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Ph.D. Dissertation

Ethical Foundations of Man–Nature Interaction

by

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ABSTRACT (Ethical Foundations of Man-Nature Interaction)

This dissertation was inspired by the fact that, even after nearly a century of thought and writings centered on the environment and pleading for preservation of nature, and more than fifty years after the first global acknowledgement that there is a anthropocene responsibility for what seems to be a runaway global climate crisis, people are still reluctant in either their personal or their social/corporate/governmental capacities to change their behaviour to alleviate the impact of waste/pollution and fossil fuel dependence. Even when there is lip service paid to environmental values, often actions are not in line with said values, and campaigns aimed at populations to recycle or re-use, or adopt minimalist lifestyles and so-called planet friendly diets are met with controversy and partial adoption. The deconstructionist thinking of Jacques Derrida and the call to a new ethical system to cope with the implications of technology on the part of Hans Jonas are synthesized with findings from animal behaviorists, food technologists and environmental activists to propose that the ethical system truly needed to drive change is based on respect for life in all its forms, and respect for the place man occupies in nature, as a part of nature, not apart from nature.

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Contents

Introduction

In 1895 Arhhenius [1] presented his findings about how the increased levels of carbon in the air were changing the temperature of the world we live in, or to put it in perspective, global warming was discovered if not yet named. In 1979 the nations of the world met at the First World Climate Conference in Geneva, followed by many other similar conferences to discuss and propose solutions to the problem of rising temperatures [2]. Coupled to this was the problem of air and water pollution, the degradation of soils due to monoculture farming and the post-nuclear radiation pollution, which led to our current era being dubbed the Anthropocene epoch.

Since that first conference, the environmental movement has grown, and environmental ethics became a new field, albeit one that was considered part of the utilitarian school [3]. When it then comes to the way in which humanity views nature, White [4] places the blame on the triumph of Christianity over paganism, which led, in his opinion, to the rise of scientific enquiry where anything could be treated as an object for disinterested dissection and use. However, we have to take into consideration that in the struggle to survive, a trait that is discernible in all life, the first consideration is always and will always be the matter of life and death.

In particular, the fact that all carbon-based life depends on ingesting other carbon-based life forms. Even plants depend on the decay of fruits, other plant materials, and animal and insect corpses to provide some essential nutrients. How is it then possible to behave in an ethical manner towards something that you will ultimately kill and eat?

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[1] Arrhenius, Svante, "On the Influence of Carbonic Acid in the Air upon the Temperature of the Ground," Presented to the Stockholm Physical Society, 1895.

[2] John W. Zillman, "A History of Climate Activities," https://public.wmo.int/en/bulletin/history-climate-activities. 2009.

[3] Holmes Rolston III, "Environmental Ethics," In *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy 2nd Edition,* Eds. Nicholas Bunnin and E.P. Tsui-James, (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing. 2003): 217.

[4] Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." *Science* 155: 1205.

I will argue that Jacques Derrida [5] places in our hands a view of how sovereignty can and should consider the world an everything in it as wondrous and amazing, a world to care for and take care of, a world where we recognize that when we place ourselves above the law we can descend into a bestiality of cruelty and abuse of all around us. I will use the lens of Hans Jonas' *Imperative of Responsibility* [6], who exhorts us as sovereigns who are able to wield immense destructive power, to take responsibility for the future of life and to foresee all the possible negative outcomes of our actions, and only then to act or refrain from acting.

By synthesizing these two views, and considering what base values or ethics can effect a change in people, I present the argument that respect for all things, animate and inanimate, is the only logical value to use, since respect engenders a mindset that can chop down a tree to provide fire for a family to survive the winter, and plant another in its place, all the while being thankful for that tree at that time, or kill a deer and use every part of it in grateful acknowledgment of its death, or harvest the vegetables and fruits from farm or garden and use them prudently and well, grateful for their sacrifice.

In the three chapters that will follow, I discuss the general background of the thesis and the sources I have drawn on, including the views of Derrida and Jonas, and finally present the many voices pleading for a new ethic towards food and resources.

I will in conclusion restate the thesis of respect more fully and show how it can impact world environmental ethics.

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[5] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Vols 1 & 2. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington. Edited by Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet and Ginette Michaud (French Edition), edited by Geoffrey Bennington and Peggy Kamuf (English Edition). (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[6] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of Ethics for the Technological Age*. Translated by Hans Jonas and David Herr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

Chapter 1 - Thesis statement and background

1.1 Questions and Thesis Statement

If humans should interact ethically with nature, what does such an interaction look like and why is it important for us to act ethically towards what many consider an impersonal force and object? After all, isn't nature merely a backdrop to the incredible development of humans in terms of language, science, arts, medicine and the control of the environment? Isn't it obvious that humans are not like other animals, and certainly not at all like plants, able to reason and explore and create? After all, nature in the form of food and shelter is there to serve man and ensure the survival of man, or so many believe. Which is why I am posing questions such as do animals have rights and what are they, do plants have rights and what are they, and is it possible to interact ethically with a non-moral agent (or at least, one that cannot communicate its morals if any) or a non-human agent such as nature in all its forms?

That last question is at the heart of my thesis, and in short, my answer is that yes, humans should be interacting ethically with nature, and what such ethics will consist of is to be found partly in the writings of Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility* [7], and partly in the first and second volumes of *The Beast and the Sovereign* [8],[9] by Jacques Derrida. My thesis is culled from these two main sources and numerous supporting articles, and can be stated briefly as follows:

Humans are inclined to consider themselves as sovereign over the natural world, whether on the large scale of corporations, governments and societies, or on the small scale of individual consumption of resources and their interaction with the environment in which such consumption takes place. This sovereignty can and may lead to excluding from ethical rules and values the animals and plants, and indeed all living organisms that share the biosphere with humans, as well as considering the inorganic resources of the earth as expendable and infinitely available for use by sovereign humanity. It even leads to an unbridled sovereignty descending

[7] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of Ethics for the Technological Age*, Trans. Hans Jonas and David Herr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[8] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign, Vol 1*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet and Ginette Michaud (French Edition), ed. Geoffrey Bennington and Peggy Kamuf (English Edition). (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[9] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign, Vol 2*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet and Ginette Michaud (French Edition), ed. Geoffrey Bennington and Peggy Kamuf (English Edition). (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

into beastliness where wars are waged for access to resources, where non-human life is objectified and considered of no worth other than utilitarian, and where humanity becomes nothing more than a mindless consumer of unbridled production and progress. The counter is to take responsibility for the consequences of any actions, not just in the immediate present, but also by considering the effect those actions will have on the future of life, all life. Jonas asks us to evaluate said actions by employing a heuristic of fear that will weigh the possible negative outcomes more heavily than those that are positive, in order to mitigate against unforeseen consequences [10]. The conjunction of a sovereignty in which responsibility is the paramount consideration when it comes to interactions between the subject and any other subjects or objects can be summed up in one word: respect. Not respect that has to be earned, or reciprocated in any way, but respect for life, for the means of sustaining that life, and for those who share this thing called life.

That last sentence summarizes my thesis: Respect is the foundational value on which responsibility for life has to rest. Respect is demonstrated in considering each and every phenomenon as valuable and to value all things, even when we do not find them appealing. Respect is an attitude in which wasted lives and resources are seen as deplorable. Respect looks not just at the present, but a future which cannot be seen or predicted, but which we can extrapolate from historical antecedents, and which we should be accountable to.

Simply stated, humanity needs to lay aside its conception of itself as apart from and above nature and take responsibility for being a part of nature and impacting it profoundly through its use of technology. The consequences of not accepting that ethical interactions with nature are not just empty words but are urgent ethical calls to adopt lifestyles and habits that might well change the course of future events, is to perpetuate damage and destruction that are already taking a toll [11].

1.2 The Ethic of Responsibility

Treating nature with the ethic of responsibility, accepting that we are responsible because we are the sovereign in the sense that we as humans are different, and more able to make a difference, charges us with being held accountable for our actions. This could be seen as utilitarian ethics since we are saving the environment to save ourselves, but it can also be

[10] Hans Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, 26-27.

[11] George Marshall, *Don't even think about it: Why our brains are wired to ignore climate change*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 3.

seen as Levinian ethics in the sense of acknowledging the alterity of all other living organisms and non-living habitats because of their vulnerability. Virtue ethics calls us as much as utilitarian ethics does in this crucial, and increasingly critical consideration of the position we are in presently concerning the world, climate change and environmental destruction. However, both of these ethical systems pale by comparison to Jonas's ethics of responsibility where we have to change our actions based on a possible devastated future we cannot see or experience, a demand that seems aimed at reducing present living standards, a demand that environmentalists have been making for decades and which remains largely unanswered.

There is a caveat to that statement. The world is at present divided sharply into haves and have-nots, or what is called first and third world.

In the first world people take certain things for granted, such as access to energy in the form of electricity or oil-derivatives to power everything from entertainment and food preparation to transport from one place to another. The practice of using fresh water not only to drink but to transport waste materials and to clean ourselves and our homes is not even discussed or considered, unless there is raw sewage discharged into an area close to a recreational beach area [12]. Having access to shops whose shelves are filled with products from all over the globe, which have been prepared for easy consumption, is not considered a luxury. So much of this is a matter of fact, that many no longer know or care where these things come from, and hence do not consider that all of this has an impact on the environment.

In the third world, on the other hand, people are lucky if they have clean water and sanitation [13]. It is estimated that 46% of the world population does not have access to what, these days, are considered minimal sanitation. Food is often a matter of what can be hunted or scavenged, and not what is on the shelves or in the market [14]. Considerations of rarity or extinction of species come in a long way behind the consideration of survival. To ask for an ethical interaction with nature from those who are struggling to survive is perhaps part of the unthinking privilege that first world dwellers are guilty of. Perhaps the first ethical interaction we should take responsibility for is to consider how the inequalities of life in the globe can be

[12] BBC, "Why is raw sewage pumped into the sea?" 26 August 2022. https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-62631320.

13 Max Roser, Hannah Ritchie and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, "World Population Growth," (2013). Published online at *OurWorldInData.org*. This article presents, among other things, the data for deaths that occur globally due to poor sanitation.

[14] Jani Hall, "What is Bushmeat?" *National Geographic*, June 2019. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/bushmeat-explained

addressed. Global news focuses almost exclusively on those countries considered part of the first world, while most of the third-world news stories that reach the mainstream are reports of conflicts and wars [15]. Shor points out that most mainstream media narratives frame the third world in stereotypical, governmentally inspired agendas, rather than reporting on daily life [16]. In order to understand what a life with no privileges truly constitutes, people tend to immerse themselves in such societies and their findings are usually reported in blogs, documentaries and anthropological papers.

1.3 The Current Climate and Global Stage

At the time of writing this dissertation, the mainstream world was filled with news stories about wildfires in Europe and America, reports about floods in Germany, the coronavirus pandemic that was dubbed Covid-19 and the impact it had on the world, as well as the usual stories about war, crime and life in general. Many of the stories that dealt with extreme weather events were no longer just sounding warnings about climate change, they were explicitly saying these events are the consequences of a refusal to limit our carbon emissions and pollution. In other words, we as humans have changed the world by our actions to an extent never before seen, and those changes seem to be hurtling us toward a mass extinction event[17].

The belief that severe climate change will affect those in the poor, undeveloped areas of the world and not a developed nation such as Germany, means that developed nations do not have to do much about giving up their comfortable lifestyles. It also means that many people feel 'I am not responsible for anything that does not happen to me in my backyard', until it does happen to me and mine. Which leads to the abdication of responsibility that is part and parcel of the concept of sovereignty as seen in the ceding of sovereign power to a government in exchange for safety and protection.

Is the government, the sovereign, supposed to act to reverse climate change? Am I responsible as an individual for climate change brought about by decisions made long before my time, or made by governmental sovereignty? Am I responsible for not trying to bring about change? To what extent does my use of electricity, a car, any modern convenience, even the

15 Francis Shor, "The Adult Learner, the News Media, and the Third World: Suppressing and Facilitating Critical Thinking." *The Journal of General Education*, vol. 42, no. 4, 226.

16 Shor, "The Adult Learner, the News Media." 229.

17 Phillip Cafaro. "Three ways to think about the sixth mass extinction." *Biological Conservation* 192. (2015): 387.

computer I am currently using, add to the problem? How do I behave in an environmentally ethical manner without giving up my convenient life?

1.4 Values and non-environmental behaviour

There are those who have tried to not only identify the gap between behaviour and ethical beliefs but have examined why such a gap exists at individual and at institutional levels. Akintunde, in his examination of models that have been proposed in the past, feels that no single model fully explains such behaviour [18]. However, he feels that a combination of existing models can lead to 'understanding that good intentions towards the environment are not enough in themselves to propel an action.' [19]. This is true at institutional (sovereignty) level and at individual (sovereign) levels.

In the words of Keith Peterson 'I realised that if social change is what environmentalists want, they must articulate a cluster of values distinct from those instituted by the existing hegemonic culture, and they must explain why it is better for both humans and nonhumans to adopt this cluster of values. More specifically, I came to see that there is a link between value articulation and practice, between values and action, that needed to be reconsidered at much greater depth than had been done in existing discourses.' [20].

It is clear that people struggle to reconcile ethical systems with action, especially when it comes to that most essential and fragile of support systems – the earth we live on. We all live with a guiding philosophy of some kind, beliefs and values that determine how we act, even if that philosophy consists of nothing more than blaming the government for inaction or expecting others to change their ways. Often those values are nothing more than a knee-jerk emotional reaction based on values that we slowly constructed for ourselves over time, based on interactions with others and the society we live in, as Haidt claims in his book, *The Righteous Mind,* and we justify those reactions after the fact [21].

In a very real sense, ethics is about our character. Do you try to leave the world, or your corner of it, a better place than you found it? Do you try to improve conditions for others? Do you discriminate on racial, social and religious grounds? Are you aware of your bias and do

[18] Elijah A. Akintunde, "Theories and Concepts for Human Behavior in Environmental Preservation." *Journal of Environmental Science and Public Health.* Vol 1, (2). (2017): 120.

[19] Akintunde, "Theories and Concepts.", 131.

[20] Keith Peterson, *A World Not Made for Us,* (New York: SUNY Press, 2020): (xi).

[21] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind,* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012): 24.

you try to respond in ways that negate that bias? Or do you go with the flow? To what extent do you take responsibility for the consequences of your actions, not just in the immediate present or even in a short-term future, but for a long term, almost indefinite future? What do you owe, and how do you behave, towards the unborn generations? And not only to the unborn generations of mankind, but of all life? Do you think the world owes you something? Do you regard life as a zero-sum game?

In other words, what is your character like? Are you a builder of things or a destroyer? Do you strive to be 'good' or do you embrace life as being 'nasty, brutish and short' and live by shunning virtue and embracing vice [22]? Do you accept that each person has a responsibility towards others, or do you regard society and government as being responsible for you?

In trying to answer some of these questions about ethics, and more particularly, the ethics that guide the interaction between humans and nature, we need to consider the two concepts that, in my opinion, are central to any discussion of such ethics, and which I mentioned earlier in this chapter: the idea of sovereignty and responsibility.

1.5 Sovereignty, Responsibility, and Survival

Sovereignty, as mentioned before, can be defined simply as 'supreme authority within a territory.' [23]. From this simple definition, a very complex issue arises, one that has been discussed at length by many philosophers. In this dissertation, I will focus on the discussion that Jacques Derrida conducted in his series of seminars, *The Beast and the Sovereign*. In the second chapter, I will be examining this work and the thought that a sovereign is, in a very real sense, above the law since he/she is the maker of the law as well as its executor in the political sense where sovereignty can be either a king/queen or a government, but is essentially a non-natural prosthesis constructed by society [24]. In terms of individuals, each person regards themselves as sovereign in some area of life, especially those who belong to individualistic societies where the importance of individual sovereignty, free will and rights are valued.

Responsibility arises, for many, from this idea of individual or political sovereignty. If the sovereign is above the law, or outside the law, it is only a sense of responsibility that will keep excesses in check.

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[22] Solomon Schimmel, *The Seven Deadly Sins: Jewish, Christian, and Classical Reflections on Human Psychology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[23] Daniel Philpott, "Sovereignty: An Introduction and Brief History," *Journal of International Affairs* 48, no. 2 (1995): 357.

[24] Derrida *Beast and Sovereign* Vol 1, 41.

A tenet of responsibility is that of being held accountable. Here accountability is the idea of paying for something, being the one who has to settle a debt and clear the books or set things right. In simple words, any action that causes some effect can be laid at our door if we are the ones who instigated it or caused it or acted in a way that caused it. In this idea of accountability and responsibility we see an implied link between cause and effect. In short, we live in a world where, pragmatically speaking, if I step on a cricket, I will lift my foot to see a squashed, lifeless corpse. Cause - my foot on its body. Effect - death by squashing and breaking open the exoskeleton. This cause and effect that ties into responsibility or accountability is what Hans Jonas talks about when he considers the impact of humans on the environment, from which he developed what he called a new ethics, based on the imperative of responsibility [25].

Hans Jonas states that the imperative of responsibility is a duty to ensure that there *be* a future life and, with it, future subjects and this duty towards life rests on man because of the power he wields through technology that is capable of destroying it [26]. Responsibility, according to Jonas, rests on the 'ought-to-be' of the object and the 'ought-to-do' of the subject, in whose power the capacity to care for the object in such a way that in can fulfil its full *being* resides [27]. The categorical imperative of Kant, treating human beings as ends in and of themselves, is not so much set aside by Jonas as transformed to recognize the role that power, and the responsible use of power, plays in treating not just human beings but life in all its complexity as an end in and of itself [28]. This is the other thought that will be explored more fully in Chapter 2.

Another critical aspect of life, the fact that everything alive has to consume nutrients derived from the death of living things although for many years it was believed that plants live solely on inorganic substances in the soil and sunlight [29], will be explored in Chapter 3. We now know that plants grow best in soils where dead leaves, plants and animal and insect corpses decay and return their nutrients, collected during their lifetimes, to it [30]. Mammals consume

[25] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, x.

[26] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, 11.

[27] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, 93.

[28] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, 81.

[29] S. Dodds, "The Use of Stimulants." *The Phrenological Journal of Science and Health* Vol. 3, Iss. 4. (1901): 117.

[30] Douglas L. Karlen, et al., "Soil health assessment: Past accomplishments, current activities, and future opportunities," *Soil and Tillage Research Volume 195*, December 2019: 104365

plants and each other to survive. Fish feed on each other and on the plant life in the water. As human beings, we have progressed to the point these days where we have almost no idea of where our nutrients and the various types of food they are encapsulated in come from. Not only in terms of the ingredients used in manufacturing, but the actual fact of death being a part of what we consume. By that I mean that life has to consume organic materials to be sustained, and all organic material differs from non-organic by having life. The idea that what I eat depends on the death of what was once alive so horrifies many that today the vegetarian and vegan movements are a strong and vocal group defending the animal from being killed or exploited for food. As an aside, please consider that we are still talking about first world inhabitants, third world people have no such luxury and know exactly what they are eating and where it came from, and the energy it took to get it into the pot.

People in the movement avoid acknowledging the fact that they consume dead plants, and therefore are still depending on the death of something once living to sustain them. This is probably because a dead carrot does not immediately look different at the moment you pull it from the earth (do we even know what living carrots look like?), since it takes a couple of days before the decay of death sets in, while an animal goes from being animate to inanimate immediately upon death, and we see and feel a visceral reaction to witnessing that death. In her book Vileisis examines how and why the consumer went from someone who knew, intimately, where each item on the table came from, often to the point of having taken part in the butchering of the animal and the growing of the vegetables and fruit, to someone who regards food as a packaged product on the shelves of a supermarket [31].

Considering what has been presented and discussed to this point, let me summarise my arguments: Humans consider themselves above nature, sovereign over nature, and often have no idea of what that nature entails beyond some idealistic vision of paradise lost [32]. The industrialization of food production, from farms practising monoculture planting, to feedlots raising animals in truly horrific conditions, to the waste generated as consumer tastes migrated to pre-packaged and sanitised products which only removed humans even further from nature [33]. Couple that to a medical industry that treats diseases previously considered incurable, a

[31] Ann Vileisis, *Kitchen literacy: How we lost knowledge of where food comes from and why we need to get it back*, (Washington: Island Press, 2008): 7.

[32] Alan Levinovitz, *Natural: How faith in nature's goodness leads to harmful fads, unjust laws and flawed science*, (Boston, Beacon Press, 2020): 3.

[33] Levinovitz, *Natural:* 5.

transportation industry that makes it possible to travel vast distances in a short span of time, and personal technology that removes the hard labour from having a comfortable shelter or keeping in touch with friends and family, and it is easy to see how nature fades into a distant backdrop, one we do not perceive as being anything other than a nice view, remote and untouched.

Such distance from the effects of the choices we make as consumers makes it very difficult to see why I should take responsibility for a world that seems to be on the brink of a catastrophe, especially when my daily life has enough problems of its own. It is even more difficult to see why I should act ethically, and morally, towards those who cannot return the favour. Moreover, what exactly does that ethical act towards nature imply? How do I act ethically? What is the right and good thing to do when it comes to nature?

The history of interactions between man and nature can be viewed as the progression from subsistence to mastery, as bands of hunter-gatherers gave way to agriculturalists, who in turn have given way to technologists.

What then, is the arena in which our responsibility as sovereign people, able to act, and hopefully, prepared to act ethically towards nature can be applied? De Shallit posits three areas - action at home, in the workplace and in the public sphere [34]. As we will see in the following chapters, each of these areas is interlinked to form an arena in which, hopefully, our ethics leads us to actions that support life and the continuance of life. I would add that in each of these arenas we need to act from a deep respect for what we have in the way of resources, be they people, animals and plants, or the world we all share. Sovereignty, exercised responsibly, is respect, and respect values all things as ends in and of themselves, not just as means to an end, that of my own comfort and pleasure, but for the care and wellbeing of all things around me.

[34] Avnir De Shalit, "From Environmental Ethics to Environmental Action." In *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics*. Eds Gardiner, Stephen M. and Thompson, Allen. Oxford: (Oxford University Press. (, 2017): 556.

Chapter 2 - Jonas, Derrida and Ethics

2.1 Ethics in General

Whenever we ask the question 'What is good? What is right?' we are asking a question that will be answered by some ethical principle. We can further ask questions about the answers we receive to determine if they are true, or objective universally applicable answers [35]. For many ethics is concerned with action, and moreover, actions concerning only other human beings [36]. The underlying assumptions of most ethics are that human beings inhabit a special place in the world, that they alone have ethical value simply by reason of being human, and not only have value but that no other species or biological entity has any ethical, subjective value [37]. If we consider such a view of ethics, that it applies only to those who can, so to speak, return the favour, we have to accept that our ethics are of a utilitarian nature, concerned with what we will get out of it, rather than an absolute universal principle that applies in each and every case. If doing no harm is only ethical when we do no harm to those who can harm us, and expect the same from them, we are driven by self-preservation. When we do no harm, even to phenomena that could harm us, simply because causing harm is wrong and destructive to our environment and to our view of ourselves, we are moving towards a universal ethic and the idea of virtue.

Aristotle famously regarded virtues as something a good man should strive for and defined these virtues as the middle path or golden mean between two extremes of behaviour, such as courage being the mean between cowardice and bravery [38]. Walking that middle path

[35] John Skorupski, "Ethics." In *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy 2nd Edition*. Eds Nicholas Bunnin and E.P. Tsui-James. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2003): 202.

[36] Skorupski, "Ethics", 203.

[37] Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*., vii, 48.

[38] Bernard Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy*, (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1945): 173.

therefore made one good, or virtuous. Not too much, not too little. In this case we can then say that ethics becomes a matter of quantity rather than intent.

Principles can be taken as a symbolic presentation of ethics through a set of coded and simple rules that could be followed or used as guides. However, it is difficult to distinguish between principles, virtues, values, morals and ethics as these terms are often used interchangeably. In this thesis, I am following the lead of Singer who uses ethics and morality as interchangeable [39]. As Singer explains, it is almost easier to define what ethics is not and in his opening chapter he states that it is no longer a set of narrow prescriptions about sex, or theoretical constructs with no practical implications, or a set of simple rules, or something that only applies in the context of religion, and finally, it is not a set of intuitive reactions to situations [40]. Singer states: "...that those who hold unconventional ethical beliefs are still living according to ethical standards." [41]. Can you justify your actions and beliefs in a way that is not just about your benefit, your desires and your life? Can you extrapolate what you believe into a universal standard? Then you have defined an ethical principle.

In this discussion I will distinguish between morality, where a group of principles such as do no harm, help those in need and act justly, which provides people with a set of rules to use to judge others; and ethics which extends beyond rules about what is right or wrong to include the aesthetic and the sublime [42], [43]. In this understanding, an ethical code leads to a morality based on values that guides the actions of an individual or group. The basis of such

[39] Singer, *Practical Ethics,* 1

[40] Singer, *Practical Ethics,* 1.

[41] Singer, *Practical Ethics,* 9.

[42] John Haldane, "Applied Ethics." In *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy 2nd Edition*, Eds Nicholas Bunnin and E.P. Tsui-James. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003): 205.

[43] Skorupski, "Ethics," 215.

ethical codes can be considered as ethical theories and provide the answers not just of what is ethical, as for example Aristotle's virtues, but how such ethical codes are justified.

Ethical theories broadly fall into one of three categories, these being normative ethics, metaethics and applied ethics [44], [45]. In normative ethics the emphasis is on finding not only a set of ethical principles, but to provide a set of rules of what people ought to do, to set a norm or standard. An example is Kant's categorical imperative of doing what we 'ought' to do, which is mainly to treat others as an end in themselves and not as a means to an end. Utilitarianism and divine command theory are theories that embody normative ethics. Metaethics concerns itself with evaluating ethical theories and asking questions about ethics. How did we arrive at them? What are they based on? How do they deal with criticism? Applied ethics is concerned with how normative ethics are used in specific situations. Thus, environmental ethics is an example of applied normative ethics [46].

Normative ethics set a standard that is used to judge between good and bad. In terms of environmental ethics and interactions between man and nature, this is usually seen in terms of pro-environmental behaviour such as saving energy [47], recycling, saving water, not littering, zero waste living and so on have all become standards by which to measure nations and individuals in terms of ethics.

Making such judgements about 'good' as opposed to 'bad' may well be an innate human characteristic, which becomes refined by experiences and society [48]. When the judgments are relative and situational, where we intuitively make a moral judgement of what

[44] Steve McCartney and Rick Parent, *Ethics in Law Enforcement*, (Montreal: Pressbooks, 2015). https://opentextbc.ca/ethicsinlawenforcement.

[45] James Fieser, "Ethics." *Internet Encyclopeadia of Philosophy*. https://iep.utm.edu/ethics/.

[46] Haldane, "Applied Ethics", 491.

[47] David Gadenne et al., "The influence of consumers' environmental beliefs and attitudes on energy saving behaviours." *Energy Policy* 39. (2011): 7691.

[48] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, iii.

is 'good' and what is 'bad' and then use reason to justify the decision made on that spur of the moment, it becomes a utilitarian, situational approach to ethics and morality [49]. Haidt theorises that we all have six 'moral taste receptors' that have been developed by the moral diet that surrounds us, and these tastes will present us with an immediate, intuitive response to the goodness or badness of a situation, after which we will use reason to justify our decision, not the other way round. Haidt also points out that morality and ethics are a 'cultural construction' that allows societies to exist [50].

Utilitarian ethics as proposed by Bentham in general takes the view that each and every situation is unique and has to be approached on its own merits, and the ethical solution found does not have to apply to any other situation [51].

A second normative system is where reason, acting on the human condition, arrives at universal principles to decide what is 'good' and what is 'bad' (absolutist approach). This rests on six expectations which are: *a priori* reasoning leads to moral judgments, moral judgments are universal, these judgments provide a moral compass to resolve all ethical questions, these are also independent of causations (the noumenon self's point of view), duty drives action, and all other rational beings are ends in themselves and should be treated as such [52]. This is the classical Kantian approach to ethics and allows no intuitive reactions or judgements to be made. In any situation, there is only one right thing to do, one good act and it will always be the same. In an absolutist approach to environmental ethics, rules would be formulated for dealing with situations such as those in which animals are killed for food, forests are cleared for land use and pollution arises from technological processes.

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[49] Haidt, *Righteous Mind*, 90.

[50] Haidt, *Righteous Mind*, 114.

[51] Mill, J. S., and Bentham, J., *Utilitarianism and other essays*. (London: Penguin UK. 1987).

[52] James S. Fishkin, *Beyond Subjective Morality: Ethical Reasoning and Political Philosophy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1984): 86 - 88

Finally, there is the normative system that rests on the divine command. God is 'good' and thus God's commands are good, and it is up to humans to ascertain what God's commands are and to follow them, with 'good' being rewarded in the afterlife and 'bad' being punished [53]. Divine command theory has been one of the major ethical systems of the world in history, simply because many people, according to Copp, find the starting point that God's commands are moral immediately comprehensible [54].

When we consider metaethics, the question is not so much what we should do, what our actions should be as it is in normative ethics but why those actions are right or wrong. Metaethics concerns itself with the foundations of ethics, with defining what morality is in and of itself [55], [56]. Metaethics questions the foundations of normative ethics. Singer claims that ethics must be universal to count as ethics, "...in making ethical judgments, we go beyond our own likes and dislikes." [57]. Jonas in making his case for the ethics of responsibility, is perhaps touching on metaethics when he claims: "All previous ethics…. had these interconnected tacit premises in common, that the human condition, determined by the nature of man and the nature of things, was given once for all; that the human good on that basis was readily determinable; and that the range of human action and therefore responsibility was narrowly circumscribed." [58].

Since this is a dissertation looking at how humans and nature interact through what is called environmental ethics, many of the arguments will be in the field of applied ethics.

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[53] McCartney and Parent, *Ethics*, ch. 2.7.

[54] David Copp, "Introduction: Metaethics and Normative Ethics." *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007): 3.

[55] Kevin M. DeLapp, "Metaethics." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* https://iep.utm.edu/metaethi/.

[56] Copp, "Introduction: Metaethics and Normative Ethics,", 3.

[57] Singer, *Practical Ethic 3rd edn*., 11.

[58] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, 1.

Environmental ethics falls squarely under this umbrella, as has been pointed out previously. The danger of applied ethics is that the universal moral compass provided by the absolutist view then bows before a view that all morality simply becomes what feels good [59].

2.2 Environmental Ethics in Particular

According to Rolston, Environmental Ethics is "the theory and practice about appropriate concern for, values in, and duties regarding the natural world" [60]. It is a relatively new area of philosophy, emerging from the discussions that started in the 1970's around climate change and the causes of such change. For example, the International Association for Environmental Philosophy was founded in 1997, and has since published its journal, *Environmental Philosophy,* bi-annually in May and November of each year.

Ojomo stresses the diversified nature of environmental ethics by pointing to five schools of thought within it: enlightened or weak anthropocentrism, animal liberation or animal rights, biocentrism which focuses on biological or organic entities, ecocentrism where the whole ecological sphere is considered, and eco-feminism [61]. He presents a clear overview of each of these areas, and then points out that there is very little coverage of African environmental ethics (not to mention other indigenous environmental ethics). In other words, even with such wide coverage, there are still gaps, the most glaring of which may be the dismissal of the ethics of indigenous people who often have to cope with the effects of negative environmental behaviour on the part of developed nations.

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[59] Haldane, "Applied Ethics," 493.

[60] Rolston, "Environmental Ethics." 517.

[61] P. A. Ojomo, "Environmental Ethics: An African Understanding," *African Journal of Environmental Science and Technology*. Vol 5 no 8. (2011): 572.

Kawall presents the argument of Richard Routley who asked if it would be wrong of the last man alive to destroy all the other biological life on earth [62], [63]. To answer this question, we need to consider the following: when humans are considered apart from the natural world and ethical behaviour is ethical behaviour towards humans only, it makes sense to answer no, since there would be no more humans left, and thus it would not be wrong in the ethical sense. It would perhaps be wrong in a purely selfish sense, where this last human will hasten his own death by destroying the food that would sustain him. If harm is considered in light of anthropomorphic principles then it becomes what harm am I doing to humanity rather than what harm am I doing in general.

Normative ethics in environmental matters generally proceed from an absolutist viewpoint. When environmental ethics are examined by the normative lens, we are considering the axiological establishment of the underlying values of an ethical system that governs human and nature interacting [64]. From an ecological viewpoint environmental ethics are teleological and situational [65], [66]. In short, this means that nature has to be considered to have an intrinsic value in and of itself, over and above the value as useful objects that provide sustenance or lend themselves to exploitation by humans.

One of the myths in environmental ethics stems from the idea that the 'noble savage' was in tune with nature and a conservator until the impact of an industrialised European colonisation intervened and Dorel makes the point that all of human history shows mankind

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[62] Jason Kawall, "A History of Environmental Ethics." In *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics*. Eds Gardiner, Stephen M. and Thompson, Allen. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 14.

[63] Richard Routley, "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?" *Proceedings of the XVth World Congress of Philosophy 1* (1973): 207.

[64] Rolston, "Environmental," 519

[65] Rolston, "Environmental," 524

[66] Lawrence O. Ugwuanyi, "Advancing an environmental ethics through the African world-view." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences.* Vol. 2 (4) (September 2011): 108

having an impact on nature through cultural activities such as building, hunting and innovative cropping [67]. Does that mean we as modern man can abdicate our responsibility for current impacts, seeing that man has always had an impact on the environment?

Attfield says no, we are responsible, but he warns against trying to homogenise people [68]. He specifically questions how we will be able to "transmit to future generations values, traditions and institutions." [69]. More specifically, he questions what those future people will be - not the grandchildren most envisage - but people who will have been created in a very real sense by what we do now, and we don't know who or what they will be. He posits two ethical options that oppose each other either to *deplete* or *conserve*, which, in the long term, he argues, leads to the same outcome - future generations living at a reduced level from what we have now [70]. The argument rests, of course, on the idea that *deplete* (if continued without changes) will not change the world so catastrophically that future generations and maybe ourselves will face an extinction event, simply that those future generations will face scarcity and have to live frugally and with less comfort than what we enjoy at present. There is, in this argument, two aspects I wish to briefly address. The current level of comfort and abundance that is used as the yardstick is that of first-world countries such as the USA, Canada, most of Europe and parts of Asia, not the level at which so-called third world countries live. It may be that the first world descendants will have to face the harsh life lived by almost half the current population of the earth. The second is the assumption that this abundant life can be sustained by conservation measures that will be embraced by the people living it.

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[67] Frederic Dorel, "Nature vs. Culture?". *ELOHI*. (2012): 37.

[68] Robin Attfield, "Beyond the earth charter: Taking possible people seriously," *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 29, (Winter 2007): 360.

[69] Attfield, "Beyond the earth charter," 361.

[70] Attfield, "Beyond the earth charter," 363.

It seems that the definition we started this section with can be expanded so that environmental ethics are not just about duties, values and a concern for the natural world and actions that support that, but should be about an ethics in which the value of all things in and of themselves is held to be part and parcel of their existence in this world, irrespective of their sentient or organic status, and that humanity has to take responsibility for their actions towards each other, the phenomena of the world, and future life and existence of the earth as whole.

2.3 Jonas and the Imperative of Responsibility

If environmental ethics are ethics in action, the impetus to that action should be the feeling of responsibility towards the earth, other human beings, and other sentient creatures that inhabit this space. That is the position taken by Hans Jonas in his treatise calling for a new ethics, an ethics based on the imperative of responsibility which no other ethical system used before [71]. Jonas feels that the reason for this is that responsibility is a function of power and knowledge [72]. This could of course be due to the fact that responsibility is a recent concept and was originally, philosophically speaking, related to the political idea of governmental accountability [73].

One working definition of responsibility could be: the existence of one is the 'oughtness' for the other as shown in the parent/child relationship [74]. This, however, does not really explore the extent to which responsibility can form the basis of a new ethic. For Jonas responsibility is concerned with causal power [75]. Acts lead to consequences, and when such

[71] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility,* 123.

[72] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility,* 123.

[73] Garrath Williams, "Responsibility," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (2006).

[74] Vyacheslav Mantatov and Larisa Mantatova, "Philosophical underpinnings of environmental ethics: Theory of responsibility by Hans Jonas." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 214, (2015): 1056.

[75] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility,* 90.

acts are under the actor's control and she is able to see the consequences to even some extent, she is responsible for those consequences.

Dahlsrud analysed 37 definitions that corporations put forth to define their social responsibility, and in the end could point to a congruence of definitions along the lines of five dimensions - stakeholders, society, economics, voluntariness and environment [76]. Most definitions included either all these dimensions or combinations of them, depending on the context in which the business operates, and are thus contextual and situational but, crucially, guidelines about how to respond in any given situation were not given, instead depending on interpretation of which dimensions carry more weight [77]. In many cases of course, corporations tend to focus on buzzwords and talk a great game instead of stepping up and putting up.

Responsibility can also be considered to refer to epistemic theory when it refers to meaning, thinking, dwelling, understanding as enacted by a so-called 'individual' [78]. Epistemic responsibility takes into consideration deliberation and dialogues, differences in opinion and resolution of arguments. In such cases we can be considered to act responsibly when we are able to express justifications and supporting evidence for any position we take with respect to our actions and thoughts.

Eshleman divides responsibility into several 'faces' such as attributability, accountability, attributionism, and answerability [79]. When either attributability or attibutionism is considered, the idea is that when an agent takes action there is the will to action, and the agent is prepared to stand behind that will and the action taken. In such a case, the agent is

[76] Alexander Dahlsrud, "How Corporate Social Responsibility is Defined: An Analysis of 37 Definitions," *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Mgmt.* 15, (2008): 5.

[77] Dahlsrud, "Corporate Social Responsibility", 6.

[78] Code, "Thinking Ecologically, Knowing Responsibly," 21.

[79] Andrew Eshleman, *Moral Responsibility*, (Portland State University: Philosophy Faculty Publications and Presentations, Paper 1. 2014) 1.1

considered to be moved by the essential character and values that are central to her life. However, she has to be able to govern and control her will and hence her actions. Without this ability, when compelled to action by ungovernable impulses, responsibility cannot be attributed to the agent. However, even when we cannot attribute responsibility to an agent, we can still through moral demands hold an agent accountable for her actions. This is where society can either blame or praise behaviour. Attributionism and answerability are simply different ways to refer to the same basic idea - a person who wills an action arising from values and beliefs held can be considered responsible for those actions (attributionism) and can be held to the consequences of those actions (answerability) [80].

From these references it can be seen that responsibility, like most of the issues of philosophy, is a broad area with many possible arguments and counterarguments. When can a person be held accountable for their actions? What if those actions were undertaken under the influence of a person, a religion or a substance that impaired their ability to reason and think logically? What constitutes such influence? Is there an underlying principle for being responsible? Or are we taught by our cultures about responsibility and what being responsible means?

The following etymological definitions (all taken from Harper, The Online Dictionary of Etymology) might point us in some direction to answer those questions.

> response (n.)
>
> c. 1300, from Old French respons (Modern French réponse) and directly from Latin responsum "an answer," noun use of neuter past participle of respondere "respond, answer to, promise in return," from re- "back" (see re-) + spondere "to pledge" (see sponsor (n.))

[80] Eshleman, *Moral Responsibility*. 3.1.

respond (v.)

"make answer, give a reply in words; make a liturgical response," c. 1300, respounden, from Old French respondere "respond, correspond" and directly from Latin respondere "respond, answer to, promise in return," from re- "back" (see **re-**) + spondere "to pledge" (see **sponsor** (n.)). Modern spelling and pronunciation are from c. 1600. Related: Responded; responding.

responsible (adj.)

1590s, "answerable" (to another, for something), from obsolete French responsible (13c., Modern French responsable, as if from Latin *responsabilis), from Latin respons-, past-participle stem of respondere "respond, answer to, promise in return," from re- "back" (see re-) + spondere "to pledge" (see sponsor (n.)).

Meaning "accountable for one's actions" is attested from the 1640s; that of "reliable, trustworthy" is from 1690s. It retains the sense of "obligation" in the Latin root word. Related: Responsibly.

From these entries, the overall meaning and effect of these words that all trace back to the Latin root ‘respons’ and this is *answer to, promise in return.* The implication is not just of answering as we would to a question, but to answer to something or someone, which implies there is an entity requiring the answer of us.

When Jonas talks about the imperative of responsibility, he is very aware that there is a ‘to’ involved, and for him that ‘to’ is the future of life, all life [81]. We, in our current ‘almighty

[81] Jonas. *Imperative*, 136.

technological power' need to consider the predictions we can make of what life will be like for those we will never see but who will enter a world we leave behind.

As Jonas states: "with certain developments of our powers the nature of human action has changed, and since ethics is concerned with action, it should follow that the change nature of human action calls for a change in ethics as well..." [82] What he calls the 'heuristics of fear' should come into play when we consider such actions and ethics [83]. Our normal (normative) ethics cannot react to a situation that we may never see with our own eyes or even be able to imagine fully. Instead, we should be scared and fearful of what our present actions may cause, and in this we have enough examples of 'unintended consequences' to guide us [84].

How does the fear factor play a part in Jonas's ethics, and in our experience of being alive? Morris documents the conflict that arose for Jonas when he considered the implications of Heidegger's philosophy of existentialism that divorces man from an organic existence [85]. Heidegger posits ek-sistent transcendence in which Being hovers above, distant and removed from beings, but Jonas thought that being/Being is life, nature in action. In effect, existentialism for Jonas tries to negate the fact that we experience the world, our world, and also the shared world, viscerally and fully [86], [87]. For the existentialist, fear of death is real, but mitigated by the distance between myself as Being and other phenomena in the world, beings, and thus my responsibility is to my Being. For Jonas, the fear of death is not just the fear that my duality of

[82] Hans Jonas, "Technology and Responsibility," 31.

[83] Jonas, *Imperative,* 26.

[84] Jonas, *Imperative,* 27.

[85] Morris, *Jonas's Ethic of Responsibility,* 33.

[86] Morris, *Jonas's Ethic of Responsibility,* 36.

[87] Hans Jonas, "Biological foundations of individuality," *International Philosophy Quarterly*. Volume 8, Issue 2, (June 1968): 233.

being/Being will end, but that all beings will end, that there will be no more being/Being and in that realisation, I also accept that my Being bears a responsibility to all other beings.

Such feelings of responsibility, when linked to environmental knowledge and environmental values, prove to be a good predictor of environmentally positive behaviour [88], [89]. Studies that have examined the link between these variables have supported this idea that responsibility plays an important role in environmentally positive behaviour [90], [91], [92]. This would be a plausible result, since it is when we feel a responsibility towards something that we tend to behave in a manner that supports that thing and wishes it well, and we accept it as a part of our lives.

2.4 Derrida, the Beast and the Sovereign.

Derrida is quite clear that no human can stand apart from nature. Through the seminars contained in the two volumes of 'The Beast and the Sovereign' he speaks of love, of friendship, of death, even of suicide and succeeds in making us understand that these things are not limited to us as humans, but are shared among all life, and can cross the boundaries of species, as in the poem, The Snake. But only if we are open to it. Only if we are prepared to carry each other in this world [93], even when that world has gone away and we are *weltlos.* That is surely a good basis for ethical behaviour. Jacques Derrida, according to Gutting, always disavowed the idea

[88] Kaiser et al, "Ecological Behaviour," 62.

[89] Jovanović Slavoljub et al., "To the environmental responsibility among students through developing their environmental values." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 171*. (2015): 321.

[90] Mantatov and Mantatova, "Philosophical underpinnings," 1061.

[91] Olvitt, *Deciding and doing what's right,* i.

[92] Luiz Paulo Rouanet, "Environmental ethics and responsibility," *Ethic@ an International Journal for Moral Philosophy*,14(3) (2015): 391.

[93] Derrida, *Beast and Sovereign*, Vol. 2, 9.

that he was doing traditional philosophy [94]. However, his prolific reading and his skill at extracting the most from any text by careful study and analysis places him in the ranks of great thinkers [95]. Derrida's deconstructionism focuses on finding and identifying the binary oppositions, the priority granted to one and not the other, and the logical exclusions, although it is not limited to simply these [96], [97]. Instead, texts should be approached from many sides, with many interpretations in order to try and get at the truth, even though any text will always remain obscure to some extent. In the seminars contained in *Beast and Sovereign*, Derrida demonstrates such penetrating thought and exploration of texts - whether myth, fable or science - that deal with the problem of humans in the natural world and their insistence on differentiating themselves from animals. That those differences do not run as deep as some may think are supported and challenged by the writers of the secondary and tertiary material presented in this section.

Despret argues that the philosophical imposition of the differences between animal and human actually hinder any understanding of the communication and cooperation that can exist between them [98]. We have placed animals not as 'other' in the way we place humans, but as unknowable and forever closed, since we cannot converse with them. By using human language as a measurement of intelligence, we ignore the possibility that we should be trying to learn animal language in order to judge their sentience.

[94] Gary Gutting, "Sartre, Foucault and Derrida." In *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy 2nd Edition*. Eds Nicholas Bunnin and E.P. Tsui-James. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003): 867.

[95] Gutting, "Sartre, Foucault and Derrida", 868.

[96] Gutting, "Sartre, Foucault and Derrida", 869.

[97] Dawne McCance, *The Reproduction of Life Death*, (New York, Fordham University Press, 2019): 8

[98] Vinciane Despret. "The Becomings of Subjectivity in Animal Worlds." Subjectivity 23, 123–139 (2008): 123

Calarco warns that current debates about 'animal rights' run into both theoretical and ethical difficulties [99]. According to him, it seems to be a discourse that stands apart from other progressive issues, because the assumption is also made that we actually know what animality is and what 'rights' said animals should enjoy. As he says, moral philosophy 'functions … within an anthropocentric, subject centred model' and as such we concern ourselves only with animals that exhibit such traits [100]. Calarco examines the thoughts that Derrida expressed about the abyss between human and animal and speculates that the modes of responsivity and responsibility would be the main pillars of drawing a new line to separate man and animal [101].

Coetzee's main character, Elizabeth Costello, remarks, "I am just an ordinary person, neither god nor beast." [102]. Throughout the speech he places in her mouth during the opening chapter of his novel, Coetzee speaks about the meat industry and the death camps of the Nazis as inextricably linked [103]. The novel explores, as it claims in the title, the lives of animals in the light of the life of a family that is deeply divided about the meat industry and its morality.

The lives of animals as observed by zookeepers and animal specialists led De Waal to pose the question as to whether we, as humans, are smart enough to assess the intelligence of animals, especially the judgement that animals do not plan, but only react.[104]. In his concluding chapter, after presenting not only anecdotal observations but the hard evidence that has led to the field of animal cognition he recounts how, even now, he and others in his field are accused of being less than scientific and more romantic when they present their conclusions [105]. Animals

[99] Calarco, *Zoogrpahies,* 7.

[100] Calarco, *Zoographies,* 8.

[101] Calarco, *Zoographies,* 147.

[102] Coetzee, J. M, *The Lives of Animals*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1999): 18.

[103] Coetzee, *Lives of Animals,* 21.

[104] De Waal, *Are we smart enough?,* 3.

[105] De Waal, *Are we smart enough?,* 265.

do plan, they do communicate, and they do think - just not in the same way that we as humans do and we need to evaluate them for what they are, organic life that on a biological and genetic level are more similar to us than different [106].

De Ville comments that the first volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign* explores the nature of the sovereign as expressed and maintained through fear, the fear of the animal within and how fable and story assist in constructing Leviathan, and then maintaining it [107]. Central to Derrida's exploration of the animal is the figure of the wolf, man as wolf and wolf as man fables, but also the wolf as a figure of terror and terror as a means of control. De Ville stresses that these seminars came after the 9/11 attacks and presents Derrida's exploration of how fear was used by both the US and by its attackers to justify and defend their actions [108]. Fear of other humans is often extended to a fear of nature 'red in tooth and claw' filled with dangers.

Derrida's use of the story of Robinson Crusoe to illustrate the workings of sovereignty is explored by Egan but from the view of how Crusoe's conversion (return?) to Christianity underpins and explains many of his actions [109]. Becoming 'saved' means that he regarded contact with the outside world, especially in the form of the heathen Friday and the Spanish captain's Catholicism, as corrupting and beneath him [110]. Crusoe becomes the sovereign of his soul, and guards it jealously against all comers, even if that means stepping outside the laws of social interaction into a law above all else that results in placing himself as master to the subjects on his island [111].

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[106] De Waal, *Are we smart enough?*, 267.

[107] Jacques De Ville, "Deconstructing the Leviathan: Derrida's The Beast and the Sovereign," *Societies 2*, (2012): 360.

[108] De Ville, "Deconstructing the Leviathan", 361.

[109] James Egan, "Crusoe's Monarchy and the Puritan Concept of the Self," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 13, no. 3 (1973): 452.

[110] Egan, "Crusoe's Monarchy," 452.

[111] Egan, "Crusoe's Monarchy," 456.

In his introduction to the special issue of the journal Environmental Philosophy dealing with *The Beast and The Sovereign*, David Baumeister makes it clear that the nine essays gathered for this issue explore a crucial and not to be overlooked aspect of Derrida's argument, namely that the beast and the sovereign are intertwined, inseparable, just as a coin has to have both head and tail. One cannot exist without the other being implicit and extant. The essays examine the results when animality and sovereignty are viewed with a critical vision of entanglement and presents, not just in the sense of sovereignty and its obverse, bestiality, but the view of ethical calls to action concerning how man and nature interact [112].

Derrida presented these seminars with the consideration of life, all life, in its diversity and variety, with special attention to the treatment meted out to animals by humans [113]. For some, it seems that the single biggest obstacle to a more ethically based, environmentally friendly living pattern could lie in the gap between theoretical ethics and daily living [114], [115], [116]. As long as ethics remain in a speculative and rarified atmosphere where theoretical constructs are presented to test the limits and applicability of the ethical theory, the relevance to someone struggling to put food on the table or cope with cancer is moot. Of course, as philosophers we need to test and debate the limitations of our theories, but as Jonas realized, if philosophy means anything it has to provide a philosophy people can live by. As each of the studies referred to shows, it is when the practical ethics (or lack thereof) in society does not

[112] Baumeister, "Introduction", 9.

[113] Derrida *Beast and Sovereign* Vol 1, 7.

[114] Kolmuss and Agyeman, "Mind the gap", 240.

[115] Paul C. Stern, "Toward a coherent theory of environmentally significant behavior," *Journal of Social Issues* 56 (2000): 410.

[116] Joe E. Heimlich and Nicole M. Ardoin, "Understanding behavior to understand behavior change: a literature review," *Environmental Education Research* 14, (2008): 219.

match the ethical behaviour postulated as an ideal, that we find people following their ingrained 'tastes', as Haidt styled it.

The themes that emerge from Derrida's seminars and the special edition of *Environmental Philosophy* can be placed in three broad categories: the human/animal interaction problem; the issue of sovereignty; and the use of myth and story to explore the themes of sovereignty, animality and beastliness and how humans think of these.

2.4.1 Human/Animal Interaction

Kelly Oliver explores Derrida's idea that the distinctions between humans and animals are not as clear and set as many would claim, and as indeed Heidegger claims, where humans are world-builders and animals are world-poor [117]. She refutes this claim, demonstrating that there is a shared experience of a world in which others impinge on us and us on them, and she draws some conclusions as to the ethical implications of sharing a world and yet being isolated. For example, the idea that animals do not die but merely end, is challenged with examples of the mourning rituals of elephants, and if animals also die, then they qualify as 'the other' and as such demand their place in the shared world [118].

The idea of how humans and animals communicate ethically is explored by Annabelle Dufourcq in her essay on interanimal ethics. She examines Derrida's punning use of the word bétise and une béte / béte to cover variously stupidity, a beast and stupid [119]. She follows Derrida into the many ways that stupidity and animalistic or bestial behaviour both in the animal and the human mirror each other and are used to mask impurity. In order to become transparent to myself, instead of projecting to an outsider, another, that which I hate in me and

[117] Kelly Oliver, "On Sharing a World with Other Animals," *Environmental Philosophy*, Vol. 16 no 1. (Spring 2019): 36.

[118] Oliver, "On Sharing," 45.

[119] Anabelle DuFourcq, "Who/What is Bete? From an Uncanny Word to an Interanimal Ethics." *Environmental Philosophy*, Vol. 16 no 1. (Spring 2019): 58.

which I then want to kill, and in the killing, minimise my culpability by claiming its death is not like mine, I need to recognize my responsibility to the other. I have to accept the ambiguity of life in, and as, bétise [120]. The solution, according to a repeated line of poetry Derrida employs, is to carry the other [121]. To accept the radical alterity of the other, and to accept that the boundaries between species are not as distinct and irrevocable as we think but can be breached and are breached when we enter into a dialogue that accepts communication that is beyond the limited definition we usually place on it [122], [123].

A provocative question along these lines is asked by Rebekah Sinclair: "And Say the Animal Resisted?" The idea presented and examined here is the problem when the death of animals being seen only as an end of something, not mortality as humans experience it, and therefore not something of importance to humans [124]. This is part and parcel of the way in which animals are treated as belongings. She highlights how Derrida examines first of all the 'naming' of animals by man as an exercise of power over the other to 'classify' and 'sort' into categories [125]. From there, it is but a short step to having the power to dispose of the other according to our wishes, rather than according to its demand made on us as the other [126].

As she points out, Derrida sees the events of animals dying in response to man-made pollution indicating an active participation in resistance to destructive power rather than a

[120] DuFourcq, "Who/What is Bete?", 86.

[121] DuFourcq, "Who/What is Bete?", 87.

[122] Sue Savage-Rambaugh and Roger Lewin, *Kanzi: The Ape at the Brink of the Human Mind.* (New York: Wiley. 1994)

[123] DuFourcq, "Who/What is Bete?", 88.

[124] Rebekah Sinclair, "And say the Animal Resisted? Derrida, Biopolitics, and the Problem with Species," *Environmental Philosophy,* Vol. 16 no 1. (Spring 2019): 116.

[125] Sinclair. "And say the Animal Resisted?", 117.

[126] Sinclair, "And say the Animal Resisted?", 122.

passive acceptance of fate on the part of the animal, and such resistance must draw from us a response to the demand of the other [127].

Of course, the question can be asked whether animals can actually commit suicide. Since we hardly understand what state of mind has to exist in the mind of a human who contemplates suicide, despite all the tomes that have been written and for a long time the verdict was that people who commit suicide are not rational, it is clear we will have even more problems understanding animals who apparently do so. For example, we all know about whales stranding themselves – is this suicide? Lussau concludes that we cannot yet determine exactly why seemingly healthy creatures would place themselves in harm, even death's way [128]. In other words, he feels that we can't ascribe these strandings to suicidal impulses, even if such impulses are in response to our actions. Lussau feels that all that can be done is to respond to mass strandings with help and sympathy.

Llewellyn examines the connection between Derrida's use of words such as death, domination and world, with Heidegger's classification of animals as world-poor and earth as world-less, while humans are world-forming, and the dogma that there is a clean and clear separation between man and animal [129]. Llewellyn explains that Derrida, while seeming to subscribe to this dogma, is actually restating it simply to eventually rail against it. Derrida does this, as with most of the concepts shared, subtly, gently, and by this example: we and the animal and the earth are a world through our presence to each other [130].

[127] Sinclair, "And say the Animal Resisted?", 116.

[128] David Lusseau, "Do whales attempt suicide?" *The Independent*. 25 January, (2016).

[129] John Llewelyn, "Singularisability, Plurality and Community," *Environmental Philosophy,* Vol. 16 no 1. (Spring 2019): 153.

[130] Llewelyn, "Singularisability", 157.

2.4.2 Sovereignty and Bestiality

When we consider the discussions Derrida pursues in his seminars, they range far and wide as we saw in Chapter 3. However, Bennington attempts to interpolate three texts that, according to him, Derrida might have overlooked or avoided in his seminars. These are Aristotle's discussion of the man of the polis, the 'one best man'; Bataille's notion of sovereignty which Derrida has, in other contexts and discussions labelled as auto immune; and Heidegger's use and discussion of the term *hupsipolis apolis*, [131]. These so-called 'overlooked cases' may simply be due to Derrida considering these concepts as superfluous to this series. However, let us examine Bennington's claims that these deserve a place in this discussion. Aristotle's work supports Derrida's argument that a man who falls below his place in the polis falls further and deeper than just becoming an outlaw and maybe this could have been more explicitly quoted and used [132]. But, with all the other support, and of a more recent vintage, that Derrida musters (such as the reaction to the 9/11 attack), this would be just a minor flourish. Similarly, maybe Bataille's argument of how a sovereign in becoming more itself also becomes less sovereign should have been given more attention [133]. After all, mankind in its rational striving to be 'good' is always adjured to 'know thyself', presumably to become more and more ourselves. Could it be that in doing that, we become less and less ourselves? That scaling the heights only leads to the depths. Yet hasn't Derrida in his use of the metaphorical wolf and his circle around the rational firelight of humanity already covered all of this? That we all have the wolf within and are constantly at war with this side of human nature by ascribing it to the beast. Finally, the man who is a worthy citizen of the city enhances his city (hupsipolis) while he who

[131] Geoffrey Bennington, "Beastly Sovereignty: Three Unequal Footnotes to Derrida," *Environmental Philosophy*, Vol. 16 no 1. (Spring 2019): 32.

[132] Bennington, "Beastly Sovereignty", 17.

[133] Bennington, "Beastly Sovereignty", 25.

brings disgrace becomes banned (apolis) and as Heidegger claims, is the uncanny figure of both beast and sovereign [134].

In drawing my attention to these three papers, Bennington allowed me to appreciate Derrida's expositions on these matters even more, since I do not feel that they added measurably to the arguments about sovereignty and bestiality mustered by Derrida.

The reaction of Derrida to Agamben can be examined by charting the dissonance between the two [135]. Derrida wishes to integrate the concepts of zöe and bios, which Agamben uses as distinctions [136]. It seems, from this article, that Derrida finds the rhetoric of Agamben restrictive when developing the idea of sovereignty, and how such sovereignty depends on historical developments that led mankind to a view of the animal that reduces it to a commodity. The arguments between Derrida and Agamben as marshalled and rehashed by Seshadri, while relevant in the context of the seminars, are not arguments that I think add measurably to the examination of how sovereignty and responsibility play a part in treating the animal as other in an ethical sense.

2.4.3 Myth and Story

Baumeister takes on the task of commenting on how Derrida uses the story of Crusoe and his island to explore how subjugation of both humans and animals are crucial to the development of sovereignty [137]. Drawing on Derrida's presentation that the beast and the sovereign are the poles, so to speak, of sovereignty, the moments on the axis of discipline and indulgence, he examines several crucial incidents in the story of Crusoe and how Derrida sees

[134] Bennington, "Beastly Sovereignty", 32.

[135] Kalpana Seshadri, "Hyperbole and Ellipses: Derrida and Agamben on Sovereignty and Life," *Environmental Philosophy*, Vol. 16 no 1. (Spring 2019): 90.

[136] Seshardi, "Hyperbole and Ellipses", 95.

[137] David C. Baumeister, "The Human/Animal Logic of Sovereignty: Derrida on Robinson Crusoe," *Environmental Philosophy*, Vol. 16 no 1. (Spring 2019): 161.

those instances. Crusoe falls into a fear and panic after discovering a footprint on the beach which precipitates a descent into animality after fifteen years as sovereign over the island and the non-human inhabitants [138]. Baumeister draws on this to extend Derrida's own reading and analysis into an exploration of how there is a human/animal logic to all the steps taken by Crusoe, first to establish sovereignty, lose it, then to rebuild it, and finally to extend that mastery to a set of humans who have to be reduced to the state of beasts in order for the sovereign to feel secure [139]. In examining the historical view that humans have towards animals, specifically in labelling animals as savage brutes, beastly, dangerous, unreliable and, in a word, bestial, Midgley points to the absurdity that humanity, given to hunting and killing many animals to the brink of extinction or beyond, sometimes simply to display the kill as a trophy, uses these appellations [140]. This is especially relevant to the story of Crusoe, who does not only dominate and subjugate the animals on his island, but also uses similar appellations to re-establish his dominion.

Igrek attempts to show that the two forms of sovereignty that Derrida discusses in the seminars are not as distinct as may have been thought [141]. The sovereignty that arises from a position taken that 'I am the master of all' is, according to him, not that different from the mastery exercised through the control given by techné. "The mutation of the "who" into the "what" indicates for us, one more time, the convergence of sovereignty with a multiplicity of suppressed figures: the beast, the mechanical being, the animal, the monster, the wolf, the death of the other, the poetics of the other, the vulnerability of the self, the temporality of the self,

[138] Baumeister, "The Human/Animal Logic of Sovereignty", 169.

[139] Baumeister, "The Human/Animal Logic of Sovereignty", 163.

[140] Midgley, Mary, "The Concept of Beastliness: Philosophy, Ethics and Animal Behaviour," *Philosophy* 48, no. 184 (1973): 115.

[141] Apple Igrek, "Prosthetic Figures: The Wolf, the Marionette, the Specter," *Environmental Philosophy*, Vol. 16 no 1. (Spring 2019): 181.

the inhuman within the human, the limitless within the limited, and so forth." [142]. Inevitably, the sovereign is both a who and a what, and rules over many others that may be seen by him as objects, but are actually also dual organisms, enfolding their 'who' inside a 'what'.

Which means, again, that our responsibility to the other rests in the acknowledgement of the face of the other as it demands a response from us whether as a 'who' or as a 'what'. Whether we turn 'who' into a 'what' in order to assuage our conscience in how we treat them, or whether we see only the 'what' makes no difference to the ethical call on us. The 'what', from the above discussion, has as much claim on ethical treatment as the 'who', if not more. For after all, Igrek has made us aware of the fact that, with techne, the sovereign is still the sovereign, the human is still human, and the dual nature is part and parcel of the 'other'.

Cary Wolfe gives us *Neither beast nor sovereign: Wallace Stevens's birds*, where he points to the digression that Derrida enters in the ninth session of the first seminar when he invites a discussion of Lawrence's poem "Snake" [143]. He points out that this discussion allowed Derrida to open up the door to examine how Levinas's ethics relates to violence against the other. It also speaks of hospitality and friendship, and of the relationship between human and non-human. More specifically, by examining the various birds that Wallace Stevens celebrated in his poems he examines the extent of the non-human [144]. After all, birds are more non-human than the animals who share our terrestrial plane. Birds soar above us and the non-human animals, swooping down onto the ground occasionally, claiming something we aspire to, but have to achieve through techne. Derrida examines the connecting points between human and animal on many levels – the shared march towards death, the finitude of being embodied beings, the supposed autonomy and automaticity, and the mechanics that allow communication

[142] Igrek, "Prosthetic Figures", 194.

[143] Cary Wolfe, "Neither Beast nor Sovereign: Wallace Stevens's Birds," Environmental Philosophy, Vol. 16 no 1. (Spring 2019): 201.

[144] Wolfe, "Neither Beast not Sovereign", 204.

[145]. Wolfe supports the contention that we all inhabit separate worlds, with bridges of fragile construction trying to reach across into the shared world, and birdsong is a communication that 'speaks' yet remains utterly inhuman and other. It reminds us that 'the world is gone, and I must carry you.' [146]. If we accept birds as 'other' in the ethical sense, we truly make the leap of recognising that otherness is seen in large and small differences, that the unique nature of the other is the true call to transcendence. As the birds sing, we are transported to their world for a moment.

2.5 Conclusion

From all of the above, I argue that Derrida demonstrates that humanity's innate drive for sovereignty leads to behaviours in which the underlying values and ethics of an individual and society are demonstrated. Mostly, these values are anthropocentric and rest on humanity being awarded a special status, resting on assumptions that Derrida refutes by showing that animals are not that different, and if we then view that through the lens of Jonas's call to responsibility for life, all life, not just in the present but also in the future, we arrive at the need for a new ethical basis for interactions between man and nature. The shape of that ethic, it's implications and the contributions this thesis makes will be more fully discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 – Synthesis and Contribution.

In many ways the call to a responsible interaction between man and nature dates back to Aristotle and even earlier, but the writing that truly moved a government and a society to action has to be Silent Spring by Rachel Carson, which initially earned its author very little

[145] Wolfe, "Neither Beast not Sovereign", 202.

[146] Wolfe, "Neither Beast not Sovereign", 220.

other than a fierce and vengeful attack on her as a person and on her ability to assess the subject she was writing about from the chemical fertiliser and insecticide industry [147]. However, the book quickly became a bestseller, and after President John F. Kennedy wholeheartedly endorsed it, this, coupled with its impact on the population eventually led President Richard M. Nixon to enact a bill that led to the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Carson's contribution to thinking about the actions, ethical or not, of humans in nature was to show clearly that when man harms the environment, ultimately, he is harming himself. Her call to act as a responsible human being when it comes to nature, and instances where we see harm coming to it, certainly made many take stock of their lives and attitudes. She saw us all as consumers that can be held responsible for our choices.

And if we are going to examine ethical actions towards nature on the part of man, we need to examine the practice of factory farming, a practice that certainly does feed a growing population yet at the same time reduces arable land to unproductive dustbowls at worst, or sterile swathes of mono-culture crops that have to be sprayed against any and all diseases and predators. Berry [148] likens the industrial farm to a concentration camp, and for that reason chooses to eat from places where he knows that both animals and plants have lived in the kind of environment they are best suited to – grazing pasture, shade, water, freedom to roam to some extent, fertile rich soil.

If we are to feast on death, it behoves us to know where, and how, the life was lived before that death, and that the death itself was a benediction. I know that speaking in that way is an appeal to pathos, rather than logos, but logic dictates a change of heart as well – food that is grown and raised under good conditions are less prone to diseases that are passed on

[147] Rachel Carson. *Silent Spring*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

[148] Wendell Berry, "The Pleasures of Eating." In Eds. Anderson, Slovic and O'Grady, *Literature and the Environment*, (New York: Pearson, 2012): 100.

down the food chain, and from a purely utilitarian perspective, we need to support ethical eating – for our health and that of the planet.

To return to Jonas and Derrida from this point, I need to summarize very briefly the main points made, after which I shall demonstrate the synthesis that flows from using the lens of responsibility to examine the sovereignty discussed by Derrida.

Sovereignty is innate to humanity, and the sovereign is above the law since he/she is the lawgiver.

Being above the law by virtue of being the lawgiver can lead to being outside the law when all responsibility to those who have ceded sovereignty to the ruler in exchange for protection and security is disregarded.

Stepping outside the law, becoming the outlaw, allows for any and all actions to be indulged in with no thought to consequences or effects, and is considered bestial behaviour, behaviour where no trace of responsibility for actions is considered.

Responsibility implies that the things towards which the feeling of responsibility is directed are cared for and kept safe from harm or damage; also that when regret for an action taken that had unintended bad consequences is felt that the harm or damage is repaired as far as possible.

Responsibility towards unseen and unimaginable future carriers of life is difficult to envisage and teach or enforce if not coupled to an innate drive that will allow people to behave responsibly towards actual and possible situations and phenomena.

Combining the drive to sovereign decisions and law-giving, with the responsibility for the present and future of life, I can see that the underlying attitude that will embody it and encapsulate it in the field of environmental ethics is respect. If I respect myself, I want to be able to say that I am a good person. If I respect nature and other people, I want to see them

flourish and prosper. If I respect even inanimate things, I treat them carefully, with consideration.

I do not have to like something to respect it. Once I realise my place in the world is not the most or least important, but that all phenomena are important because they all have a role to play in the world, and I stop making assumptions about them, I can truly change my destructive habits and those humanity through the consumer choices I make.

Contribution

1. Building on the work done by researchers who demonstrated that pro-environmental behaviour rests on values and ethics, this analysis and synthesis has contributed to the dialogue in Environmental Ethics by discarding the general basis where ethical consideration is still largely human-centered and utilitarian, and moved it into a realm where the ethical consideration is not just the future of humanity, but the future where humanity is able to see themselves for who and what they are, and value that, while at the same time valuing everything else. Papers in which this ethic is related to daily living, habits, and eco-friendly projects will be written and published over the coming years.
2. The ethics of respect is not simply a theoretical construct based on Jonas's imperative of responsibility, but can be demonstrated by the way in which various movements around the world are growing in numbers and influence. These include the minimalist movement, permaculture, homesteading, nose-to-tail eating and a renewed interest in ecology and the healing power of nature on the spirit of man. My own contribution to this movement, which will lead to several publications and an actual centre where the principles can be seen in action, has been started through the construction of an apiary in which twelve colonies of bees are currently being kept. They are being kept in hives that are of a unique

construction that allow the beekeeper to interact with the colony and inspect their wellbeing with minimal invasiveness. Once the colonies are in their second season, workshops will be organized for Bulgarian beekeepers to demonstrate that beekeeping can be streamlined by returning to a more natural environment for the bees, and incidentally providing a less labor intensive hive to care for. Also, workshops will demonstrate that bees can be kept not just for honey and pollen production, but that there are potential added benefits in terms of health and wellbeing. This is a contribution to Bulgarian beekeeping of great importance, as the industry is currently in decline due to the competition from Ukrainian raw honey [149], [150]. There will be between two and five papers a year detailing progress and innovations, and the results of the venture as compared to more conventional beekeeping.

3. Using the ethics of Jonas in conjunction with the deconstructionism of Derrida is a new departure in environmental philosophy, as evidenced by the special edition of the journal *Environmental Philosophy* where Derrida's contribution to environmental philosophy is discussed at length, yet never once is there a reference to the work of Jonas either in the papers or in the references they give. I have no doubt that if I search intensively, the connection between them may have been drawn by someone else, yet I did not find such explicit connections in all of the reading I did (which does not imply that such a connection has not been made, simply that it is obscure enough to have escaped many of the searches I did). However, by combining their viewpoints, as I have shown in this thesis and hope

[149] Vanya Slavova. *Beekeepers are worried that Bulgarian honey holds the lowest purchase price in Europe*, Interview on BNR, January 2023. Compiled by Diana Tsankova.

[150] Lyubomir Lyubenov, Anelia Lyubenova, Ivailo Hristakov. FINANCIAL ISSUES AND FUNDING IN THE BULGARIAN BEEKEEPING SECTOR. Economic Archive, 1/2021. ISSN 0323-9004. pp 45-59.

> to show even more in future discussions and presentations, is the unique and enlightening contribution created by using the one as a lens to examine the other. It also cast the ethic of responsibility into one where man has to consider their innate drive to selfish, comfort seeking behaviour, and instead acknowledge that the unique position that technology has placed them in, has to be accompanied by a deep respect for all that is given by and through nature to sustain that power. Instead of focusing on the differences between man and woman, human and animal, nature and technology, the central idea that life is valuable in any and every form, that all phenomena are worthy of respect not for their utility but for their very essential selves, and that the substrate of the earth, the infrastructure that allows all of life and sustains it is an interconnected web in which man, despite his numbers and power, remains a cog, a part of the whole.

Conclusion

In our exploration of the ethical basis for the interaction between man and nature, as we have seen from many of the authors writing either about animals, about nature or about environmental ethics, there are many aspects they touch upon. For example, the idea that ethical behaviour towards nature means not disturbing the balance of the ecosystem, or the idea that preservation of the ecosystem is ethical, or that we have to do something to stop global warming by using less fossil fuels, or that we need to stop viewing nature from an anthropocentric mindset. And there are all the examples we examined of how there is not that much difference between animal and man, at least not enough to justify treating them as objects. Also, as set out above, to consider that animals can suffer just as we suffer, and we need to be empathetic to that suffering and not inflict harm.

Yet, we return time and again to the biggest problem, that of life needing to feed off life. Even in veganism, we eat things that were alive and now are dead so that we can eat

them. The example of eating apples since that does not really harm the tree does not consider the fact that the apple bears in it the seeds of a new tree. Eating eggs, drinking milk or making cheese from that milk, picking and eating fruit, can still do harm to the entities involved in their production. Battery farms where hens are regarded simply as egg-laying machines, mono-cultural orchards where fruit trees have to be sprayed against diseases with pesticides and fungicides that affect the water table and the surrounding ecology, or cutting down ancient biodiverse forests and grasslands to provide pasturing for milk animals such as cows, sheep and goats, allowing their waste to enter the water table, all contribute harm to the environment even if no direct harm befalls the animals.

To return to the sovereign and the beast as explored by Derrida. The sovereign can and often does explore the fauna and flora of his environment violently and intrusively, all in the name of increasing his knowledge of them. This is an aspect of where humans and animals do differ. Animals do not seek to increase their knowledge ad infinitum. Animals learn what is needed to survive and are content. For many humans this is of course why the animal is stupid and bestial, it does not strive for the intellectual pursuits of humanity. As far as we know. What do we know of animal thinkers? Nothing. We have no evidence that they do not think, just as we have very little evidence of their ability to think and reason. What evidence we have of animal cognition is based on testing them the way we test ourselves, checking to see if they recognise themselves in a mirror, if they can tell when someone is lying and in general using ourselves as the measure for intelligence. The harm that we have done in the process of increasing our knowledge of animals as physical and mental beings has led to a subset of environmental ethics, the ethics of animal rights.

There have always been communities that have revered animals to the extent of almost worship, such as the embargo against killing any animals in the Buddhist tradition and the so-called ‘sacred cows’ of Hinduism. Yet, for most of Western thinking, stemming to a

large extent from the theology that God gave dominion over the earth and the creatures to man, animals have no rights to anything, not even life. They are subject to what man will make of them. The God-given rights rested solely in man and led to an attitude towards nature that was based purely on human need and desire. Animal rights? What rights? Not to be killed? But they kill each other all the time. Not to be eaten? Tell that to the lion and leopard and fox and dog. Not to be tortured? Tell that to the big cat engaged in eating the entrails of a still breathing antelope. In other words, man's attitude to animal rights on the whole rested, as far as I am concerned, on what he saw around him of how animals interacted with each other, and his belief that his creator had endowed him with superiority in this world. We are sovereign under God, delegated if you will, to rule in His stead, or we are sovereign by dint of our ability to reason and construct tools and change our environment to suit ourselves rather than adapting to it as other animals have to do.

Being sovereign means being above the law, the law that the sovereign makes and imposes on all below, being lawless. Being able to take whatever I want or desire, and if that is cruelty and lust and exploitation I can allow my inner beast free reign and descend to the outlaw status of the beast. As an outlaw, I need take even less notice of the rights of anything or anyone else.

However, Hans Jonas and his ethic of responsibility takes up this attitude and basically says that because we can do these things and do them with greater impact due to our technology, we have a responsibility to life itself. Not to God, or other men, but to the force of life all around us in every single organic being, animal or plant based. Life is owed our allegiance. We have to refrain, not from harm to an individual, but from harm to the ability of life to continue. The best defence of an eco-system is not to preserve homeostasis, but to help it increase biodiversity. Biodiversity allows a system to adapt to changing conditions, which is why the extinction of any animal or plant species is a cause for concern, and if we have a

hand in hurrying along such an extinction, we are guilty of an ethical violation towards life. The sovereign's power should be extending rights to animals and plants, not arguing that they have none.

Of course, if we think about the rights of plants, we enter a murky territory where we can acknowledge that plants are alive, but should they then have rights? What possible rights could we ascribe to plants? The right to grow freely? We all violate that every day when we pull out the weeds in our gardens. The right to exist? Well, they do, despite us it seems, especially in the case of weeds. The right to have their seeds dispersed by animals? This certainly seems to be a bargain that non-motile plants have struck with motile animals: I will provide you with food in the form of fruit, you drop my seeds far afield as you wander around. However, simply because it is difficult to think of the rights of plants in quite the same way that we would think about animals, I would suggest that in both cases we can consider the right not to be needlessly harvested and wasted and to be protected against undue exploitation, a central right for both. Incidentally, a right many humans would appreciate as well.

However, it that the extent of interactions with plants? When a person plants a tree, nurtures it through applying fertilizer and water, prunes it, checks it for diseases and treats those, and eventually harvests either the fruits or the whole tree for building materials, is such a person behaving ethically? Should we be protecting animals from plants that respond to overgrazing by increasing tannin levels and thus killing the animals? Or should we protect plants, all plants, from being overgrazed?

Or should we do our best to identify what supports biodiversity and encourage that on the part of both animal and plant kingdoms? An anecdotal story I was told by a Bulgarian beekeeper, concerned the change in the grasslands of Bulgaria following the Soviet centralized agriculture model. According to him, with the removal of free-grazing herds of

sheep and cows from the land, certain species of wild-flowers started to disappear, and the bees had to range further afield to find nectar-bearing plants, which affected the health of the bee colonies. I could find no studies that supported such anecdotes, but he insisted that with penned grazing the nature of the plants in the meadows change.

What, if it comes to that, of the plants styled as weeds? In general, people think of any plant that does not yield any crop as a weed, especially if that plant competes with crops. In general such plants are fast-growing (usually much faster that the crop), and thus displaces the crop plants by crowding, stealing sunlight, and especially by stealing nutrients and thus lowering the yield of any crop. To cope with this, humans have traditionally had to hoe the fields, physically removing the invasive weeds, however, this is a labour-intensive process and in modern agriculture, herbicides play a big role. Using herbicides has an effect on consumers and societies, as Rachel Carson revealed in Silent Spring, and thus has an ethical component. Maybe the rights of plants cannot be defined beyond the right to be considered as entities in their own right with unique and possibly necessary value to the ecosystem as a whole.

All the previous arguments boil down to this: humanity differs from the rest of nature by dint of its ability to manipulate its environment to suit its own comfort, regardless of how that comfort level affects the environment, and as such has set itself above nature. However, being able to impact the capacity of the environment to carry a wide and diverse array of life forms demands a responsibility from humanity for such life, not because its disappearance will inevitably lead to the extinction of man, but because it is in his power to wreak such havoc. Which leads to the heart of the matter: has our technology accelerated the normal cycle of climate change that will impact life on earth, probably leading to a sixth mass extinction event?

In the previous chapter I presented a number of papers that dealt with affirming the fact that humans have, through the use of fossil fuels, unchecked population growth, and waste production due to the consumer culture, accelerated the natural climate change cycle of the planet, one whose effects are becoming more and more evident as the years go by. Can we reverse this change? Can we ameliorate the effects? Opinions are divided, but what is certain is that we can all start living with more awareness of the consequences of our actions, both as individuals and as a part of society. Movements such as permaculture, minimalist consumption and living and homesteading are all ways in which certain sections of society are trying to answer the question of dealing, not only more effectively but also more virtuously with nature. However, climate change seems to be not only in our immediate future, but part of our present. Is this, however, a situation in which ethical values and principles can and should play a part?

Consider the following scenario: those who wish to act ethically by consuming more plant-based products, including nut milks. The argument is that cows and other ruminants contribute a considerable amount of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere and therefore drinking nut milks rather than animal dairy produce should be the ethical response to the climate crisis. However, the production of almond milk has led to the massive deaths of pollinator bees and a depletion of water resources, both from irrigating the trees and from manufacturing the nut milk. Changing the water table and creating new desert areas has as much of a negative effect on the climate as the greenhouse gases do, perhaps more since desertification contributes to the warming of the surface of the earth. In trying to act ethically by reducing the suffering of dairy animals and removing their contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, consequences are set in motion that are harmful, maybe as much as the initial circumstances, maybe less. This is exactly why Jonas pleads for us to act only after considering possible outcomes using the heuristics of fear. What is the worse that could

happen? Is one thing worse than another? Is action worse than inaction? The ethic of responsibility does not prescribe a set of rules to follow or guidelines to use to decide what is right or wrong, only asking for careful consideration of actions.

My thesis question was this: If humans should interact ethically with nature, what does such an interaction look like and why is it important for us to act ethically towards what many consider an impersonal force and object? The works of Derrida and Jonas were discussed in the previous chapters, and can be summarised to answer that questions as follows:

Jacques Derrida presents us with a view of humanity in which we are constantly struggling with our desire to be sovereign, or to abdicate sovereignty to a government provided we are protected from the dangers of life by that sovereignty. In both cases, we run the risk that being above the law will cause us to descend into lawlessness, into outlawry, or into a bestiality that owes nothing to animals, and everything to human nature that is capable of being far worse and cruel than any animal we can imagine.

In the fear generated by trying to maintain power, both in the powerful and in those they wish to rule, we use the images and projections of our worst selves to justify the way in which we use the world and the other animals it contains to provide us with what we desire. Derrida challenges us to embrace the animal, the one whose stare can disconcert us in its vulnerability as well as in its arrogance, and to accept our place alongside it as part of a world we share. Jonas counsels us to act circumspectly, to consider our actions carefully. I have repeatedly in this section stated these two conclusions, and in this final part I want to examine how we have used the many different views of ethics to exclude nature and its demands of us from any ethical considerations.

For many generations our interactions with nature were mainly utilitarian, and when we considered the rest of the world ethically, it was from a place of sovereignty and power.

That view did not create a large-scale impact on the world, in fact, the world had much more of an impact on us, forcing us into what is considered the subsistence life of hunter-gatherers or small-scale agriculturalists.

However, the increasing scientific knowledge of the world and the technological revolution of the last two centuries has led to us creating in those few short years a situation that, in the normal cycle of the world, would have taken millenia to develop. That situation can be called the climate crisis, global warming or the verge of the sixth great mass extinction and consists of several related problems: the rising temperature due to CO2 emissions, waste such as plastics and radioactivity rendering recycling by natural methods impossible and locking away nutrients and elements from use, and the death and extinction of species resulting in a decreasing biodiversity.

In order to try and rescue some kind of future for life, we need to develop an ethic that will lead to fair use, preservation and consideration, and that ethic is indicated by Hans Jonas in his imperative of responsibility. As was discussed in the chapter dealing with Jonas and his work, I feel that taking responsibility proceeds first and foremost from a position of respect. Whenever we give a phenomenon a name with some kind of negative connotation, such as bestial in terms of animals or weeds in terms of plants, we are not respecting the phenomenon or the entity we are dealing with on its own terms. We are not approaching it on its own terms, we are not seeing its values in and of itself. Often we make assumptions about the entity, based not on our own interactions with it, but with what I would call societal prejudices. DH Lawrence illustrated that so perfectly in his poem The Snake.

In that poem he channels the societal response when he talks about how the voices in his head were saying ‘kill it’. Yet, he did not react, but watched the snake, appreciated it for its beauty and for its charm, and it drank and turned to leave, and at that point he suddenly reverts to the ‘normal’ response. He throws a stick at the snake and it flees away. But before

that he and the snake shared a moment of perfect communion, each of them quiet and content at the fountain for the water they needed to stay alive.

When we discard our respect, our awe at the wonder of the creatures who share this world with us, we are able to kill them with no guilt, to destroy them and their ecology without thinking of the ethics we are embodying. Whether those ethics rest on theology, or utility, or even the golden rule, they are instilled in us by the society we live in, and the easiest thing in the world is to use whatever intrinsic ethical system we have to react to the world around us. Such instinctive value judgements and actions based on them are most often reinforced by social approval, such as a child picking a bunch of flowers for a parent and in the process destroying a plant completely. The destruction of the plant is overlooked in the warmth of the parent's feelings of love and care from the child.

Of course, a respect for life is a difficult thing to cultivate in, as I've said before, a world where life depends on death to survive. Such a respect for life goes hand-in-hand with a desire to protect it and keep it safe and is at odds with the need to kill in order to eat. Which is, of course, one reason why so many people prefer to shop in brightly lit and decorated supermarkets for pre-packaged, often carefully prepared and presented meat, fish and fowl rather than have to see the animal alive, then dead, and be involved in the messy actions of skinning, gutting and butchering.

The thought arises that those who are involved in such actions on a daily basis develop a callousness towards the suffering that inevitably accompanies death. I cannot speak for all such workers, but my guess is that mechanization of any action removes emotional involvement with that action. To a slaughterhouse employee, it might well be that the production line of meat has no more emotional connection than the piece of a car has for an employee on the assembly line. I would argue that this is perhaps the biggest problem of the technological world. It does not matter what it is that we are doing, as human beings we get

the most satisfaction and do the best job when we are emotionally connected to what we are doing. If we respect everything we touch, assemble, disassemble, cut, prune, pick, write or use we handle them with care, we do a careful job with them and we have pride in what we do.

The butcher who respects the animal cares whether it suffers or not, and cares about the final product, is, indeed, thankful for that product and the food it puts on the table. The farmer who cares for his orchard, the oenologist who knows where each grape in his wine came from and is grateful for the harvest, all of these are practicing the ethic of responsibility.

There is another aspect to this ethical viewpoint of respect leading to responsibility, and that is to not waste what we get from nature as sustenance. Not just on the large scale where fruit and vegetables are rejected by supermarkets because of spots and flaws that will cause the buyer to reject the produce, but on a small scale when we refuse to eat certain parts of the animal or the plant. We do this not because it is not nutritious, but simply because the appearance or the smell or the idea that it is an organ rather than musculature, or a leaf or peel rather than the flesh of the fruit, is part of what we learned to eat when we were children.

Waste in all its forms is disrespecting the item and all those who had a hand in producing it, yet it is built, as was discussed in earlier chapters, into our consumer culture. From being people who would recycle and reuse without actually calling it that, we have become litterers. Things are not valuable enough to repair or repurpose, and after all, the shops are full of things to replace those.

One of the things that technology has done for us is to present a forum for ideas, and in the last twenty years there are more and more people who are talking about ways in which to prepare food from previously disregarded parts of the animal and plant or are showing others how to live with minimal waste. Of course, the problem is that the forums exist between those who live in the wealthy countries, and by that I mean countries where having a

smartphone and a computer are considered normal, where having access to electricity without interruptions is normal, where food and water are simply a part of daily life and almost every home has some kind of temperature control.

Within these countries there are those who live on the margins, who worry about having enough money to pay for shelter, food and transportation, who live with very basic media access, and are thus not part of the forums. They are part of the population of earth who live, still, in survival mode. Who cannot afford to consider whether to eat meat or not, since they simply are considering whether they will eat at all. The luxury of debating cutting greenhouse gas emissions and waste and acting ethically towards animals and plants are not for them. Their responsibility is to the life of their children and society. They don't have to be told about nose-to-tail eating since they cannot afford to discard any edible part of any food source. They are as vulnerable to the actions of the haves, in this case, the technology haves, as the rest of nature is. There are literally millions of people who exist in the midst of droughts, floods, food deserts and in their worlds, their first concern is staying alive. Those of us who are privileged, who have the luxury of choice, should be supporting outreach programs into such areas.

So, when we speak of acting ethically towards nature, we have to consider that our ethical actions have to include all life, and especially the life that is vulnerable to the decisions we make every day as consumers. Living in places where we have become accustomed to the kind of lifestyle driven by the consumer society, we have to accept that we are the sovereigns, and take responsibility for our actions towards the rest of the world, filled with humans, animals, and plants.

By accepting responsibility, the sovereign becomes the wise ruler, creating worlds in which life continues. However, this responsibility extends down to every single person, and

should be founded on a respect for, and valuation of, every other thing in our world, be they animate, inanimate, organic, or inorganic.

Supporting those who advocate for fair use, supporting companies who farm responsibly, supporting nose to tail and root to leaf eating, shopping for produce that is locally sourced rather than flown and trucked in, eating seasonally, living thriftily are perhaps ideas that for many smacks of privilege and libertarian ethics.

One example is the concept of using waste ground in cities to create community gardens where children can again learn just where their food actually comes from, and here the support of leaders and laws and ordinances need to be adjusted to allow such activities. Cleaning up the plastic already dumped into the sea is another such project.

There are many programs and actions taking place and taking place where individuals can get involved. This is where your choice, your decision can be made for a future filled with life you will never see or experience. As a sovereign person, this is where you can act responsibly and interact with nature ethically.

As a closing statement, I would say that acting and thinking responsibly in what we consume, what we buy, what we use, is a wise use of our sovereign power, and by recognising that we do have a choice towards how we treat every other subject and object in this world, the best way to act responsibly is to approach each thing with respect. Respect not just for what we can get from it, but the respect that sees it as an end in and of itself, respect that appreciates their uniqueness and contribution to the thing we call life.

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