam Smith’s ethics.⁵⁷ *Contra* Callicott who finds “little ethical holism” in Smith’s moral philosophy, Frierson shows the possibility of extending Smith’s account of sympathy, “and thereby benevolence and justice,” to nature.⁵⁸ Frierson also shows how Smith can accommodate similar attitudes toward nature without any extension of sympathy. He appeals to Smith’s account of sympathy and duties toward the dead to show how “Smith provides a model for how to account for similar attitudes towards nature.”⁵⁹ This is “important in the context of environmental ethics” according to Frierson because it “dramatically expands the scope of sympathy” beyond sentient creatures since the “dead are not human, not sentient, and not even living.”⁶⁰

There is a lot of debate about the similarities and differences between Hume and Smith on sympathy. Frierson explains the main difference is that Hume emphasizes “that one sympathizes with the *actual passions* of the object of one’s sympathy” whereas Smith’s “account of sympathy includes sufficient examples to show that sympathetic feelings are based not on the actual feelings of another.”⁶¹ For Smith, sympathy depends on how one feels when “one imagines oneself in the position of the other, and that feeling will often be quite different from what that other feels.”⁶² There is not the space to compare Hume and Smith on sympathy in

detail, but it is worth noting that Hume might have the resources to adopt a similar approach. If so, then it might also be possible on Hume's account that one might have attitudes and duties towards non-human animals, parts of non-sentient nature and the ecological system as a whole without the requirement of sympathy. Frierson acknowledges in the twenty-fifth footnote of "Adam Smith and the Possibility of Sympathy with Nature" that there are some examples wherein "Hume seems to suggest that one can sympathize without sympathizing with actual feelings of another." Hume describes, for example, being present at the "more terrible operations of surgery":

'tis certain, that even before it begun, the preparation of the instruments, the laying of the bandages in order, the heating of the irons, with all the signs of anxiety and concern in the patient and assistants, would have a great effect upon my mind, and excite the strongest sentiments of pity and terror (THN 3.3.1.7).

This example of the observer strongly resonating with the feelings of the patient during the preparation of instruments in anticipation for a surgical operation supports the possibility of extending Hume's account of sympathy to non-human aspects of nature.

Moreover, Hume admits that when we apply these principles of correction to our feelings, we find that our feelings do not often correspond entirely to our considered judgments. He says that the "judgment corrects or endeavours to correct the appearance, but that "it is not able entirely to prevail over sentiment" (EPM 5.2 n. 1). He allows thus that our passions "do not always follow our corrections" and that our passions "do not readily follow the determination of our judgment" (THN 3.3.1.21, 17).

Nevertheless the correction of our sentiments is good enough to serve its purpose for our everyday social interactions with other people. Hume says that the correction is "sufficient to

regulate our abstract notions, and are alone regarded, when we pronounce in general concerning the degrees of virtue and vice” (THN 3.3.1.21). He writes that even though,

the heart takes not part entirely with those general notions, nor regulates all its love and hatred, by the universal abstract differences of vice and virtue, without regard to self, or the persons with whom we are more intimately connected; yet, have these moral differences a considerable influence, and being sufficient at least for discourse, serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools (EPM 5.2).

Consequently, Hume’s theory does not require that our feelings need to correspond precisely to the moral standards we adopt and espouse in discourse. Hume even suggests that moral judgments can occur without the presence of actual feelings:

We blame equally a bad action, which we read of in history, with one performed in our neighbourhood the other day: The meaning of which is, that we know from reflection, that the former action would excite as strong sentiments of disapprobation as the latter, were it placed in the same position (THN 3.3.1.18).

This has the advantage of broadening the scope of a Humean environmental ethic. Now it may be possible to defend environmental values toward not only animals, but also inanimate objects such as trees and marshes, as well as the whole of nature without the sole appeal to sympathy with nature.

One further point worth noting, especially in the context of the other essays in this book, is that this also entails that our reasons for caring for animals (and even other humans) need not depend exclusively on their status as fellow sentient beings. We may appreciate all animals for their beauty and for their contributions to the ecosystems of which they are parts.

One might still argue that the kind of moral standing on this Humean view is a purely instrumental value, and thus does not provide the kind of warrant for intrinsic moral consideration of the environment that is desired by Callicott and other environmental philosophers. There are three forms of response to this. First, we might abandon the intrinsic/instrumental value distinction. One could adopt a view, such as that of Bryan Norton, who seeks to undermine the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value, and claims that arguments in favor of environmental preservation should be cast in terms of anthropocentric reasons.⁶³ Second, one might claim that sentiments favoring environmental preservation have become so entrenched within us that even in specific cases where there is no human benefit of a feature of the environment or even of a far-flung ecosystem as a whole, we would continue to value the environment and desire its preservation, all things considered. For example, it seems that even if the last person (as in Richard Sylvan's famous thought experiment from "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?") derives pleasure out of destroying the last remaining trees, there still seem (to many people, at least) to be moral reasons why he is wrong to do so.

Third, we can accept that Hume himself did not accept an extension of intrinsic ethical consideration to ecosystems, but we may still use the resources of the metaethical system he develops, with its non-relativist sentimentalist projectivism, to create a *neo-Humean* environmental metaethic, in the same spirit as Callicott's. This might be done in a variety of ways. The fact is that many humans – especially those who have studied ecology – nowadays do have sentiments favoring ecosystems and this may be enough to ground an ascription of intrinsic value to the natural world. Hume did recommend that the expression and scope of such feelings of sympathy and moral sentiments depend on how far our reason and understanding informs

them, so it makes sense that the Humean environmental ethic would be open to revision of sentiments in light of new empirical information about the inter-relatedness of natural beings in ecological science. In this spirit we hope to have shown in this paper that there is no reason to limit Humean moral sentiments to the human species.⁶⁴

¹ Tom Beauchamp, "Hume on the Nonhuman Animal," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 24 (4) (1999): 322-335, 332.

² Some scholars have argued that we ought to drop the term intrinsic value from environmental ethics altogether; see Andrew Light, "Contemporary Environmental Ethics: From Metaethics to Public Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy* 33 (2002): 426-49; Bruce Morito, "Intrinsic Value: A Modern Albatross for the Ecological Approach," *Environmental Values* 12 (2003): 317-336; Bryan Norton, "Why I Am Not a Nonanthropocentrist: Callicott and the Failure of Monistic Inherentism," *Environmental Ethics* 17 (1995): 341-58, and Anthony Weston, "Beyond Intrinsic Value: Pragmatism in Environmental Ethics," In *Environmental Pragmatism*, ed. Andrew Light and Eric Katz, (London: Routledge, 1996), 285-306. For a recent defense of intrinsic value see Katie McShane, "Why Environmental Ethics Shouldn't Give up on Intrinsic Value," *Environmental Ethics* 29 (2007): 43-61.

³ See Jim Cheney, "Intrinsic Value in Environmental Ethics: Beyond Subjectivism and Objectivism," *The Monist*, 75(2) (1992): 227-235; Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 4, 197, and J. Baird Callicott, "Intrinsic Value, Quantum Theory, and Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 7 (1985): 257-275, 261.

⁴ J. Baird Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic: More Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999), 241.

⁵ Callicott, "Intrinsic Value in Nature: a Metaethical Analysis," *The Electronic Journal of Analytic Philosophy* 3 (1995), retrieved 6/30/2014: <http://ejap.louisiana.edu/EJAP/1995.spring/callicott.1995.spring.html>. See also Richard Routley (Sylvan), "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?" reprinted in *Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Michael Zimmerman, et al, (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001): 17-25; Holmes Rolston III, "Is There an Ecological Ethic?" *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy*, 18(2) (1975): 93-109, and Tom Regan, "The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic," *Environmental Ethics* 3 (1) (1981): 19-34.

⁶ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, reprinted in *A Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from Round River*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 204.

⁷ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 239.

⁸ Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 66-7.

⁹ J. Baird Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989): 152, "Environmental Ethics: An Overview" (2000), accessed on 6/30/14 at <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/disciplines/ethics/index.html>, and "The Land Ethic," in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Dale Jamieson, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 204-217, 205.

¹⁰ Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, 147. Rolston in *Environmental Ethics* defends an alternative account of intrinsic value where value is literally a property of entities of the world.

¹¹ See for instance Norton, "Why I Am Not an Anthropocentrist" and Ernest Partridge, "Ecological Morality and Nonmoral Sentiments," *Environmental Ethics* 18 (1996): 149-63.

¹² See for example Alan Carter, "Projectivism and the Last Person Argument," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 41 (1) (2004): 51-62; James Fieser, "Callicott and the Metaphysical Basis of Ecocentric Morality," *Environmental Ethics* 15 (1993): 171-80; Paul Haught, "Hume's Projectivist Legacy for Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics* 28(1) (2006): 77-96; Yeuk-Sze Lo, "Non-Humean Holism, Un-Humean Holism," *Environmental Values* 10 (2001): 113-23 and "Making and Finding Values in Nature: From a Humean Point of View," *Inquiry* 49.2 (2006): 123-147; Partridge, "Ecological Morality and Nonmoral Sentiments," Andrew Valls, "Hume, Justice and the Environment," in *Engaging Nature: Environmentalism and the Political Theory Canon*, ed. Peter Cannavo and Joseph H. Lane, Jr., (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014); Gary Varner, "No Holism Without Pluralism," *Environmental*

Ethics 13 (1991): 175-79, and Jennifer Welchman, Jennifer, "Hume, Callicott, and the Land Ethic: Prospects and Problems," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 43 (2009): 201-20.

¹³ J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair," *Environmental Ethics* 2(4) (1980): 311-338.

¹⁴ See J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Back Together Again," *Between the Species An Online Journal for the Study of Philosophy and Animals* 4(3) (1988): 163-169.

¹⁵ For an account of sentimentalism and animal ethics, see Elisa Aaltola's "The Rise of Sentimentalism and Animal Ethics," chapter 12 of this volume.

¹⁶ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, (New York: Appleton and Company: 1871): 69.

¹⁷ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 89.

¹⁸ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 92-3.

¹⁹ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 93.

²⁰ Callicott, "Environmental Ethics."

²¹ Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, 126

²² The following abbreviations will be used for Hume's works: EMPL (*Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (revised edition), ed. Eugene Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985); EPM (*An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and THN (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David F. Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). References to the *Enquiry* and *Treatise* cite book, chapter, section, and paragraph. References to the *Essays* cite page numbers only.

²³ Quoted in Callicott, "Environmental Ethics" and "The Land Ethic," 208.

²⁴ Quoted in Callicott, "The Land Ethic," 209.

²⁵ Callicott, "The Land Ethic," 209

²⁶ J. Baird Callicott, "Non-anthropocentric Value Theory and Environmental Ethics," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21 (1984): 299-309, 305.

²⁷ Callicott, "Non-anthropocentric Value Theory," 325.

²⁸ Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, 193-4.

²⁹ J. Baird Callicott, "Rolston on Intrinsic Value: A Deconstruction," *Environmental Ethics* 14 (1992): 129-143, 132, 129.

³⁰ Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, 115.

³¹ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 210.

³² Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic*, 107-108.

³³ Partridge, "Ecological Morality and Nonmoral Sentiments," 149-150.

³⁴ See Varner, "No Holism Without Pluralism" and Welchman, "Hume, Callicott, and the Land Ethic," 205.

³⁵ Valls, "Hume, Justice and the Environment," Part 3.

³⁶ For a recent account of the similarities and differences between human and animal cognition, see David Premack, "Human and Animal Cognition: Continuity and Discontinuity," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 104(35) (2007): 13861-13867.

³⁷ There is a lot of debate about this passage. For discussion see Arthur Kuflik, "Hume on Justice to Animals, Indians and Women," *Hume Studies*, 44 (1) (1998): 53-70, and Joyce L. Jenkins and Robert Shaver, "'Mr. Hobbes Could Have Said No More.'" In *Feminist Interpretations of David Hume*, ed. Anne Jaap Jacobson (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 137-155.

³⁸ We shall suppose that Hume uses the term "humanity" more or less synonymously with "benevolence." On this point see Remy Debes, "Humanity, Sympathy, and the Puzzle of Hume's Second *Enquiry*," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 15 (2007): 27-57, 29, and Jenkins and Shaver, "'Mr. Hobbes Could Have Said No More,'" 546.

³⁹ This point is made by Julia Driver, "A Humean Account of the Status and Character of Animals," in *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*, ed. Tom Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 144-171, 160 and Valls "Hume, Justice and the Environment," Part 2.

⁴⁰ See Peter Singer, *The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981).

⁴¹ Korsgaard, "Moral Animals: Humans Beings and the Other Animals," 26.

⁴² Driver, "A Humean Account of the Status and Character of Animals," 163.

⁴³ Driver, "A Humean Account of the Status and Character of Animals," 163.

⁴⁴ Driver, "A Humean Account of the Status and Character of Animals," 164. See Claire Palmer, *Animal Ethics in Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) for a lengthy defense of this position, though not on Humean grounds.

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- ⁴⁵ Frans De Waal, *The Age of Empathy – Nature’s Lessons for a Kinder Society* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009) and Birgitta Forsman, *Animal Experimentation* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1992).
- ⁴⁶ Elizabeth Radcliffe, “Hume on Motivating Sentiments, the General Point of View, and the Inculcation of Morality,” *Hume Studies* 20 (1) (1994): 37-58, 43.
- ⁴⁷ For recent neuroscience on sympathy and empathy see Jean Decety and Kalina J. Michalska, “Neurodevelopmental Changes in the Circuits Underlying Empathy and Sympathy from Childhood to Adulthood,” *Developmental Science* 13 (6) (2010): 886–899, esp. p. 886. Sympathy and empathy are often used interchangeably although it is thought that there are important differences between them.
- ⁴⁸ There is a lot of debate about the differences and similarities between human and animal reasoning in Hume’s philosophy; see Beauchamp “Hume on the Non-human Animal” and Boyle “Hume on Animal Reason” for discussion. For intellectual context see Peter Kail, “Leibniz’s Dog and Humean Reason,” in *New Essays on David Hume*, ed. Emanuele Ronchetti and Emilio Mazza (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2007): 65–80.
- ⁴⁹ Most recently, Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pearce detail the “distribution of cognitive empathy in different species” in their *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 123f.
- ⁵⁰ See for example Harrison, “Anthropomorphism, Empathy, and Perceived Communicative Ability.”
- ⁵² This topic has received a great deal of attention in the literature on environmental aesthetics; see especially the papers in Part III of Allen Carlson and Sheila Lintott, ed. *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism: From Beauty to Duty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
- ⁵³ Willet Kempton, James Boster, and Jennifer Hartley, *Environmental Values in American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), ch. 5.
- ⁵⁴ Valls, “Hume, Justice and the Environment,” Part 3; Carter, “Projectivism and the Last Person Argument,” 26; Fieser, “Callicott and the Metaphysical Basis of Ecocentric Morality,” 173, and Partridge, “Ecological Morality and Nonmoral Sentiments.”
- ⁵⁵ Valls, “Hume, Justice and the Environment,” Part 3.
- ⁵⁶ Haught, “Hume’s Projectivist Legacy,” 93. See also D. A. Lloyd Thomas, “Hume and Intrinsic Value,” *Philosophy* 65 (1990): 419-437.
- ⁵⁷ Patrick Frierson, “Adam Smith and the Possibility of Sympathy with Nature.” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (4) (2006): 442-480 and “Applying Adam Smith: towards a Smithian Environmental Virtue Ethics,” in *New Voices on Adam Smith*, ed. Eric Schliesser and Leonidas Montes (London: Routledge, 2006).
- ⁵⁸ Callicott, “The Land Ethic,” 209; Frierson, “Adam Smith and the Possibility of Sympathy with Nature,” 479.
- ⁵⁹ Frierson, “Adam Smith and the Possibility of Sympathy with Nature,” 453, 455.
- ⁶⁰ Frierson, “Adam Smith and the Possibility of Sympathy with Nature,” 453.
- ⁶¹ Frierson, “Adam Smith and the Possibility of Sympathy with Nature,” 450-1.
- ⁶² Frierson, “Adam Smith and the Possibility of Sympathy with Nature,” 450.
- ⁶³ Bryan Norton, “Integration or Reduction: Two Approaches to Environmental Values,” in *Environmental Pragmatism*, ed. Andrew Light and Eric Katz (New York: Routledge, 1996): 105-138.
- ⁶⁴ Thanks to Adrian Bardon, Stavroula Glezakos, P.J.E. Kail, Ralph Kennedy, Win Lee, Emilio Mazza, Christian Miller and Andrew Valls for very useful feedback and/or discussion on earlier versions of this paper. Thanks also to the editors Elisa Aaltola and John Hadley for helpful comments on a more recent draft.