UC Irvine
UC Irvine Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title
Get Over Yourself: Universal Egoism in Ethics

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/48326521

Author
Kleszyk, Louise Marie

Publication Date
2015

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Get Over Your Self: Universal Egoism in Ethics
DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Philosophy

by

Louise Marie Kleszyk

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Martin Schwab, Chair
Professor David W. Smith, Chair,
Professor Aaron James.

2015

© 2015 Louise Marie Kleszyk

DEDICATION

To

all the others--

the ones I recognize

and the ones I am learning to recognize.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
CURRICULUM VITAE	v
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: Resources of the Phenomenological-existential Tradition	20
CHAPTER 2: Identity Arguments and Their Limits	72
CHAPTER 3: Alterity Arguments and their Limits	88
CONCLUSION: The Death of Ethics	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY	120

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express thanks to Martin Schwab for allowing me wide breadth with my dissertation topic and research. His openness and receptivity have allowed me to pursue a dissertation that has challenged me as much as it has been a process of challenging the traditional discourses in Western Ethics.

Additionally, I express appreciation to David W. Smith, whose willingness to recognize commonality with others is an inspiration in a field where so many focus only on difference.

Thank you also to Aaron James. His rigor and attention help to bring order and clarity to a radically different and obscured approach to philosophy.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Louise Marie Kleszyk

2010- 2015 University of California, Irvine. Ph.D. program in Department of Philosophy,

2007-2010 University of California, Irvine. M.A. in Philosophy.

2002-2006 Hamline University. B.A. in Philosophy w/ Certificate of Proficiency in German.

FIELD OF STUDY

Phenomenology, Existentialism, and Value Theory

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Get Over Your Self: Universal Egoism in Ethics

By

Louise Marie Kleszyk

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Professor Martin Schwab, Chair
and
Professor David W. Smith, Chair.

Universal egoism runs rampant in Western ethics. Too many theories justify intrinsic moral value only in terms of some moral 'self' that is defined by a concrete set of identity conditions. Such theories have failed to justify the value of non-human natural phenomena such as landscapes, plants, and animals because these theories require a basic similarity, or shared identity that grants them moral status. Understanding and acting upon the value of others, especially radically different others becomes increasingly important in a time of melting polar ice, rising sea levels and increasingly polarized political discourse. Only if we supplement identity arguments with alterity arguments can we create an ethics that not only overcomes universal egoism but also offers insight into how we face new ecological consciousness and crisis. Alterity arguments differ from identity arguments because the characterization of the other need not be particular, epistemically closed or metaphysically secure. An ethics of alterity can be grounded in resources from the phenomenal-existential tradition. Relying on insights from classic phenomenology and West-coast phenomenology, alterity arguments can justify intrinsic moral value for non-human natural

phenomena such as landscapes, plants, and animals. Indeed, when paired with identity arguments, we can justify action-guiding norms and principles as well. Using resources from the phenomenological-existential tradition also allows us to reconceptualize ethics in a way that addresses both the is/ought distinction and the relationship between metaethics, ethics, and applied ethics.

INTRODUCTION: 'UNIVERSAL EGOISM' IN WESTERN ETHICS

It is a time of new ecological consciousness and crisis. In order to face the challenges of a world where the ecological balance grows ever more tenuous[1], we need an ethics that can help us to uchapternderstand not only what is at stake but also how we should respond to the crisis. There is a certain kind of selfishness, or egoism, that runs through most texts in the Western tradition of ethics. The selfishness to which I refer is not the self-interested individual represented in Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*[2] nor is it the 'rational egoism' of Ayn Rand's writings[3]. The egoism that concerns me is a universal egoism according to which ethical theories are inherently incapable of recognizing and justifying the value of otherness and diversity which extend beyond the narrow interests of some privileged group. I call this an egoism because the end of such ethical systems is always some concrete self--even if that self is a unified group of various individuals. I call this egoism universal because rather than applying to merely one individual's self interest (as is the case in Hobbes' and Rand's philosophies), the self-interest applies universally across individual members of the privileged class. That the name 'universal' implies that

---

[1] Recent articles discussing the increasing concern about ecological crises include Kerr, 2013; Warwick & Ng, 2012; Raupach et al., 2011; and Harvey et al., 2013. Harvey et. al., for example, argue that unless we are able to 1) increase current energy efficiency, 2) make better use of renewable energies, 3) develop a new zero-carbon energy source, and 4) revise land use regulations then we will face a catastrophic global temperature increase of two degrees Celsius.

[2] In Chapter 13 and 14 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes describes the 'natural man' as someone who seeks peace for himself and whose solve reason to enter into covenant with others is out of self-interest. "From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which neverthelesse they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their End (which is principally their owne conservation, and sometimes their delectation only,) endeavor to destroy, or subdue an other." (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 13). Here we see an intrinsic conflict between two individuals that follows from their similarity insofar as they are both self-serving egoists.

[3] From Rand's *Virtue of Selfishness*, p. 21, "The Objectivist ethic hold man's life as the *standard* of value--and *his own life* as the ethical *purpose* of every individual man." Where a straw man might be desirable, Rand provides a clear example of an egoist philosophy, according to which each individual's self-interest is the goal of such an 'ethics'.

the theory should apply to individuals beyond the defined limits of a particular class of beings is not an irony lost on me. It is precisely because an ethical theory presupposes that only those who fulfill certain criteria for identity are morally relevant that a 'universal egoism' is unable to account for the moral value of radically different others. Ultimately, an ethics characterized by identity must be supplemented with an ethics meant to characterize alterity if we are to respond to our newly understood yet entirely ancient role in the larger biological environments in which we participate.

Some of the most horrifying examples of prejudice, oppression, and genocide have been motivated by moral attitudes that seek to limit the class of individuals to which moral regard is expected and hence for whom moral respect is deserved. In the National Socialist era in the German-speaking world, Jewish people were often dehumanized in propaganda and represented as animalistic (looking often like apes) or demonic (resembling what we think of as traditional representations of the devil). This representation of 'others' as non-human or sub-human reflects the notion that they are undeserving of the same moral regard or respect owed to 'ethnic Germans'. In 18th century Europe, people from other continents were kept as curiosities or as zoo animals in private and public exhibitions. Human beings were treated as non-human animals because, quite simply, white Europeans thought of them as inherently other and different. Currently, we can observe how humanity's pursuit of certain ends has meant the destruction of entire populations and sometimes entire species of non-humans. Unregulated hunting, deforestation, and other destruction of habitat all have contributed to loss of biodiversity on this planet. An ethics of alterity is needed to overcome universal egoism at the level of society with other humans and at the level of society with our biological environment.

It is a time of new ecological crisis, meaning that we face challenges in resource management never conceived of by previous generations. It is also a time of new ecological consciousness and awareness, meaning that we understand better than ever how we interact with and contribute to our environments. Biological sciences now allow us not only to better understand a great deal more about the other organisms on our shared planet but also about our interactions with interdependence between the various interrelated organisms on our planet. Scientific knowledge alone may not be sufficient to save ourselves and our planet from ourselves[4]. In order to recognize and respect others (human and non-human like), we also need moral and ethical concepts according to which we can recognize others and respect them for their own sake. Up until this point, most texts from the Western tradition of ethics have had great difficulty accounting for the positive moral value of others--non-Western cultural minorities and non-humans alike.

Although there is much to be said about moral theories that adequately account for the positive value of 'other' humans, the main concern in this text is whether an ethical theory can justify intrinsic environmental concern in a way that addresses the first-personal point of view. Non-conscious, non-sentient 'others' in our environment represent the paramount 'other'. These are beings that are so entirely different from us that we still lack an ethics that adequately considers their otherness and our moral obligations to those others. If we can find an ethics that can ground intrinsic environmental concern, including

[4] As the article, "A Trillion Tons" confirms, we do indeed have great reason to be concerned. As we draw closer to the limit of a trillion tons that scientists agree is our total 'budget' for global carbon emissions, the authors suggest that a multi-prong approach is our only hope to avoid a seemingly inevitable 2-degree Celsius temperature change that can radically alter the face of our planet and all life living on it. "The En-ROADS modeling exercise shows how rapid deployment of efficiency improvements, renewables, and new technologies might impact the carbon budget over this century. Specifically, it confirms that each component is necessary and none is sufficient alone. Combined with a carbon price and effective land-use policy, these three tools offer a challenging but credible path that stays within the carbon budget." (Harvey et al., p. 22).

concern for those most dissimilar from us, then such an ethics can also be applied to diverse populations of humans and non-human living beings.

To talk about the first-personal point of view is just to talk about things in terms of a subject's experience, or from the point of view of some subject. It is my opinion that such a justification is well-suited to overcome the universal egoism that afflicts our Western culture. Since we are, in a certain sense, closed-minded because of the limits of our own subjective experience, I hope that our minds can be collectively opened by an appeal to intrinsic environmental value that is justified by a first-personal point of view. Before I explain my proposed solution to the problem, it is important to properly understand the claim of universal egoism that I have already made here. Only when the diagnosis is clear will the prognosis make sense.

Immanuel Kant is probably the last moral philosopher that anyone would expect to be classified as an egoist or as promulgating a selfish philosophy. His main ethical axiom amounts to a very sophisticated way of saying, "You are not special. You are not an exception to any rule—even (indeed especially) those willed by your own rational mind." For Kant, the highest, unqualified good thing is a good will. To have a good will is to know how to achieve an end by certain means, i.e., it is to have practical reason. More specifically, Kant thinks that practical reason is a matter of testing personal rules to see whether they can be willed as a universal law. An action is only good insofar as it realizes the end of a good will. If one wills correctly, then the will of that person is a good will. One can tell if he or she has a good will by administering the test of the Categorical Imperative, which is the one and only command that we ought to follow at all times: "There is, therefore, only one categorical imperative. It is: Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same

time will that is should become a universal law" (Kant, *GftMoM,* p. 44). If one's action and the personal rule behind that action conform to the standard of the categorical imperative and if the action is done out of respect for a rational being's law-giving authority, then one's actions are the end of a good will. Willing in accordance with the categorical imperative satisfies just what it means to have a good will. One must assess the particular features of his or her maxim-led action in order to determine if that maxim-led action conforms to the standard provided by the one and only categorical imperative. When the condition promulgated by Kant's ethics is fulfilled, then one's will and resulting action can thus be identified as good. Specifically, one's action is good if that action follows from a rule that can be willed as both my personal rule and as a universal law for all other beings capable of having a good will. In other words, an action is good if its motivating maxim can rationally be applied universally across all beings capable of practical reason.

This is the sense in which Kant's imperative is categorical: by applying rationally and universally across all subjects capable of a good will. Importantly, one must also act for the reason that his or her action is the result of a good will, i.e., one must act based on respect for the capacity of rational beings to legislate universal moral law. Only actions performed from duty are identified as good. Actions that merely accord with duty are not good because although the action itself may conform to appropriate standards, the will that guides the action does not conform to appropriate standards. Some say actions speak louder than words. For Kant, the words that express the personal rules we follow say the only relevant thing we need to know about our moral character. Indeed, even if one's maxim is never manifested in action, this does not preclude the possibility of morality, as the will itself still has 'full value in itself' even when the person with the good will lacks all

power to bring about change in the world (Kant, *GftMoM*, p. 8). Kant explicitly notes that someone completely unable to affect change in the world is still able to have a good will and hence able to be morally good. Consequences of our actions are ultimately beyond our control. Our will, the only thing we can control with certainty, is the source of morality.

A classic objection to Kant's ethics is that the moral test of the categorical imperative leaves a lot of others out of moral consideration. If only actions motivated by maxims capable of being willed as universal law are calculated as contributing to what is morally good, then any number of humans and non-humans become mere marginal notations if not left out of the analysis altogether. Anyone incapable of practical reason is unable to perform moral actions. If one's mind and intelligences do not fulfill certain criteria, then any resulting behaviors can never have positive moral value. Although many humans are capable of achieving a good will, many are not. Newborns, children, people with developmental disabilities, people with lessened cognitive capacities due to various maladies or because of advanced age, and people with alternative notions of 'rationality' are all excluded from the class of beings for whom positive moral value is possible. For Kant, being the object of moral obligations requires that one is also the subject of moral obligations. Not only must one be capable of evaluating which means are necessary for attaining an end (the good will, as it is the only end in itself). One must also be capable of endorsing and acting from rules the aim of which is a good will. In other words, one must be capable of having a good will and acting for the sake of a good will. This reflexive awareness itself is part of the structure of a good will[5]. One must not only be capable of 1)

[5] And, as Korsgaard claims, "...the concept of goodness, in the final sense of goodness, has a kind of reflexivity about it: nothing can be a final good if it cannot be perceived as a final good, and indeed the final good is, as it were, made complete by its own perception." (Korsgaard, "The Origin of the Good and Our Animal Nature", p.33). In this essay, Korsgaard attempts to show that not only a Kantian ethics but also a Utilitarian ethics and an Aristotelian ethics will lead to this conclusion.

acting according to rules capable of being willed as universal law but also 2) acting because the rule can be simultaneously willed as universal law. Many humans, and most non-humans (save, perhaps any non-corporeal rational beings such as angels--which Kant himself had in mind when writing his ethics) will be incapable of fulfilling these criteria. Hence, many humans and most all non-humans will be void of moral status such that grants obligations and rights. Indeed, Kant explicitly notes that whereas things have value (*Wert*), only beings with a good will have dignity. Rational human beings fall into the latter category as something to be respected as an end in itself. All else has merely instrumental value, or value as a means to an end(Kant, *GftMoM*, p.41).

So how can a Kantian ethics attempt to account for the positive moral value of non-human natural phenomena? In short, a Kantian ethics cannot account for the intrinsic value of non-humans. Obligations regarding moral actions toward non-humans are grounded not in the value of the things themselves but in the value of rational beings like us. In his *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant explains the indirect duties we have to treat animals well: "Animal nature has analogies to human nature, and by doing our duties to animals in respect of manifestations of human nature, we indirectly do our duty towards humanity (Kant, *LoE*, p.239). Kant does, in these same lectures, explicitly denounce various forms of animal cruelty. He also approvingly notes that people who perform vivisections on animals are rightfully kept from serving on juries because of their decreased capacity for empathy (Kant *LoE*, p.240). Although Kant lauds kind treatment of animals and denounces cruelty towards non-humans, any duties to treat animals well do not stem from obligations to the animals themselves. It is only because we indirectly fulfill our duty to other humans that we ought to treat non-human animals well. Hence animals lack any intrinsic moral value.

Moreover, the positive moral value of our actions towards animals seems to be directly proportionate to the extent to which these non-human animals are similar to or analogous with rational human beings.

Obviously sensate non-humans such as canines, felines, and non-human primates are thus deserving of good treatment because they, like us, are capable of sensation and suffering. But what about non-sensate non-humans such as plants or landscapes? Can we have duties to these others? Indeed, this is the radical notion proposed by Aldo Leopold in the first half of the 20th century. Leopold predicted that the natural evolution of ethical systems was to continually broaden the scope of beings that count as moral objects. In a certain sense, Leopold predicted that humanity was capable of living in a kingdom of ends where landscapes themselves are also moral subjects, and as such, objects of moral duties(Leopold, p. 239).

According to Kant, if landscapes, including the plants in them, do not fulfill the criterion of being analogous to human beings, then there is no duty to treat them well. We might imagine that plants, for example, are so utterly different from us that there is no danger of losing our capacity for empathy when we destroy or harm plant life. In his lectures, Kant claims that destruction of nature is wrong not because of any features of the things themselves but because of their potential to be a means to some person's ends. "Destruction is immoral; we ought not to destroy things which can still be put to some use. No man ought to mar the beauty of nature; for what he has no use for may still be of use for someone else" (Kant, *LoE*, p.241). This quote highlights that things that are not analogous to us have no features in themselves that make them valuable. The 'beauty of nature' has value not because of some features it possesses but because it has potential use for other

human beings. Neither sensate beings nor non-conscious natural beings have any possibility of having intrinsic moral value; both are mere things and can be used as a means to an end. Although the features of some non-humans make them worthy of good treatment insofar as they are analogous to rational human beings, the duty to treat them well is ultimately a duty directed towards and grounded in humanity itself. Moreover, radically different, or other, kinds of non-humans that are not sufficiently similar to humans are relegated to having merely instrumental value. Even if a duty to, for example, return a worm to nature after researching it (as Kant lauds Leibniz for doing in his *Lectures*, p.240) is based on the characteristics of the worm itself, the duty is directed towards beings capable of having a good will. In the case of having a duty to avoid destruction of nature, the features of the landscape itself are only relevant if they are deemed useful by or able to be deemed useful by some human beings. There is nothing about the landscape itself that makes it morally significant in the sense that the worm's identity makes it morally relevant insofar as it is analogous to us. In either case, there is no way to account for the intrinsic value of non-human natural phenomena within the context of Kantian ethics. Although Kant would admonish an individual person who acts according to entirely self-serving rules or some notion of exceptionalism, Kant's ethics still can be classified as suffering from a universal egoism. No individual rational being should act from purely selfish reasons, but as a species we ought only consider our own selves when determining the morality of an action. Moreover, the only members of our species who have intrinsic dignity worthy of respect are those who fulfill very specific criteria for having a good will. Care for others or for those who are radically different (e.g., persons with limited or no rationality or non-

sentient natural things) only applies insofar as these other are similar to us or useful for us. At the level of the group of rational beings, Kantian ethics is universally egoistic.

What has come above is an explanation of why Kantian ethics cannot provide a justification of intrinsic concern for radically different others as moral subjects. To be a moral subject is to have a distinctly moral point of view and a distinctly moral identity from which and towards which duties are owed. In Kant's ethics, persons are moral subjects because they are good as ends in themselves (i.e., good insofar as they are capable of good wills). All things that are not good as ends in themselves are only good instrumentally for some moral subject, but something that lacks moral subjecthood has neither goodness 'in itself' nor a good for its own sake. Something which is not an end in itself can be morally relevant as a moral object of concern, which is to say that although it can owe no duties to such radically different others, there can be duties relevant to that thing insofar as it is something to be considered in evaluating the actions of ourselves and those like us who are capable of having a good will; this is the case with animals in Kant, as we owe other moral persons kind treatment towards animals because treating animals well helps us to serve our duties to other moral subjects. In this sense, non-rational humans, non-human animals, and perhaps even plants insofar as they share basic analogies with human life (e.g., need for nourishment) are all capable of being the indirect object of moral action even if they are not the object of moral obligations directly. Radically different others can be morally relevant within Kantian ethics insofar as they are objects that have instrumental value for our ability to fulfill duties to other moral subjects. Yet these radically different others cannot have their intrinsic value justified. According to Kant, there is no reason to have intrinsic moral concern for these 'things' because the only reason something is intrinsically morally

valuable is if it is capable of a good will. Things that are incapable of acting based on rules that can be willed as universal law are merely things, and as such, they have no intrinsic moral value.

If Kant's ethics cannot provide justification for the intrinsic moral value of non-human natural phenomena, then it may seem that Utilitarianism--another philosophy designed to overcome mere self interest--can possibly overcome the universal egoism that plagues most texts in the Western tradition of ethics. John Stuart Mill, one of the founders of utilitarian ethics, was known for his social activism on behalf of people marginalized by government and mainstream society: women, slaves, and lower-class members of society in general. The main upshot of his philosophy is the greatest happiness principle: actions are good insofar as they maximize the universal sum of happiness. Happiness is defined as a surplus of pleasure over pain. Like Kant, one's individual self-interest is considered good only if it contributes to a more general good[6]. As someone explicitly concerned with overcoming the selfish elitism that still characterizes most developed Western nations, it seems perhaps incongruous that his proof for the greatest happiness principle begins with an appeal to egoistic impulses, "No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness." (Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch IV). Mill also takes as a premise that the fact that something is desired is sufficient proof of its desirability (*ibid*.). As all people desire their own happiness as an end, he concludes that happiness itself must be what is truly desirable and hence the end of all actions, i.e., the ultimate source of positive moral value. Note that although his premise is that all human beings desire their own happiness, his conclusion

[6] Kant's general good is the universal good of the good will. Mill's general good is the universal sum total of happiness.

regards happiness in general. He begins with a premise regarding egoistic hedonism and attempts to prove from that a universal hedonism. In Mill's ethics we get a two-fold egoism insofar as he uses it as a basis for his justification of the greatest happiness principle in addition to the universal egoism. Although utilitarianism was supposed to be a theory crafted to avoid selfish, egoistic conclusions and actions, the philosophy itself, like Kant's ethics, still falls victim to the plague of universal egoism which consumes ethical theories and texts in the Western tradition. More directly to my main goals, such an ethics is incapable of providing justification for the intrinsic value of non-human natural phenomena. Not only is Mill's proof for the greatest happiness principle limited by its egoistic starting premises, but even a more general application of the guiding principle itself will fall short of providing a justification for the intrinsic value of radically different others.

In classical utilitarianism, the explicit subject of discussion is often a human one. Although Mill makes passing remarks about non-human capacity for happiness ("It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied..." (Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. II), the non-human's pain and pleasure are classified as belonging to a lower class of pleasures. Intellectual pleasures, resulting from higher faculties, are superior in kind to the sensuous lower pleasures. Still, even the lower, sensual pleasures of which even animals are capable are relevant for a utilitarian calculus. Jeremy Bentham seems to disapprove of the way that animal 'agents' are treated in human legal systems, noting that "Other animals, which, on account of their interests having been neglected by the insensibility of ancient jurists, stand degraded to the class of *things*" (Bentham, *Introduction*, Ch. XVII). Whereas Kant's ethics provide absolutely no justification for the intrinsic value of non-human natural phenomena

(who all only have value as things), at least classic utilitarianism can claim that an animal's pain and pleasure do have some moral value[7], and moreover, the value of non-human animals' pain and pleasure is completely independent of any human subject's experience or observation. It seems then that perhaps utilitarianism could be a good resource for overcoming the universal egoism that has led to so many ethical justifications that are ultimately speciesist, racist, or sexist. Indeed, to find and justify such a philosophy was Mill's explicit goal. But we must also consider the extent to which the utilitarian justification is based on a first-personal perspective. In order to address this issue, it is necessary to consider the very notion of utility. Is utility a first-personal notion? Do animals contribute to utility?

One might raise concern that happiness cannot be understood merely as the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain, and so 'happiness' as well-being cannot be understood merely in terms of pleasure and pain. If happiness is something more complex than a surplus of pleasure over pain, then perhaps utilitarianism cannot justify the intrinsic value of non-humans natural phenomena. As with other utilitarian philosophers, such as Sidgwick, it might be the case that happiness is not merely pleasure and pain. Sidgwick used 'happiness' and 'well-being' interchangeably (Preface to the Second Edition of *The Method of Ethics*), and indeed happiness seems to be more closely tied to 'interests' than pleasures and pains. In the tradition of utilitarian ethics, however, especially following John Stuart Mill and his most recent follower, Peter Singer, happiness is understood merely in terms of these two things: pleasure and pain. Given Mill's dominant role in the interpretation and practice of utilitarian ethics in the Western tradition, I will limit most of

[7] In Bentham's own words, pain and pleasure are the 'two sovereign masters' to which humanity (and likewise non-human sentient beings) is subject.

my discussion to happiness understood in such terms. Indeed, even discussion of interests has often been boiled down to pleasures and pains, as in the case of Singer's claims that animals have interests. Although Sidgwick's language (e.g., 'happiness', 'well-being', and 'interests') suggest that perhaps happiness matters as something beyond pain and pleasure, he still seems to conflate the notions of well-being and a balance of pleasures and pains. Moreover, Sidgwick's ethics, too, seem to imply that when it comes to a matter of quality, human pleasures and human interests are decidedly more important:

> "...beauty, knowledge, and other ideal goods, as well as all external material things, are only reasonably to be sought by men in so far as they conduce either (1) to Happiness or (2) to the Perfection or Excellence of human existence. I say "human", for though most utilitarians consider the pleasure (and freedom from pain) of the inferior animals to be included in the Happiness which they take as the right and proper end of conduct, no one seems to contend that we ought to aim at perfecting brutes, except as a means to our ends, or at least as objects of scientific or aesthetic contemplation for us"
>
> (Sidgwick, *MoE*, Book I, Ch IX, section 4).

The above passage is significant because it shows that even when 'happiness' is understood more broadly in terms of 'well-being' and 'interests', the latter considerations always boil down to pains and pleasures for a classic utilitarian and even for some of the modern counterparts (e.g., Singer). Moreover, this passage gives us an explicit indication that although animals' happiness, well-being, and interests must be taken into consideration when calculating whether an action contributes to universal happiness, the main reason for considering the lives of non-humans or sub-human brutes—the heavily racialized term

applied to humans thought to be inferior and primitive—is as a means to our ends. Although classical utilitarianism acknowledges that there is something good for the sake of 'inferior' beings, the good of those beings is ultimately only morally relevant insofar as it contributes to our own good or the seemingly intrinsic value is relegated to a status of lower value. If the so-called 'perfecting' of brutes can only be justified in terms of our happiness, then certainly we have hope to justify the intrinsic value of neither non-human animals nor non-conscious living beings such as plants.

It should be noted, however, that there is the possibility of justifying intrinsic concern for some non-human natural phenomena merely in terms of classic utilitarian ethics. Although Sidgwick himself seems to think that non-humans are rightfully classified as things that are ultimately only morally relevant as means to our ends, the philosophical principles allow for further justification of their moral value. Jeremy Bentham, for example, seems to note with disapproval that non-human animals have been classified as mere 'things', or means to our ends. He notes that the 'insensibility' of 'ancient jurists' has led to this 'neglect' of animals (Bentham, *PoMaL*, Ch XVII, section 1, subsection IV). Although Bentham seems to disapprove of this neglect for the interests of non-human animals, we still face two difficulties with the classical utilitarian approach. First, we still have no clear way to understand interests in terms other than pleasures and pains (which means non-sentient beings cannot generate moral value), and second, as such, we cannot justify intrinsic concern for radically different non-conscious living beings such as plants or landscapes because such radically different others are not sentient. In short, we cannot yet justify the good for the sake of anything that does not experience pain and pleasure—including plant life and landscapes.

Two points can be made here. First, the justification for the moral value of non-humans, although based on their general capacity for experiences of pleasure and pain, is not a truly first-personal justification. In utilitarian ethics, it is the first-person experience of pain and pleasure that grounds moral value, but this pain and pleasure must always be evaluated from an impersonal point of view. Pain and pleasure of all kinds must be taken into account when calculating whether an action maximizes universal happiness, but whose pain or pleasure it is becomes irrelevant. All that matters is that there is someone for whom there is an experience of pleasure or pain. An animal's pain and pleasure have moral value, but the non-humans (just as humans) themselves are merely occasions for pain and pleasure. The animals' welfare may be understood as having moral value, but the animals themselves have no intrinsic value. Because of this impersonal perspective from which pain and pleasure must be evaluated, a species that does not yet exist or one that has already been wiped out has no welfare and hence no moral value. Additionally, if we were able to annihilate a species without causing the members of the species any pain, then this action could potentially maximize universal happiness. There is nothing to explain *in principle* the positive moral value of natural phenomena themselves.

Second, if animals have moral value only insofar as they are sensate beings, then any non-sensate non-humans are incapable of contributing to the *summum bonum* (Mill's phrase) except insofar as they contribute to the maximization of universal happiness of sensate beings. Hence, the most successful attempts to justify the value of non-humans from a utilitarian perspective apply to animal ethics rather than environmental ethics. Certainly we get nothing like an intrinsic concern for the lives of non-sensate living things such as plants. Non-living things such as landscapes are likewise unable to have any

intrinsic value. Things that cannot experience pain or pleasure can only have instrumental value inasmuch as they provide pleasure or pain to sensate beings like humans and non-human animals.

Utilitarian ethics is known as a universal hedonism. Hedonism, as the theory according to which actions are good if they create pleasure, is inherently egoistic. Pleasure and pain, although measured from a neutral perspective, are always pleasure and pain for someone or experienced by something. Authors like Mill begin from an egoistic premise, e.g., 'My happiness is the ultimate good for me' and attempt to universalize this egoism for the sake of the welfare of all (humans or animals or sensate beings). Such an ethics may be applied universally across individual members of certain classes of beings (e.g., sensate organisms), but this approach is unlikely to yield a solution to the universal egoism in Western ethics because it 1) can only be applied to beings sufficiently similar to us, i.e., beings that can suffer pain or enjoy pleasures and 2) justifies the value of non-human others in an explicitly impersonal way. Although utilitarians attempt to argue for a hedonism that is universalistic rather than egoistic, even a universal hedonism is universally egoistic in the sense I have described at the outset of this paper.

It remains open whether classical Kantian ethics or classical utilitarian ethics do have the conceptual materials available to justify the intrinsic value of non-human natural phenomena such as animals or even non-conscious natural phenomena such as plants. Certainly authors such as Peter Singer and Christine Korsgaard have attempted to take classical ethical approaches and show how the underlying principles in a given theory can accommodate such justifications. Such questions will be dealt with later in Chapter Two

, where I consider the accomplishments of the most recent iterations of these classical theories. For now, it is sufficient to note that through prejudice, classical authors have excluded non-human natural phenomena from their ethical systems—even if it is possible that the conceptual basis for the intrinsic justification of non-hum is also a part of the moral system they defend.

So how is it that we might answer Kant and the egoist in their own terms? In other words, it remains open whether there is an ethical tradition that can provide an affirmative answer to the question of whether we can justify an intrinsic environmental concern from a human agent's personal, i.e., first personal, point of view. My thesis is that the phenomenological-existential tradition has resources that, when suitably developed, can justify the intrinsic value of all non-human natural phenomena from a first-personal point of view and justify action-guiding, normative principles relevant to non-humans when paired with identity ethics. This thesis will be developed in two parts. First, I look at the conceptual resources available in the phenomenological-existential tradition and their potential for being developed into an ethics of alterity--an ethics able to overcome the universal egoism in which so many ethical theories are trapped. The key element of this transition towards an ethics of alterity is a radically different notion of self. Indeed, phenomenology and existentialism provide concepts not only for an ethics of alterity but also a radically alternative notion of what an identity ethics would look like according to a very different concept of 'self'. Thus in two ways does the phenomenological-existential tradition offer a way to escape the universal egoism of Western Ethics. Second, I contrast contemporary examples of alterity-based ethical arguments with the mainstream, dominant trend in Western Ethics: identity arguments. Identity arguments, concerned with

the fulfillment of some particular conditions for criteria for a certain identity, can only justify the intrinsic value of non-human natural phenomena in a very limited way insofar as the criteria for being morally relevant are coextensive with criteria that would make those beings in some sense, just like us. In contrast, alterity arguments, concerned with understanding the other for its own sake and on its own terms, have greater success in justifying the intrinsic value of radically different, or 'other' non-human natural phenomena. Ultimately, shortcomings of both kinds of arguments are complimentary. Whereas alterity arguments can justify the intrinsic value of non-human natural phenomena from a first-personal point of view, they can fall short in grounding specific action-guiding norms and principles. Identity arguments are well-suited to justify action-guiding normative principles, but they are unable to justify the intrinsic value of non-human others for their own sake. When blended, the two kinds of ethical arguments can provide us with a robust justification for intrinsic environmental concern as well as specific action-guiding rules.

CHAPTER 1: RESOURCES OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-EXISTENTIAL TRADITION

It has been mentioned that resources within the phenomenological-existential tradition can aid arguments designed to address Kant (not to mention the egoist) on his own terms, i.e., in terms of first-personal justification. What is first-personal justification? Perhaps it is best to answer this question in the negative. Such caricatures of phenomenology exist that it will be helpful to explain what authors in the tradition are not doing. Here is what I imagine many people think of then 'phenomenology' comes to mind: a fellow perched in his armchair reflects on his own subjective, qualitative experience in order to infer some universal truth, and his own first-person experiences, perceptions, and memories are all he needs to consider when doing philosophical reflection about things like ethics; this may be called proof by a Cartesian theater of the mind. By looking first at the false caricatures of phenomenology, we can better understand the prejudices against this tradition. Likewise, when we bring this prejudice into clear view, we can see how misunderstandings about phenomenology and existentialism provide an analogue to the misunderstandings about personal human selfhood.

Misconceptions about phenomenology like those mentioned above could not be further from the truth about the authors in the tradition. Indeed, in analytic philosophy of mind, the word 'phenomenology' has meant the qualitative character of an experience as experienced from the first-person point of view. Another brief characterization of 'phenomenology' is thus 'what it's like'. There is no problem with choosing to use this term

in such a way within a specific sub field of philosophy. There is a problem with taking this usage to represent a more general truth about a historical tradition within philosophy. Phenomenology should not be understood as a simple appeal to the qualitative characteristics of an experience that are noticed upon reflection by a thinking subject. Neither should the human subject be understood as an isolated, reflecting consciousness completely separate from its environment.

Now that I've identified what the phenomenological-existential tradition is not, what is an appropriate way to characterize the kind of first-person justification that can be based in this tradition? Subjective experience does matter, but as with any philosophy, it is only a starting point. In order to understand the role of subjective experience, we must first understand the method of bracketing. Phenomenological bracketing is applied to subjective experience in a way that can indeed reveal general (perhaps even universal) and objective truths. Bracketing can likewise be applied to experience to reveal truths about moral values. Moreover, when we properly understand the effects of bracketing, we see that although phenomenology does take subjective, qualitative experience as a starting point, descriptive claims about the way things are and moral claims about the way things should be must ultimately be justified by intersubjective standards external to any single individual's perspective.

First, let's understand the role of subjective, qualitative aspects of experience in the kind of first-personal justification that can be informed by the phenomenological-existential tradition. A good place to go is Ideas I, where Husserl describes the difference

between the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude and how bracketing serves as the transition between the two attitudes. From section 27:

> "...when consciously awake, I find myself at all times, and without my ever being able to change this, set in relation to a world which, through its constant changes, remains one and ever the same. It is continually "present" for me, and I myself am a member of it. Therefore this world is not there for me as a mere *world of facts and affairs*, but, with the same immediacy, as a *world of values*, a *world of goods*, a *practical world*. Without further effort on my part I find the things before me furnished not only with the qualities that befit their positive nature, but with value-characteristics such as beautiful or ugly, agreeable or disagreeable, pleasant or unpleasant, and so forth. Things in their immediacy stand there as objects to be used... These values and practicalities, they too belong to *the constitution of the "actually present" objects as such*, irrespective of my turning or not turning to consider them or indeed any other objects." (*Ideas I*)

We see how in Husserl's basic introduction to his phenomenological method of bracketing, already included in the world of experience and the things to which bracketing would be applied are values. Values as such are part of the world of experience in the natural attitude; this is just another way of saying that values are experienced as a real part of the world[8]. In our usual, everyday attitude, we experience events, actions, and people as being

[8] Indeed, as further explication will show, this phenomenlogical description of values as seeming real within the intersubjective world need not be taken. Such a view is characteristic of Simon Kirchin's work, for example.

morally good or morally bad. An abused animal on the television screen or a dead animal in the shopping cart are perceived as morally irrelevant or as morally significant depending on the person, but the feature of a non-human being positively morally valued or not valued at all is just part of our natural attitude. Whether the dead animal is experienced as morally relevant or not is experienced as representative of some objective feature of the world.

In the natural attitude, which is the everyday, embedded way we experience the world, things, including values, are experienced as if those experiences accurately reflect the way things are in themselves. A person is experienced as a friend or foe, an object is experienced as animate or inanimate, and an action can be experienced as morally good or bad. The positive or negative moral value, the mindedness of the thing, and the moral status of the other can all be (and often are) experienced as if these are concrete, real features of the things themselves. The person in the natural attitude, the person who is not yet doing phenomenology, seems to commit the same error as the caricature of a phenomenologist. In the natural attitude, values need no further justification than merely subjective, qualitative experience. If I experience a landscape to be sublime and morally relevant, those features are proven to me on account of my experience of them. If one stays within the natural attitude, then she will assume that just because something seems to be morally good, then it must be morally good. Likewise, when we have an unreflective approach to the world, we assume that things are morally irrelevant just because they seem to be.

Key to understanding phenomenology is understanding that phenomenology requires that one think about experiences but that one suspend the natural attitude towards experiences for the sake of philosophical inquiry, including philosophical ethics. Phenomenological bracketing, also called 'epoche', is exactly this suspension of the natural attitude. When doing phenomenological reflection, a subjective, qualitative experience of value may be the starting point of the investigation, but the mere qualia themselves are not taken as proof positive of moral features of the world—only someone who fails to abandon the natural attitude would think such a thing. Although it is 'natural' for humans to assume that the world is the way they experience it, philosophical phenomenology—and hence an ethics grounded in phenomenology--requires more than an appeal to merely subjective or qualitative aspects of experience. The thesis of the natural attitude is "I am part of an intersubjective world in which things, including values, are as I experience them to be." Phenomenology, as well as a phenomenological ethics, requires a modification of this thesis. The modification, called bracketing, must be understood with reference to Frege's classic work, "Ueber Sinn und Bedeutung". In this seminal work, Frege explains his theory of sense and reference.

> "If words are used in the ordinary way, one intends to speak of
> their referents. It can also happen, however, that one wishes to talk
> about the words themselves or their sense. This happens, for instance,
> when the words of another are quoted. One's own words then first
> designate words of the other speaker, and only the latter have their

referents. We then have signs of signs. In writing, the words are in this case enclosed in quotation marks. Accordingly, a word standing between quotation marks must not be taken as having its ordinary referent (p.211)".

Why would we look to philosophy of language and logic in order to understand Husserl's phenomenological method of bracketing? Moreover, how can philosophy of language better help us to understand the task of ethics? Husserl himself was quite concerned with not only with the subjective nature of experience but how something subjective like an experience could represent objects in the shared intersubjective world. His *Logical Investigations* consisted of two volumes in which he explores questions of language, logic, and reference. Moreover, when we understand better the task of bracketing, we can see how ethics itself is a form of this method borrowed from philosophy of language and phenomenology.

Other philosophers have noted that Husserl's method has relevant analogies to methods that have been understood quite clearly within logic and philosophy of language. In David Smith's *Husserl* text, he likens bracketing to adopting a metalanguage. Whereas everyday uses of language generally refer directly to real objects in the intersubjective world, a metalanguage allows one to talk about the original language we use to refer to the world. For example, when I say “X is good”, I am attempting to refer to some quality of an action or person or situation. But when I ask, 'What is 'good'?, I am not asking about the property itself. Rather, I am asking what possible definition there is for this word and what

qualities might fulfill the concept for the word. In other words, I am no longer using the word to refer, but I am mentioning the word to inquire about its meaning.

> "In a logician's turn of phrase, we practice semantic ascent, moving from our experience to our language about our experience, as we reflect on the content of the experience, "quoting" the noematic content. Similarly, in logic we practice semantic ascent as we ascent from our use of words to our logical or semantic talk *about* those words, quoting the words without assessing what and how they represent" (Smith, *Husserl,* p.272).

The semantic ascent we practice when using language to talk about value language is thus analogous to an experience in which we reflect on the way we experience values rather than accepting the experience itself as representative of the values themselves. The latter is a mundane attitude normally and naturally adopted as we go about our days, embedded in the world and our projects. The former is a special attitude taken up when one wants to philosophically reflect on experience of value itself as the object of reflection. With values, then, we would practice semantic ascent to a meta-language in order to talk about the meaning of value terms instead of just talking about our experience of values. The person in the natural attitude takes her experience of values to be proof positive of their existence. The person doing philosophically phenomenological ethics, however, must abstract from her experiences as if of good and bad and she must take up a special attitude towards those experiences in order to ask what (if any) underlying truths about good and bad might be present in her experience.

The purpose of phenomenology is not to doubt or deny the existence of the world itself. Likewise, a person doing ethics need not call all her value experiences into question and doubt all her value assumptions. The 'natural thesis', as Husserl calls it, is our ordinary, everyday assumption that the world is the way we experience it--including the experiences as if of moral values (Husserl, *Ideas I*, sect. 27, p.103). During phenomenological bracketing, this thesis (e.g, that morals are exactly as I experience them to be) is modified. It is neither doubted nor negated, but "we set it as it were "out of action", we "disconnect it" (Husserl, *Ideas I*, sect. 31, p. 108). This process of adopting a new attitude toward the natural thesis is just what Husserl calls bracketing, and sometimes *epoche*. So just as phenomenology in general requires taking a neutral (as opposed to invested and interested) approach to our experiences in general, philosophical ethics does require making an effort to view with more neutrality our own values. We should, as it were, place our own biases and prejudices 'out of action' in order to reflect on our experiences in a way that is not limited by our everyday practical and moral commitments[9].

So what is the purpose of setting the natural thesis out of action? Like Descartes[10], Husserl's goal was to discover, "...the ultimate foundations of our beliefs about the world and about our place in it, and to justify--or at least to effect an understanding of--the

---

9 It may be worth noting that this goal of neutrality when reflecting about values seems to be the same main goal of Rawls' Veil of Ignorance. When using Rawls' thought experiment, one should set aside all of her biases, prejudices, and personal preferences. Whereas Rawls is primarily concerned with values in the context of modern political society, approaching values from a viewpoint neutral with regard to your own personal values can be applied more broadly, as we see in the phenomenological method of bracketing.

10 In *Meditations*, Descartes begins his series of thought experiments as a way to see if there are any propositions can be justified as clear and distinct. Whether Husserl actually accomplishes this Cartesian goal is beyond the scope of this project. It is sufficient here to note that Husserl himself conceived of his own project as following Descartes exactly in this regard.

framework within which all our thinking about the world takes place" (Smith & McIntyre, "Husserl and Intentionality", p.94). The phenomenological method of bracketing is thus a good conceptual resource for issues of justification of values because Husserl's main goal was to justify knowledge about the world. To ask about the justification for claims about what is 'good' and 'bad' is exactly the task of ethics. Because the world, as experienced in the natural attitude, includes values, phenomenology is thus a way to justify knowledge about values. Although methodological bracketing requires a suspension of the natural attitude, the main goal is still to justify claims about the things themselves, including good and bad.

In *Cartesian Meditations,* Husserl lauds Descartes' *Meditations* as the 'prototype' for all philosophical reflection (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p.2). The individual subject must reflect on her own experiences, but the goal is not a merely subjective truth or observation. Knowledge gained through such reflection is 'self-acquired' but 'tends towards' universality by virtue of one's own insights (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p.1). The purpose of phenomenological reflection about values is not to discover truth about one's own values but an attempt to discover some more general, intersubjective, perhaps even universal truth. Descartes' *Meditations* were, according to Husserl, epoch-making in a unique sense: they turn our attention away from the world itself and towards our experience of that world. Likewise, an ethics based in the phenomenological method directs our attention away from what we experience as being real values and towards our experience of those values. Recall that another term Husserl used for his

phenomenological method was *epoche*, indicating that his own method is supposed to be epoch-making in a similar way. Husserl describes the new kind of philosophy as a "...radical turn: from naive Objectivism to a transcendental subjectivism--which, with its ever anew but always inadequate attempts, seems to be striving toward some necessary final form..." (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p.4). Husserl's philosophy may be self-labeled as transcendental subjectivism, but this does not mean that Husserl abandons the goal of seeking an objective ultimate justification for knowledge about the world and our participation in it. Quite to the contrary, a turn towards the way we subjectively experience the world is supposed to be aimed not at subjective knowledge of an individual's experience but at some 'final form' or objective knowledge. Similarly, whereas someone stuck in the natural attitude may naively take her experiences of value to be proof of the objective nature of those values, the person who brackets her experience of value for the purpose of philosophical reflection is reflecting on her subjective experience in service of some more transcendental truth. 'Naive Objectivism' in ethics would be the meta-ethical ethical position according to which one's personal, subjective experience is evidence of objective values. A transcendental subjectivism with regards to ethics would be a philosophy according to which moral truths require intersubjective validation by other humans in our world after reflection on one's own subjective experience. In the former case, it seems that although one is committed to the objectivity of values, the only justification possible is radically subjective. In the case of the latter, one's proof of the

'objectivity' of values is general (ideally universal) intersubjective agreement and validation of those values.

At this point, it will be helpful to clarify in what sense this knowledge could be 'objective'. If objective knowledge means knowledge that is entirely independent from and external to all human subjects, then this seems impossible for a phenomenologist (and perhaps anyone else for that matter[11]). If, rather, we adopt a Kantian understanding of objectivity, we can see how phenomenology aims at objective knowledge. Recall that for Kant, objective knowledge is not knowledge of the noumenal realm that outstrips all of experience. Rather, objectivity, such as the objectivity of space and time rests, "... on the fact that so far as the form of thought is concerned, through them alone does experience become possible" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.126). In other words, space and time are objective insofar as they apply to all possible experience--not insofar as they outstrip all experience. Things that are objective, "... relate of necessity and *a priori* to objects of experience, for the reason that only by means of them can any object whatsoever of experience be thought." (*ibid*). The goal is thus not knowledge that is independent of all experiencing subjects but knowledge that necessarily applies to all experiencing subjects. In short, objectivity amounts to universal intersubjectivity. In Kant's ethics, too, we get the same sort of justification for ethical knowledge of what is good. If a maxim is able to be willed universally by all rational subjects, then the maxim passes the test of the categorical imperative and so is evidence of a good will. Universally intersubjective validation is not

[11] Even contemporary version of scientific realism indicate that there is always a mediation of objective facts through a conscious individual. Those facts may exist independently of human observation, but it is in the observation that these facts are revealed as true.

subjective in the sense that it does not depend on mere individual experience—an idea Kant explicitly rejects (Kant, *Grounding*, p. 23). Rather, universally intersubjective validation is subjective in a transcendental way insofar as justification in Kant's ethics goes beyond any single, individual subject. In Husserl's terms, Kant rejects naive objectivism and embraces transcendental subjectivism.

While experiences in the mundane attitude can never provide true universality (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.42), universally intersubjective validity can be achieved by a certain kind of reflection. Similarly, Kant's ethics also achieve objective validity by turning away from merely subjective experiences in the natural attitude and turning towards intersubjectively universal propositions that apply for all subjects of moral experiences. A good will is the highest good, but without any rational beings, there would be no good will. Hence the good will is objectively good not in the sense that it is independent of all subjects but that it can be universally applied to all rational subjects. Just as Kant's ethics represent a synthesis of purely logical elements with experience (Kant, *Grounding,* Preface), the phenomenological method of bracketing indicates a "synthesis of the logical with the experiential" (Smith, *Husserl*, p.271). Moreover, this synthesis represents an attempt to transcend mere subjectivity by directing our attention towards subjective experience in a certain way. Although Husserl is not concerned with conditions of rational agency or autonomy, he shares with Kant a commitment to transcending mere subjectivity and finding objective truth by identifying intersubjectively universal forms of experience.

In addition to Husserl's Cartesian-Kantian quest for justification for knowledge in the form of universally interactiveness validity, Husserl includes other insights paradigmatic to the phenomenological-existential tradition. Subjectivity, as understood within the context of 'continental' philosophy, must always be understood as a path to intersubjectivity. The tradition is rich with examples of how taking a certain attitude towards subjective experience actually allows one to go beyond, or transcend, merely subjective experience.

Consider Sartre's essay "Existentialism is a Humanism". In this text, Sartre embraces the label of existentialism as a philosophy of subjectivity, but he rejects standard Western notions of subjectivity according to which it is understood as applying to only one individual and her particular experiences and identity. Rather, he encourages his audience to understand the relevant notion of subjectivity as inherently intersubjective. Moreover, the intersubjective nature of subjectivity has decidedly normative consequences. What we all share in common is that we are all subjects of experience. Any meaning, including meanings for ethical terms like 'good' and 'bad', require intersubjective validation in a social space. Thus to claim that some action or principle or lifestyle is good is not just to claim that is it good 'for me'. "When we say that man chooses himself, not only do we mean that every man must choose for himself, but also that in choosing himself, he is choosing for all men" (Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism", p. 24). Because the meanings of such terms must always be validated by others, Sartre thinks that even our most personal assessments of what is good for oneself must always be understood in terms of what is also

good for all other subjects. "[One] realizes that he cannot be anything...unless others acknowledge him as such" (Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism", p.41)[12]. To have one's values affirmed in an intersubjective space of meaning is just what it is to justify the values themselves as values. To be a value means to be a value for someone. More exactly, to be a value means to be a value for multiple someones. If a value is part of our intersubjective world, then that value will be validated and verified across many (or perhaps all) subjects within our intersubjective world[13]. It is not just that the rules themselves are justified by intersubjective validation. The values themselves are of the nature that they are inherently social[14]. We find and verify values in a social space of meaning, I.e., in our world.

Not only is the human subject, or self, always living in a world of intersubjective meanings, but Sartre and other authors also provide quite a different notion of what counts as one's own 'self' or who 'I' am. Humans, according to Sartre, are Being and Nothingness. Nothingness means the radical freedom of our consciousness that is not limited or confined by the physical world. That we are also Being indicates that we are part of a physical, empirical, intersubjective world. Sartre notes that there is only freedom in a situation, but

[12] It is of note that Sartre here was explicitly rejecting both Kantian and Cartesian notions of self. Although he himself rejected the Cartesian *cogito*, it seems that what he rejects is the standard caricature of the *cogito*, which is quite distinct from the notion that Husserl himself embraces in his *Cartesian Meditations.*

[13] Indeed, as Foot suggested in "A Philosopher's Defence of Morality", terms such as 'good' have meaning specifically because of the moral weight they carry within a society. Just as imperative phrases would lose their meaning if nobody properly had the power to tell others what to do, value terms lose meaning if they do not actually represent an agreed upon and intersubjectively verified account of what is , e.g., 'good', 'moral', or 'bad'.

[14] Note at this point that the phenomenological step of bracketing keeps this claim from being a reification of the values themselves. Indeed, the values may be real, as presupposed by the naïvely objectivist position held in the natural attitude. But we should take Sartre's insights about values to be phenomenlogical descriptions and thus made within the metalanguage wherein we talk about value experiences as such without presupposing some substantial, ontological basis for those values.

how are we to understand this insight and how it provides a different notion of human selves than represented by other philosophies?

Maurice Merleau-Ponty perhaps best explains the extent to which out selves are already extended into and constituted by the very real and very intersubjective physical world. "Our freedom does not destroy our situation, but gears into it: so long as we are alive, our situation is open, which implies both that it calls forth privileged modes of resolution and that it, by itself, lacks the power to procure any of them" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 467). So for Merleau-Ponty, we should not understand my consciousness, or freedom, as something completely separate and distinct from Being, or the world. Rather, what freedom we do have is, as he says, "is not on this side of my being, but out in front of me, among the things" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 479). Although Sartre's catchphrase is often interpreted as an expression of the physical limitations of our individual freedoms, the language of Merleau-Ponty helps us to understand this insight from another perspective. Specifically, one's own individual freedom is dependent upon and simultaneously constituted by the material conditions of a situation in the world. To say my freedom is among the things is to say that my own possibilities for self-creation are in the intersubjective world of experience. Freedom and subjectivity are inherently intersubjective and empirical.

If morality is seemingly tied up with concepts of freedom, as implied by debates about moral responsibility, and the nature of subjectivity and personhood, as implied by existential analysis of values as well as traditional inquiries into personal identity such as

Locke's[15], then it will certainly be relevant that the 'free will' uncovered by phenomenological analysis is inherently intersubjective and empirical. The discussion of Sartre above has already shown that an empirical, intersubjective space of meaning is the basis of having values validated as the good or right values. Indeed, the nexus of the free will, personhood, subjectivity, and morality can be seen in the works of various authors in the Western tradition. Recall that for Kant, an action or a person is only good on the basis of a good will what will in accordance with what can be rationally willed in a universally intersubjective fashion. Indeed, aligning our wills with the categorical imperative in a rational manner is the very manifestation of our freedom, or autonomy, according to Kant. Note that this notion of freedom is not the notion according to which one can fulfill all of his particular desires and wants. Kant's free will is a good will, which means that it must will in a rather specific way. The freedom relevant to Kant's moral philosophy is constituted universally and intersubjectively rather than at the level of a particular individual. Only if someone is capable of such autonomy are they capable of moral actions and moral responsibility.

Although other authors in the Western tradition may have had a different notion of free will, there has been overall agreement about the extent to which free will is necessary for moral responsibility. Harry Frankfurt, in his essay "Moral Responsibility and the Ability to do Otherwise", confronts a long-time bias that moral responsibility requires free will, i.e., the ability to have done other than one did. This definition of 'free' differs significantly

[15] In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Locke is explicit that the term 'person' is a forensic term meant to be used to address the responsibility of an individual person.

from Kant's, but the long-presumed relationship between being responsible in a morally relevant way and being 'free' is the same. Frankfurt ultimately rejects the principle that moral responsibility requires the ability to do otherwise on the basis that someone's inability to do otherwise may not be what determines a person's behavior. A person may be physically determined to perform some action, but unless that physical determination is the sole factor in explaining why someone did what they did, it seems that a person can be responsible[16]. In much of the Western tradition, this moral responsibility is the product of our subjectivity. According to Sartre, a person always has radical freedom of consciousness, and this is what predicates moral responsibility for all actions. If we take a radical notion of subjectivity such as Merleau-Ponty's, then it seems ironic that although Sartre recognizes that freedom is always in a situation, he still identities the source of moral responsibility on the side of mere subjectivity rather than in the intersubjective world where our freedom lies. Indeed, it's tempting to turn Frankfurt's conclusion on its head: if free will is a necessary condition for moral responsibility, then it seems that the relevant freedom required for being responsible in a moral way is that one's will is able to achieve a sort of synchronicity with its environment. For Kant, autonomy is not a matter of doing whatever you as an individual will to do but to will maxims that can be willed as universal law. For Frankfurt, if one's will is against the world and the world determines one's actions, then they have no ability to do otherwise and they are excused on that basis. But if one's will is

[16] As is the case in Frankfurt's Jones 3 thought experiment. Jones 3 has a device implanted in his brain that will force him to commit some terrible crime, but the device will only activate in the case that Jones himself does not want to perform the action. So in the case where Jones does want to commit the crime, the device is not activated and his mental state alone is enough to determine his action—even though his action would have been physically determined by an external source if his mental state had not been sufficient to cause his action.

with the world and both one's will and the situation in the world determine one's actions, then the person does not have the ability to do otherwise, but his willing makes him responsible regardless of whether it is free in the sense of able to act otherwise. Indeed, an insight of the phenomenological-existential tradition is that the freedom we have to act is externally constituted—either by material conditions or rational laws (e.g., the law of non-contradiction). As one's body is a physical being, it is subject to the laws of nature and is externally determined. As such, any freedom to act is freedom to act within a situation on the basis of a power one has within the situation, and that power itself is constituted by our role in an environment rather than an external force that we use to affect a situation. Rationality, likewise, is not determined by individual consciousness. As such, any freedom to will is done on the basis of an intersubjectively available feature of human subjectivity.

Personhood, or subjectivity, is another concept with a clear relationship to what counts as moral philosophy. Sartre would say that development of our own ideal selves is always a moral project in need of intersubjective validation. John Locke, one of the first philosophers in the English-language tradition of philosophy to puzzle about personal identity, was concerned with the conditions for personhood precisely because it was a person who would be morally responsible for any and all actions committed during a lifetime (Locke, *Essay*, Bk. II, CHXXVII). Indeed, being a rational being is just what distinguishes moral subjects from mere things, according to Kant. Indeed, it was Galen Strawson who argued that because we are always already determined by the external world—at least insofar as we are determined to be free—we lack the sort of absolute moral

responsibility because who we are is not up to us (Strawson, p. 1). Whether we agree with Strawson about the possibility of moral responsibility is irrelevant at this point. What matters is that the concepts of self and the possibility of self-determination are particularly moral concepts, and they have been for hundreds of years. If the self's freedom and the self are both externally constituted, then it seems that an individual's moral status and moral agency are also externally constituted. If the human self can be morally relevant, then that self that is morally relevant is a self that is externally constituted.

Indeed, Merleau-Ponty encourages his readers from reading too much into his use of the first-person pronoun when understanding the subject of experience, which would include moral experiences:

> "...how does it happen that we perceive? We will only understand this is the empirical self and the body are not immediately objects, and never fully become objects; that is, saying that I see the piece of wax "with my eyes" makes sense; if correspondingly this possibility of absence, this dimension of escape and of freedom that reflection opens at the foundation of ourselves and that is called the "transcendental I" are not initially given and are never absolutely acquired; and finally, if I can never say "I" absolutely and if every act of reflection, every voluntary taking up of a position is established against the background and upon the proposition of a pre-personal life of consciousness." (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 215-216)

Clearly, the subject of perception is not to be thought of as an individual observing some Cartesian 'theater of the mind'[17]. The subject of experience is not an individuated, entirely subjective human consciousness. Rather, the subject of experience is something pre-personal. This means that the level at which we experience things, including values, is not at the level of maximal individuation and uniqueness. Rather, there is a generic way of experiencing that is primary to any further individuation of self as a personal identity[18]. Although it makes sense to say that I perceive, e.g., a piece of wax or moral goodness[19] with 'my eyes', or 'my' mind, 'my' experience is neither wholly unique nor specifically individuated to my mind, my body or my self. However we traditionally individuate personal identity is not how we individuate the subject of experience, which, by nature seems to be non-individual.

That the subject of experience is pre-personal applies to experience of values, too. In the same text, the French phenomenologist notes that 'my body' is the subject of experience (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.234), but every perception through our bodies, "...takes place within an atmosphere of generality and is presented to us as anonymous" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.223). The fact that our bodies are not something with specific features unique to us but that rather the body, as

[17] Daniel Dennett is known for his rejection of what he calls the Cartesian theater of the mind model of experience, which amounts to the caricature presented at the beginning of this chapter.

[18] That is, if we think that personal identity is a matter of psychological continuity or connectedness, or a matter of individual choices and actions.

[19] Although it makes sense to think that the wax is somehow more real than goodness, my point here is not to make an ontic claim about the existence of values. Rather, the point is that in the natural attitude, values are experienced as being as real as wax. Likewise, with methodological reflection, it may seem that the wax or value is not real. Even if my goal is to prove that the wax or the value is real, I use bracketing to suspend this assumption so that I may think about things in a more rational, general way.

subject of perception, is something generic and anonymous implies that who perceives is not who we usually think of as our 'selves'. This idea is resonant with Husserl's comments in *Ideas II* (known to be a large influence on Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*) about the body being first and foremost a mere 'zero point of orientation' from which the self experiences the world (Husserl, *Ideas II*, p.61). The self described by phenomenologists is looking less and less like the robust notion of personal identity that many of us have, which includes all of our peculiar quirks and personality traits.

In other places, Merleau-Ponty says that we perceive 'through a world' and that

> "Universality and the world are at the core of individuality and of the subject. We will never understand this as long as we turn the world into an ob-ject; but we will understand it immediately if the world is the field of our experience and if we are nothing but a perspective on the world" (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.428).

Here, Merleau-Ponty seems to deny the traditional subject-object distinction that dominates much of Western thinking. Who we are ,what defines us and our own individual selves are neither defined by nor contained within what we traditionally think of as ourselves[20]. Many already appreciate the phenomenological-existential insight that our

[20] There is an interesting question here to what extent this insight into selfhood could be linked to logical analyses of language of first-person pronouns in which "I" is said to be entirely context-dependent for the content of the sign to refer. It seems that the logical-linguistic analysis of self is actually quite resonant with phenomenological discussions of self, leaving room for further research about the extent to which the phenomenological-existential tradition can be understood in tandem with logic and philosophy of language. Papers relevant to this question include John Perry's "The Problem of the Essential Indexical"; Hector-Neri Casteneda's "Indexicality: The Transparent Subjective Mechanism for Encountering A World"; David Kaplan's "Thoughts on Demonstratives"; Christopher Peacocke's "First-person reference, representational independence and self-knowledge; Sydney Shoemaker's "Self-reference and Self-awareness"; and David W. Smith's "Indexical Sense and Reference". A thorough discussion of the topic here would veer to far from the main project, but the the texts listed here seem to indicate that phenomenology, existentialism, logic, and philosophy of language share many insights about the

selves extend into the future, past, and present[21], but perhaps too few of us truly appreciate the extent to which we are extended into our environment. Who we are and what we create are created through our interaction with an empirical environment, including our values. Although our perspective on the world may be unique and particular to ourselves, that the perspective is of an empirical, intersubjective world proves that we are not discrete, individual consciousnesses that somehow interact with the world as an external thing. Along with Strawson, we should then agree that any 'self' responsible for action is ultimately not a self for which we as individual beings are responsible. As such, concepts of morality and moral responsibility must be radically altered. We can no longer view a single individual as the agent who is responsible in a way that makes her good or bad. Even if we can hold an individual responsible for her actions, we should also contextualize that responsibility in the environment by which and in which she is constituted. All of the things that identify us and our particular point of view of the world, including our actions, beliefs, language, appearance, memories, etc., only arise in a social, empirical world where meanings are introduced in and validated by a space of social meaning. As such, any values always come from beyond ourselves. Even if we are as individuals responsible for our values, this does not preclude the possibility that we re also responsible qua community (social or ecological) membership and participation or that a numerous individuals are responsible as a community. Merleau-Ponty's insights into the nature of human

---

nature not only of reference but of self-conceptions.

[21] Heidegger's theory of ecstatic temporality explains how the experience of time is the most basic meaningful structure of human existence. Past, present, and future are all understood in terms of one another and can be put in terms of a unified narrative.

subjectivity underscores this possibility. Whereas Sartre indicates that subjectivity is inherently intersubjective, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that subjectivity is inherently pre-personal or pre-subjective. Who we are depends not only on the other subjects in our environment but also the non-conscious parts of our environments as well.

Heidegger is another author in the phenomenological-existential tradition who is known for rejecting the traditional subject-object distinction. As characteristic of his philosophy, he pays special attention to the language of the word 'phenomenology' in order to understand the discipline. 'Phenomenology' is a combination of two Greek words: *phenomenon* and *logos*. A phenomenon is not a mere appearance or merely subjective experience of something. It is not something unreal or immaterial. Properly understood, a "...'phenomenon', the showing-itself-in-itself, signifies a distinctive way in which something can be encountered" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.54). Note that not only does a phenomenon refer to something real that does exist but that it also refers to the way in which that very real thing shows itself as it is itself. Logos, the second half of the term, refers to structures that allow something to be seen as itself (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.56). The logos (or if you will, the logic), of a thing is thus not determined by the individual subject or even by the intersubjective community of individuals but by the thing itself. A slogan often associated with Husserl is 'To the things themselves!', which we can understand through Heidegger's characterization of phenomenology here. Although objectivity may amount to universal intersubjectivity, the aim of phenomenological bracketing is still to find truths not just about subjects but about the things themselves.

Thus a phenomenological-existential account of values is not just a look at values as constituted and constructed by human subjects within a larger community. Rather, such an ethics would require looking into the values of things in a way that respects the nature of those things in themselves—whatever those things are.

Such a notion of phenomenology helps us to understand Heidegger's *alatheic* view of truth: "Furthermore, because the logos is a letting-something-be-seen, it can therefore be true or false. But here everything depends on our steering clear of any conception of truth which is constituted in the sense of agreement" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.56). For Heidegger, it is not the case that our claims are true insofar as they agree with or accurately represent the world itself. Thus a claim that something is good is not true because it corresponds to some feature in the world. Rather, what is true or false is the way we uncover or reveal the things themselves. The claim that something is good will be true if that thing reveals itself as true according to its own logos. When values are revealed as they are in themselves, these things are phenomena. When the things themselves are covered up or passed off as something which they are not, that is what counts as being false (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.57). So we could falsely reveal something as being morally valuable in a positive or negative sense but in doing so, we could fail to respect the nature of the thing itself. What we find then in Heidegger's phenomenology is not just a theory of self (*Dasein)* according to which the traditional subject-object distinction is overcome but also a theory of knowledge that is inherently sensitive to the things themselves and the way these things show themselves as they are in themselves, including values. In short, Heidegger's

method seems largely concerned with the way things really are--independent of our limited understanding of them. In this sense, any talk of values is not just talk about what subjects think and do in a world of objects. Recall that for Heidegger, there is no traditional subject-object distinction. Values are things themselves, but just as we are intertwined and constituted by our environments, so, too, are values constituted by and with us. Because we are both 1) free to create meanings and 2) constituted by our being-in-the-world, we have a special role in the world according to which our values are pregiven in a sense but we also have a special responsibility to re-create and re-value those values for ourselves[22].

So far are we now from the caricature described above that it serves only as a reminder of how terribly misunderstood this branch of philosophy truly is. The truth of the claims of phenomenology cannot be justified by merely subjective experience. Rather than experience itself being the ultimate justification for knowledge, the things themselves provide their own standards for being accurately shown as they are in themselves—even if those things themselves and our subjective experience are essentially interwoven. Whether we note the extent to which the things themselves provide appropriate standards of what counts as true and false as described by Heidegger or if we appreciate the role of intersubjective validation of meanings in Sartre's philosophy, we see that justification of knowledge about values is judged normatively by standards of appropriateness that are determined by something other than what we traditionally think of as one's self. Moreover, the conception of self found in phenomenological-existential philosophy is radically

[22] Indeed, Nietzsche would say that the transvaluation of all values is the task of modern ethics.

different from most Western notions of personal identity[23]. Even what we call our 'self' is not just an individuated and individual subject interacting with an external world. One's self is inherently constituted and shaped by the generality of one's body, one's environment, and the intersubjective universality of the environment in which we are embedded. By comparing this notion of subjectivity we can also see an analogy for how the resources of the phenomenological-existential tradition can be developed in response to universal egoism.

Contrast the phenomenological-existential perspective on justification of moral knowledge and moral claims with the so-called 'ethical egoist'. Hobbes' self-interested rational subject has no reason to constrain his behavior by contract other than his own self-interest. Intrinsic concern for others and the environment are rejected automatically. The standards for justification of 'ethical' knowledge are radically first-personal in a way that differs greatly from the kind of first-personal justification discussed so far. An 'ethical egoist' who accepts only those normative claims that serve her own self-interest will require proof or demonstrative arguments based on premises that are self-evident, based on private experience or intuition, or that can't be rejected without irrationality. Any argument which addresses the egoist on her own terms must include a premise that appeals to her own self-interest. An argument that uses insights from the phenomenological-existential tradition can address the egoist on her own terms in an even deeper sense. Imagine, for example, an egoist who sees no benefit to 'saving the planet'

[23] Without going into much detail, many texts have focused on autobiographical memory as being the primary determining criterion for personal identity. A classic example of this is John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Ch. II, Book XXVII. A more updated discussion of memory-based personal identity (and whether 'identity' is the proper term for it) is Derrick Parfit's "Personal Identity".

because it would cause her own suffering[24]. She refuses to participate in a resource-reducing social movement such as water conservation, public transit, and recycling programs because the effort required to participate either interferes directly with certain projects or because it requires effort and energy she would rather apply directly to her own individual projects. But the response from the phenomenological-existential tradition to the egoist is the same as would be our response to the solipsist. It is not just that there is some mistake made about the world (specifically whether it exists or whether it's valuable in itself), but both make an essential mistake about the nature of their own selves. Recall that one of the main insights of the phenomenological-existential tradition is that one's self is always already constituted intersubjectively in an empirical world. Without other subjects or without a material, physical environment of a specific kind (adequate oxygen, limited radiation, etc.), neither the solipsist nor the egoist would be. To be capable of taking up an egoist position or a solipsistic stance is only possible because we are constituted by and dependent upon the intersubjective world[25]. If traditional ethical egoism is the position that things are only good insofar as they are good for me, then one way to undercut the traditional egoist is to reveal that even personal identity is not all about 'me'. More exactly, the concepts of self expressed by words like 'me' involves a lot that is other than what is traditionally construed as self. There will be more to say later about how phenomenological-existential insights can help us to address egoists such as the classical egoist and the more pervasive, more invisible, and more dangerous egoism of universal

[24] Rex Tillerson, CEO for Exxon Mobil is known for asking his shareholders "What good is it to save the planet if humanity suffers?"

[25] In *Ideas II*, Husserl actually deconstructs the notion of a solipsist, nothing that even such an abstraction is dependent first and foremost on our existent as constituted in an intersubjective space.

egoism. For now it is sufficient to note that the concept of self in the phenomenological-existential tradition itself is radical enough to attempt an overthrow of traditional egoism on the very basis of its 'self'. First, I say a bit more about methodology in phenomenology and how this can help us to better understand the task of ethics itself.

How can we hope to convince anyone--let alone the solipsist, egoist or the Kantian--of the truth of any normative ethical claim? It is my proposal that the practice of ethics can be best understood within the context of phenomenological bracketing. Specifically, ethical claims such as "Reducing meat consumption and carbon emissions are good things to do" require intersubjective justification. The process of doing ethics and justifying ethical claims can be understood as a version of the basic phenomenological method.

The first step is to begin in the 'natural attitude', expressed by the thesis, "I am a member of an intersubjective world in which things are experienced as good or bad, and things are as I experience them, including being good or bad in themselves." If an ethicist were to stay in the natural attitude, then her task would be simply to catalog personal experiences of value. Indeed, this is the caricature of a phenomenological meta-ethics discussed in the literature[26]. It is unlikely that any ethicist thinks that her main task is merely to describe her own unique, subjective experiences of value--whether they represent some more objective truth or not. As Peter Singer points out in his article, "Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism", if ethics were just about making an organized list of the

[26] For an example of how this caricature of phenomenology is used in contemporary ethics and meta-ethics, see Simon Kirchin's 2003 article, "Ethical Phenomenology and Metaethics". This also seems to be the approach of Lester Embree in *Environment, Technology, Justification*, wherein he claims that our phenomenological reflection can show us objective truths about the way things are. Sadly, some phenomenologists do fit the caricature that many people have of the discipline.

things we do value, then ethicists would be obliged to proclaim as 'good' all sorts of things that she would actually find philosophical reasons for thinking are unjust or immoral or otherwise reprehensible (e.g., racial segregation, genocide, and animal cruelty in various forms)[27]. Language that expresses what we value is descriptive in some sense; it describes what we do value. Some would say it describes a feeling and nothing else[28]. But ethics is supposed to be normative and not just descriptive. In other words, ethics is supposed to be about the way things should be and not just about he way things are. If certain feelings, thoughts, and mental states are relevant to ethics, then it is insofar as ethics is about what we ought to feel, think, and experience--not just what we do feel, think, and experience; this is why the second step in a phenomenologically-existentially informed ethics is vital. Whereas explaining what we feel to be good is a task that can be best accomplished in a purely descriptive, fact-finding manner, what is good itself not simply a matter of the way things are. We must adopt a new strategy to discover what is good. We must, in a certain sense, go beyond our personal ego in order to discover normative truths. In short, we need semantic ascent and semantic assent to transcend ourselves and discover what is good. In order to explain how this is possible, we must go back to the relationship between phenomenology and philosophy of language.

---

[27] One might object that even if an ethicist were to simply describe what we do value. Rather, to describe value is to describe what is valued from a perspective, so any descriptive account of value must describe not only catalog what is valued but also by whom, under what conditions, for what reasons, in what context, etc. In a certain sense, this more ambitious descriptive project may be the kind of ethics done by Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morality*. In this classic text on value theory, Nietzsche puts traditional Judeo-Christian values in context and describes not only what was valued but by whom, for what reason, etc. Singer may insist that value theorists such as Nietzsche are not properly doing normative ethics, but we should also note that Nietzsche is not merely cataloging or listing values.

[28] A.J. Ayer is known for proclaiming that terms like 'good' and 'bad' express no more than either a pro-orientation or a negative orientation toward the things called 'good' and 'bad'.

Although subjective experience in the natural attitude is the 'natural' starting point for any philosophical reflection, it is necessary to bracket the thesis of the natural attitude in order to identify particular modes of presentation or general forms of value-experience. As mentioned, an ethicist does not merely catalog what values appear in everyday experience. An ethicist reflects about her experience and attempts to identify, from a neutral standpoint, whether or if there is some rational, logical structure or form (what Carnap would call a meaning) that underlies her experiences and judgments as if of value. The difference between the two approaches to value theory may be hard to observe from the outside, but the difference is essential for the ethicist. Moreover, the difference is phenomenological. Quite simply, the difference is the difference between the natural attitude and an attitude wherein one brackets the thesis of the natural attitude. The reflective pause or suspension of the natural attitude is akin to bracketing and semantic ascent insofar as the ethicist does not take her experience of value to be proof of the value of the things in themselves or the meanings of value terms. But neither does she outright deny her own experience or doubt the truth thereof when doing ethical inquiry. Rather, she brackets her experience of value in order to ask whether there is some logical, rational structure or form underlying that experience. Moreover, the structure need be more than a mere idiosyncrasy. Just as with phenomenology, the goal is to strive towards a more general, final form. Ideally, the underlying logical structure or meaning would have an intersubjectively universal form. In order to seek this more general form, an ethicist must, from a neutral standpoint (as opposed to the natural standpoint) assess the logic of her

own experience. The reflective pause, i.e., the suspension of the natural attitude toward values is essential to the practice of ethics when we seek a more general, universal kind of truth about what is good instead of just asking, “What is good *for me*?”.

Without the methodological bracketing, then any value theory is merely a description of an idiosyncratic experience of value, whether it be my own experience or the experience of another. Hence phenomenology can help us to understand the way in which we can do moral theory in a way that is not completely subjective or biased. This phenomenological characterization of ethics also serves to solve the problem of the relation between normative claims and descriptive claims: the former can neither be reduced to the latter nor constituted independently thereof. In the natural attitude, value-language is directly descriptive. Claims made in the natural attitude are directed to real objects as such. Things are experienced as hot, cold, good, or bad. In the natural attitude, one is already imbedded in a world of empirical and intersubjective meanings. One takes for granted the truth of any number of concepts and conceptual schemes in our everyday experience of the world. The reason why Carnap and other philosophers are inclined to say moral claims are meaningless is because we often don't share the underlying concepts and conceptual schemes according to which other individuals have experiences of or make evaluations about what is 'good' or 'bad'. My point is that my characterization of ethics provides us a way to avoid the problem of meaninglessness is ethics. When one brackets an experience of value, then one abstracts away from the world of intersubjective, empirical meanings as they are given in experience. One takes an experience or belief or claim with the content, "X

is good" and one considers what possible logical entailments could follow from such a claim, which brings me to the third step in the phenomenologically-existentially informed ethics: the process of identifying potential general logical structures of value-experiences. Normative claims are claims about the apparent logical structure that underlies our experience of value. To do ethics is not just to answer the question, What is good? but to answer the question, Why is something good? To provide an answer to the first question is to identify the set of things to which the predicate can be applied. In other words, this would provide us with a list of examples of 'good' things, but we would then lack an abstract theory or definition of what is 'good'. To provide answers to the second question is an attempt to provide a set of truth conditions for the claim, "X is good." Thus to answer the question of why something is good is to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for claims about something being good. In other words, we can take a normative ethics to require claims about what is logically entailed by 'X is good' or 'X is bad'[29]. Whether the claim is normative or descriptive seems to be a matter not of the words used or the content of the claim but rather the attitude taken towards the claim. Descriptive claims are just claims we make about the world. Normative claims are claims we make about the way we think the world should be. But if being 'good' or 'the way things should be' has an empirical definition, then a normative claim is a certain kind of descriptive claim.

In brief, to understand ethics through the lens of philosophy of language is to say that investigation into 'the good' is really investigation into what necessarily follows from

[29] Someone may note that we can answer the question, "What is good?" with a set of truth conditions for claims such as "X is good". But if someone is providing more than a merely extensional answer, then they are indeed rather answering the question, "What makes something good?" or "Why is something good?"

the claim, “X is good.” For Mill, the claim entails a further claim that “X maximizes universal happiness. For Kant, the claim entails the proposition that “X is an action that is done out of respect for 1) rules that can be willed as universal law and 2) the law-giving authority of those who can assess which rules can be willed as universal law.” Someone might say that these characterizations are just different constructions of principles, and in a sense this is right. But we can see that how these principles are constructed can also be seen as a reflection on the underlying logical structure of claims such as “X is good”. Ideally, an ethical system's principles should be organized in such a way that there is a discrete logical form underlying such normative ethical claims.

Thus the phenomenological-existential characterization of ethics as doing a certain kind of philosophy of language can also help us to understand the nexus between ethical inquiry and meta-ethical inquiry. In short, the relationship is one of logical entailment. Although we can distinguish between substantive normative claims and more abstract, general claims about the form of the good, i.e., meta-ethical claims, the two are essentially conceptually connected. To give an answer about the basic form of what is good, i.e., to make a meta-ethical claim, entails certain logical possibilities about what substantive normative claims can be made about particular actions or people being good. The 'why' question entails a certain range of answers for the 'what' question and vice versa. Substantively normative ethical claims imply a more general form of the good and thus a meta-ethical claim. To say that something is good is to say that thing is good with some reason in mind about why it is good. The reasons for why something is good are the

conditions that, when satisfied, fulfill the concept of what is good. And to say that something about why things are good in general it so say something about what kinds of things are good. Meta-ethics is about the abstract form of the good, and so meta-ethical claims are about what is good in general. Substantive ethics is a matter of what concrete and particular people and things are good. So whereas meta-ethics gives a general, abstract definition of what is good, ethics is then a question of what things fulfill the criteria contained in the concepts of the good. Likewise, to identify how actions and people can satisfy the definition of the good, there must already be some definition of the good in mind in order to make such claims. Consider two classical views and how they show this relationship between ethics and meta-ethics.

Mill's answer to the question of why things are good is that things are good because they maximize universal happiness. This meta-ethical claim entails a range of possibilities for normative, ethical claims. If any action or person is good in a substantively normative sense (indeed, the statement of particulars seems to be what makes this claim substantive rather than merely abstract), then they can only be good because they are good for that reason. So when Mill advocates for women's suffrage, there is an explicit claim that women having the right to vote is a good thing. Yet implicit in any substantive, normative claim is a meta-ethical claim. In this case, women's suffrage is good only because it yields a higher net sum of happiness. Because everyone's happiness matters when calculating the sum total of happiness, Mill thinks that it is important that all people have access to the means of happiness, such as participation in a political process. But this participation is only good if

it does indeed fulfill the criterion given in the meta-ethical definition of the good. Thus the substantive normative claim and abstract meta-ethical claim are logically linked.

For Kant, just as for Mill, claims about what actions and people are good entail a specific criterion regarding the definition of the good and meta-ethical claims about what is good entail a range of possible examples that can fulfill the given criterion. Kant would say actions are good insofar as they are done on the basis of a good will. If an action is the manifestation of a good will, which is an end in itself, then the action is good because the good will is good as an end in itself. Actions are evaluated according to whether the action was based on a maxim that could be rationally willed as universal law, which is just another way of saying that the action the done from a good will. That the good will is the highest good, good as an end in itself, and is good in an unqualified way is the meta-ethical form of the good, along with the definition of what counts as a good will. From here, normative, substantive ethical claims follow insofar as they identify actions or people who fulfill this criterion: acting from the good will. Making a false promise, then is bad. The truth of this normative ethical claim is entailed by the fact that the person who lies does not fulfill the criterion given above in the meta-ethical characterization of the good in Kantian ethics. Specifically, because a rule that says "It is good to lie" leads to a contradiction when universalized. Lying means saying something false and representing it as true, so this requires trust. If everyone were to follow the above rule, trust would erode to the point the deception necessary for lying would become impossible. Hence, if everyone followed the rule, nobody could follow the rule. In short, substantive normative claims follow from the

meta-ethical characterization of what is good. Likewise, if we truly understand the substantive normative claims, then we should also understand the meta-ethical basis for those claims.

In both of these classic authors, we can understand the task of value theory as critically reflecting on the possible logical structures that underlie experiences of value. Ethics, as the identification of good, e.g., actions and people, is the task of asking what action or people fulfill some more abstract definition of the good, the latter of which is a matter of meta-ethical inquiry. What makes it philosophy is not just to give any old reasons for why something is good. A philosopher attempts to identify a structure or logical organization of meanings. My radical suggestion is that when we do this, we are still talking about the real world, but we are doing so in a way that brackets assumptions about the veracity of our subjective experience of the world. These claims are not meant to use the word 'good' but to mention the word in order to consider its underlying logical structure. Hence, normative claims, claims about what logical structure or form grounds value, are not the same as plain descriptive claims[30]. Yet in what follows, I hope to show how a claim that is normative, such as "It is good to reduce meat consumption.", can be understood as a statement the truth of which can be verified as meaningful in an intersubjective, empirical way.

In the logical positivist sense, the bracketed claims have no meaning, but we can understand these claims as empirically meaningful if we can explain how the truth of a

[30] It may seem that the following proposed logical structures are just an explication of the relationship between different facts. In a sense, this is correct. For philosophers such as Carnap, words are meaningless unless they have empirically verifiable definitions, i.e., factual definitions. So what I offer is a proposed definition of goodness (vis-a-vis eating) that offers empirical characterizations of the term 'good'.

claim like, "It is good to reduce meat consumption." can be translated into a set of relevant empirical truth conditions. For example, the claim, "Reducing meat is good." is true iff:

1) The goodness of an action regarding food consumption entails that the action contributes to the well-functioning of a human body.

2) The goodness of an action regarding food consumption entails that the action reduces resource costs associated with food production and distribution.

3) The goodness of an action regarding food consumption entails that these actions limit suffering for humans and non-human subjects.

4) The goodness of an action regarding food consumption entails that these actions do not disrupt the larger biological systems in which we live and on which we depend for food production.

Above we have a logical form of a particular normative claim, specifically that it is good to reduce meat consumption. In other words, I have identified potential truth conditions for a normative claim of a particular kind. Whether my conditions are really the truth conditions for the claim I make (and if my claim is thus descriptively true) is a matter of whether such claims are recognized as true in the intersubjective empirical world.

This brings me to the fourth and final step of a phenomenological-existential ethics: intersubjective validation of the potential logical structure for claims using words like 'good', 'bad', and 'moral'. When doing ethics, my normative claims have no truth value insofar as they are bracketed versions of claims that describe my experience. But when ethics becomes social, the truth of my normative claims can be assessed by others who

accept or deny the logical structure I propose for my claims[31]. Thus the completion of the task of ethics is to explain how normative claims can be judged as true within the natural world. Although one must take on a neutral attitude in order to logically assess potential meaning structures for terms, the sentences of ethics are not properly normative (or action-guiding) until we can say what is good in some intersubjectively verified way. Ethics means identifying the structures of logical inference that serve as the basis for ethical claims, but ethics is incomplete without a social discussion about the logical forms that a philosopher proposes. Sartre was right to say that no ethical claims are true *a priori*, but ethical claims can be true in a descriptive sense when a set of intersubjectively verifiable standards are identified and agreed upon. This is one of the phenomenological-existential insights that I would like to apply to the Western tradition of ethics[32].

In simple terms, the fourth and final stage of ethical inquiry requires acceptance of proposed meanings for 'good' and 'bad' within a given community of value-language users. For practical purposes, at least some members should already have, realize, or endorse the proposed value-structures so that the concepts can be grasped by anyone within the community. To tie this to a Heideggerian insight, any individual's proposed value-meanings

---

[31] One may object to my view that the person who rejects such a characterization of what is good (re: food consumption) does not reject the logical structure according to which certain facts are related, but rather that these facts are sufficient for something being good. But my claim is that to reject these as sufficient conditions for what is good is to reject the proposed logical structure. The proposed logical structure is that there is a relationship between these facts and the concept of 'good' such that when these conditions are met, it is sufficient to satisfy the concept of good.

[32] This may be a narrow concept for what counts as ethics. But at this point, this seems to be all we can accomplish within the realm of philosophical, logical analysis: to identify the truth of evaluative claims based on the truth of other evaluative claims that are already presumed to be true within a given community. Logical analysis of language requires that there be some stable meanings within a community, or else nothing can be logically entailed from any attempts to make claims about what is good.

must first derive from social meanings in order to be capable of being meaningfully understood within the community.

To explain this process in other terms, normative claims should not be understood as claims that are a distinctly different kind of claim from descriptive claims. The difference between what we call 'normative claims' and what we call 'descriptive claims' is not so much the content or the logic of the claims themselves. Rather, what I want to call normative is an attitude that we can take towards descriptive claims. In my everyday natural attitude, I experience things as good or bad. These claims are meaningful. The reason why they seem meaningless is because when I am experiencing the world in an imbedded, practical mode, the different logical structures that underlie my experiences are not always apparent to me. It requires a moment of pause and a shifting of attention to focus on these things. As Husserl would say, we must take off our blinders and instead use corrective lenses. In the natural attitude, we are blind to the many apparent structures of meaning that cause me to make claims like, "This is good" or "That is bad". Ethical claims do have some meaning for that person on most occasions. Usually, we just are not aware of these meanings in a way that we can make them intersubjectively available and verifiable. Ethics is the task of explaining how experiences of things as 'good' or 'bad' can be understood in socially meaningful ways. Phenomenological reflection requires using the lens of bracketing to allow us to zoom in on possible logical structures underlying claims like "Reducing meat consumption is good."

Ethics can best be understood as the method of bracketing experiences about value in order to inquire about possible logical structures that underlie claims about experiences of value[33]. Meta-ethical inquiry, particularly within the tradition of analytic philosophy, is concerned with questions about what the word 'good' means. Moore and Ayer are two examples of the style of meta-ethics that seemed definitive of the 20th century English-language, analytic philosophical tradition. In other words, meta-ethical and ethical questions alike are not empirical questions directly about the seemingly good or bad objects themselves. Rather, meta-ethics, like ethics, is a discipline where we ask questions about what the mode of presentation for the word is. To ask what 'good' means is to ask what is conceived of when that sign is used. Strictly speaking, meta-ethical claims, like ethical claims, fail to directly refer. Hence, they are not descriptive claims but modifications of descriptive claims. Claims about what 'good' means can only be verified in an intersubjective community where evidence about the truth of claims is available generally (if not universally). With this characterization, the tasks of ethics and meta-ethics seem to be essentially the same task. Namely, in both ethics and meta-ethics, one must bracket pre-existing assumptions in order to identify intersubjectively available meanings for concepts like good and bad. We see now just how far we are from the solipsistic, idealist caricature of phenomenology.

[33] Importantly, one thing that such an ethics cannot help us with is an answer to the question, "What is the value of our values?" In other words, ethics defined as such is the practice of evaluating claims within an already pre-existing system of meanings and evaluations. To perform a much more radical and critical evaluation of all of the underlying ground values for certain system of meanings would perhaps require a more radical kind of method. It is even a question whether such a radical analysis could be done in a question-begging way. An evaluation of any kind presupposes that there is some value according to which evaluations can be made. Thus, in order to evaluate any value system, some value must already be presupposed in order to provide a coherent, consistent analysis.

Now that I have sketched out a way of doing ethics that integrates insights from the phenomenological-existential tradition, it makes sense to consider whether there may be a further connection between the tradition of 'continental' philosophy and the practice of ethics. Above I focused specifically on how the phenomenological method of bracketing is relevant to ethical inquiry. Now I consider whether the basic premise of existentialism makes it an appropriate analogue to philosophical ethics.

The basic premise of existentialism is that we are what we make of ourselves. In Sartre's terms, "...man is nothing other than what he makes of himself." ("Existentialism is a Humanism"). As such, existentialism is a normative theory. Normative questions are questions about how we ought to act and what we ought to do. I'll say more about 'normative' questions and claims in section II, but for now it is sufficient to understand normative claims as claims about what we ought to do or what is good to do. Existentialism is a theory according to which we define ourselves through action, and insofar as existentialism is also a questioning of the meaning of an existence defined by actions in a world, it is thus also implicitly concerned with standards for judging actions, i.e., it is a normative kind of inquiry insofar as it is about what we do and what we should do.

Normative claims are not just claims about what we should do or what is morally good. These claims are also often expressed in the form of an imperative, such as, "You should stop eating so much red meat." An imperative expresses a notion about what is good, or what one should do, but it also directs someone towards that action. It is making the claim that one ought to do a certain thing, but this claim is also often directed at specific

individuals or groups in a way designed to guide action or realize a certain result. "You should do X." not only indicates evaluative standards for action; it is also an attempt to motivate others to realize the ideals implied by those standards[34].

Although explicit value judgments are few and far between in the writings of existentialist authors[35], existentialism is a theory about the forms of life in which and out of which we create value. Consider Heidegger's theory of authenticity. Authentic projects are projects that somehow belong to an individual in ways that other projects are not. An authentic project is individual and unique, but also bears a special relationship to the person realizing that project such that it is 'mine' and not coming from an outside source. According to Heidegger's theory, Dasein, a being essentially concerned with its own essence and existence, is always in danger of fallenness and inauthenticity[36]. So, too, is it he case with values. Dasein tends to 'flee' from its own authenticity by taking up the values and meanings of others. Although Heidegger doesn't use words like 'good' or 'should', he indicates a normative structure[37]. If Dasein wants to be authentic, then it must avoid fleeing

[34] Just as Philippa Foot notes in her essay "A Philosopher's Defense of Morality", ethical claims including the word 'good' would be meaningless if we did not have power over each other to influence action. Likewise, imperatives would be useless if we lacked such power. Because we do have social power and influence over each other, normative claims about what is good and imperatives indicating what we should do are both able to function in their intended manner.

[35] Sartre explicitly says that given adequate time and information, we should be able to understand the validity of any project, including children, idiots, and people from radically different cultures.

[36] Although Heidegger does seem to value authenticity as preferable mode of being, the two modes of authenticity and inauthenticity (fallenness) are both in a sense equiprimordial. Heidegger would even say that the latter is our default mode of being. We are thrown into a world of meanings, and as such, we are almost always inauthentic. It is more desirable but also more rare to re-value values in an authentic way.

[37] Indeed, given Heiedegger's focus on authenticity, or own-ness, as being the foundational value around which being authentic (or even being fallen) is possible, Heidegger may be a most appropriate resource in responding to an egoistic position. Insofar as each person must decide for herself what meanings to appropriate from her culture and make her own, Heidegger seems to resonate with the egoist in a particular way. Neither wants to abandon self-interest wholly for the other. Although Heidegger abandons the subject-object distinction, he still emphasizes the importance of being authentic, or one's own.

from itself. In other words, Dasein can only avoid being fallen if it does not allow itself to be taken over or swept up in what one does. Not only does Heidegger's existentialism provide a normative structure according to which certain things are good for certain ends, his philosophy also presupposes that we are thrown into a social world with pre-existing values from which we must make our own meanings. Thus existentialism and ethics are not two completely different fields of philosophy. Phenomenology is thus not so 'other' than ethics, either.

Ethicists ask, among other things, What has positive moral value? and How ought I to live? Existentialists ask questions such as, What is the basis for value? and How do actions create meaning for me and others? The questions are distinct, but all are normative insofar as they suggest valuable actions and standards for evaluating actions. Additionally, we do get some substantive meta-ethical content from basic existentialism. You are defined by your actions, so you are defined by how you treat others. As the ancient philosophers Socrates and Epictetus said, and just as Kant said of our poor treatment of animals, we harm ourselves first and foremost when we act viciously. An existentialist would perhaps frame this in slightly different language: your immoral acts towards others define you as an immoral person (granted that there is some intersubjectively verified definition of what it is to be immoral). Existentialists will also grant that each Dasein has the capacity to freely choose its own moral standards of evaluation, but the existentialist also recognizes that any

values are only meaningful if validated in a space of social meaning. All personal meanings are based on social meanings[38].

With this insight, too, we see that although existentialism may seem like the red-headed stepchild of Western philosophy, it is indeed a close cousin to other normative disciplines. Ethicists ask, How should we treat others? existentialists ask, How are social standards for moral action determined? Although existentialism, especially secular, atheistic existentialism, has been accused of being an immoral or amoral philosophy, existentialism presumes the existence of some ethic[39,]. Note however, that existentialists do not look to some deity or divinity as a source of these values. Rather, individuals embedded in communities are the source of moral values. Without social normative standards and meanings, an individual Dasein cannot possibly define its own projects and meanings. And while each individual is in a sense the ultimate authority for what counts as authentic for her, she can still propose and validate meanings for others even if she cannot insist that her values are objectively correct and therefore ought to be adopted universally. Existentialism

[38] Consider how Heidegger's personal project to involve himself in Nazi politics was validated in the first half of the 20th century in Germany, but was invalidated by Western civilization after WWII and since the second half of 20th century. Although Heidegger famously never disavowed his own actions, his former projects were nonetheless taken up within the context of given social meanings and were likewise invalidated by another context of given social meanings.

[39] One may ask to what extent this kind of investigation of ethics differs from a naturalist theory of value according to which what is 'good' is just what is determined to be good by our natural biology. The PET shares with naturalism the thesis that values always already are determined for us. Naturalistic, or socio-biological perspectives on ethics finish the story about what is 'good' with some sort of evolutionary or empirical story about how certain traits benefit a species or members of a species. The PET diverges from naturalism thus because according to PET, values are not merely determined for us, but we also have freedom to choose our own values from a provided set of social meanings. As David W. Smith notes in *Mind World,* the meaning we create belongs to a different ontological category than the natural world--even if both are part of a larger whole. "Intentionality is categorized within the world of nature, and "naturalized" in that way, without reducing consciousness or its intentionality to a causal or computational process along the lines envisions by current cognitive science...The guiding assumption, which I call *unionism*, holds that there is but one world, ordered and unified as "nature". That world includes us, our conscious intentional experiences, and a host of other things, from rocks, trees, and bees to families, symphonies and governments" (p.177).

recognizes that we are always already in some intersubjective, ethical-social world, but more about this in the third chapter.

For now, I point out that while ethicists ask about what things have value, existentialism is concerned with value as a precondition for our own meaningful existence and as a creation according to which we are defined. Perhaps it would be appropriate to say that Dasein is not only pre-ontological[40] as Heiedegger says in *Being and Time*[41], but that Dasein is pre-normative. In other words, who we are and how we experience value shapes our philosophical inquiry about values.

The fact that values permeate our existence and our world means that we are already always in an understanding of value, but that value, as given in the world, is obscured by its banality or everydayness. The fact that value is ubiquitous makes it something that is always already understood in the natural world, but it is also something that we must strive to understand within the empirical, social, intersubjective world. We must interrogate value specifically because it is already understood in the everyday experience of the world; this is because we, as valuing things, structure values and value inquiry.

We see now how the two seemingly distinct disciplines of ethics and existentialism are actually close relatives, but a further question is whether the phenomenological-

---

[40] Given the context of the insights about the nature of the self mentioned before, it may seem that Dasein is pre-ontological in the sense that who we are is determined ahead of time for us by our intersubejctive, empirical world. However, for Heidegger, questions about our existence were ontic questions rather than ontological questions.

[41] To say that Dasein is pre-ontological means that human beings' structure and internal organization informs and shapes the kind of ontological inquiry that we can do. In other words, who we are structures how we look into ontology, which for Heidegger, was a matter not of existence but of the meaning of existence.

existential tradition provides resources for some kind of normative ethical position. What we have so far is a clear 'other-orientation', or an attitude that encourages openness and respect toward others--including radically different others.

First, consider the phenomenological stance attained by bracketing. Although one need never doubt nor deny his own pre-existing value-judgments and perceptions as if of value, bracketing does require a suspension of the natural attitude we usually have towards our experiences of value. Consider the impact this may have on an ethical dialogue between two diverse individuals. When speaking from the bracketed point of view, one simply cannot appeal to one's own moral intuitions, personal experiences or merely subjective observations. Rather, two individuals would be required to identify potential logical structures that underlie those intuitions, experiences, and observations. Consider, for example, a discussion between a gleeful meat-eater and a committed vegetarian. At first glance, we might not expect two people with such polar views to be able to have much of a discussion. Often times, simple disagreement in enough to close off discussion. "X is morally wrong" one will claim. When the other's response amounts to little more than, "X is morally right", what arises is not a philosophical argument or discussion but mere contradiction[42]. But within the bracketed mode of philosophical inquiry, both parties must present a potential set of conditions that would constitute the truth of their claim. For example, our meat-eater may appeal to the 'rightness' of eating meat by pointing out the history of humanity as including meat in the diet. She may also explain how certain

[42] Monty Pyton, in their skit "Argument Clinic", highlights the difference between a true argument and mere contradiction quite well.

nutrients that are necessary for human biological flourishing can only be found naturally in meats. In other words, "Eating meat is morally right iff 1) it contributes and has contributed to the biological flourishing of individual members of the species and 2) it contributes to the well-being of the species in general." The vegetarian may then explain how certain nutrients may be found in artificial supplements. He may also appeal to recent studies highlighting the positive impacts of a vegetarian diet for both individual humans and the ecosystems in which we live[43]. He may insist that eating meat is wrong because nutrients necessary for human flourishing can be found in sources that don't require animal suffering or biological degradation of the environment on a massive scale. In other words, "Eating meat is wrong iff 1) in inhibits long-term flourishing for individual humans and our species in general and 2) it causes animal suffering." This may be the end of the conversation: a standstill at a further point of contradiction (i.e., disagreement about whether eating meat is necessary for or contrary to human flourishing), but at least both parties have gained greater awareness about the other's moral views that goes beyond a simple disagreement in the form of 'X is wrong' vs. 'X is right'. If the two parties can agree on the basic meaning, or underlying logical structure of the claim, “Eating meat is bad”, then

[43] For a brief overview of health-related impacts of diets with reduced meat or no meat, these articles will be useful: "Blood Pressure in Vegetarians" by Frank M Sacks et al.; "Environmental and nutritional impact of diets with less meat and dairy--Modeling studies in Dutch children" by E.H.M. Temme et al.; "Periodontal conditions in vegetarians: a clinical study" by I. Staufenbiel et al.; "Vegetarian diets and incidence of diabetes in the Adventist Health Study-2" by S. Tonstad et al.; "Vegetarian Dietary Patterns and Mortality in Adventist Health Study 2" by Michael J. Orlich et al.; "Diet and Sex-Hormone Binding Globulin, Dysmenorrhea, and Premenstrual Symptoms" by Neal D. Barnard et al.; and "Reducing Meat Consumption Has Multiple Benefits for the World's Health" by Barry Popkins. These articles don't represent a full spread of the various research done on potential health benefits from reducing meat consumption, but they do provide an introduction into the various health issues impacted directly by how much and what kinds of meats we consume.

it is a matter of verifying whether the conditions for the meaning of the claim are fulfilled by the world.

Inasmuch as bracketing encourages an openness to and clarifies dialogue with the other, we still lack evidence that it is sufficient to ground substantive, i.e., action-guiding, normative claims. Before we close this question (whether it be for now or 'for good'), let us consider whether the substantive philosophy of certain phenomenological-existential thinkers may be adequate to ground substantive normative principles.

Consider first the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. Recall that one of the most important insights from his philosophy is that the subject of perception (i.e., our selves) are not individual and individuated unique perspectives but rather anonymous bodies. How does his philosophy handle the other minds (*cogito*s), especially in terms of value?

> "The other person's cogito strips my own cogito of all value and shatters the confidence I enjoyed in the solitude of having access to the only being conceivable for me, that is, being such as it is intended and constituted by me. But we learned in individual perception not to conceive of our perspectival views as independent of each other; we know that they slip into each other and are gathered together in the thing. Similarly, we must learn to find the communication of consciousness in a single world. In fact, the other person is not enclosed in my perspective on the world because this perspective itself has to definite limits, because it spontaneously slips into the other's perspective, and because they are

gathered together in a single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception." (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.369).

What normative claims follow from this radically other view of the self? First, recall that this point of view is particularly adept at undermining the limited self-interest of the ethical egoist. We can agree with the egoist that self-interest is good, but we disagree with the egoist about the nature of the self itself. Specifically, my self is always already socially and materially constituted. Hence in order for something to be good 'for me', it must also, in some sense, be good 'for others', since, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, our perspectives 'slip into' each other's perspectives in a way that blurs the traditional distinctions between self and other. Although this offers a general attitude for addressing the other, we still lack grounds for further substantive, action-guiding principles. Even if we can convince an egoist to adopt a more expansive, embedded notion of self, then there still may be disagreements about what counts as good for us. The philosophy of the famed French phenomenologist doesn't offer concrete guiding principles that can inform our actions.

What about Heidegger's philosophy? We see here, too, a certain other-orientation. Phenomenology, according to him, is a matter of allowing things (including other humans as well as non-human natural phenomena) to show themselves as they are in themselves. This notion of truth as revealing is present in his later works, also, as Heidegger warns in "The Question Concerning Technology" against modes of revealing that limit the possibility of things to reveal themselves as they are in themselves. "The essential unfolding of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be

consumed in ordering and that everything will represent itself only in the unconcealment of standing-reserve" (Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p.339). To view everything (including ourselves) as a resource to be consumed for our economic purposes is to give into this danger and prevent the possibility of things revealing themselves as they are in themselves. Furthermore, Heidegger claims that in order to properly dwell (*wohnen*--to reside) in our environment, we must first and foremost spare things. Sparing, or saving, requires allowing things to reveal themselves as they are in themselves. "Dwelling preserves the fourfold by bringing the essence of the fourfold into things... In this way, that mortals nurse and nurture the things that grow, and specially construct things that do not grow" (Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p.353). But even in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", what may be Heidegger's most explicitly normative text insofar as he explains that certain orientations toward the world, including sparing and saving, are necessary for mortals to properly dwell, we do not find any explicit normative obligations other than very general claims such as "If you want to dwell, you must spare nature." Nowhere does he even say that we should dwell. He merely offers conditions necessary in order to dwell and claims that dwelling allows mortals to initiate their 'essential being'. Indeed, it seems that basic phenomenology and existentialism do not provide a sufficient basis to ground action-guiding norms and principles. Necessary for this would be further conditions such as practical orientations (e.g., "You should dwell") or further value commitments (e.g., "Human biological flourishing is good").

What we get is not a set of substantive ethical obligations. In this sense, we lack a normative ethical position. What we have, however, is a normative meta-ethical stance. The stance is normative insofar as certain value-attitudes are required by phenomenology. Specifically, one must be other-regarding and sensitive to the other's values, attitudes, and perspectives. But the stance does not yet offer specific action-guiding obligations, hence we remain at a meta-level of normative discussion. The other-orientation is a normative standard insofar as it offers guidelines for how we ought to act towards and think about others, but without further practical or ethical obligations (e.g., "We should protect human life" or "Diversity of human and non-human life is good”), we lack substantive, i.e., action-guiding norms. All in all, whether one thinks that the phenomenological stance amounts to an ethical position or not will depend on how we characterize the task of ethics and meta-ethics, respectively.

Martin Buber, philosopher and theologian, perhaps represents such an ethics that amounts to no more than an other-orientation. In his seminal work *I and Thou*, he describes the mode through which we should encounter the other: namely as a 'thou' rather than as an 'it'. Although Buber's ultimate other is divinity itself, his theory can be applied to diverse others, and his examples often include natural phenomena such as trees as examples of a 'thou'. Much of his normative philosophy includes a description of two different attitudes. One attitude is towards an 'it'; the other is towards a 'thou'. An 'it' is something that can be defined with discrete definitions and that can be wholly known through our descriptions. A 'thou', however, will necessarily and always outstrip our

descriptions and evade our definitions. Yet in spite of our inability to concretely and definitively know the other, we can still approach the other with a certain kind of openness, or other-orientation: "I can neither experience nor describe the form which meets me, but only body it forth. And yet I behold it, splendid in the radiance of what confronts me, clearer than all the clearness of the world which is experienced" (Buber, *I and Thou*, p.10). Whether we consider such a philosophy to be, properly speaking, an ethics is a less interesting question than how we might, using the conceptual resources of the phenomenological-existential tradition, develop a more robust, action-guiding ethical theory.

Next, I'd like to explain how the phenomenological stance offers resources to develop into a kind of ethics: an ethics of otherness developed from alterity arguments. I contrast these 'phenomenological' arguments from the standard kind of argument found in the Western tradition: identity arguments. After understanding the distinction between these two kinds of arguments, we will see how identity arguments, as standard in the field of Western ethics, are inherently unable to adequately account for the value of others, especially radically different others; this is what I earlier called universal egoism. In contrast, alterity arguments are particularly well-suited for accounting for the value of others. Yet the alterity arguments themselves have a complementary weakness: an inability to ground substantive normative principles. Ultimately, I suggest identity arguments must be supplemented by alterity arguments to overcome the universal egoism of most Western ethical texts.

CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY ARGUMENTS AND THEIR LIMITS

The Western mainstream tradition of ethics can be explained in terms of a dichotomy. Like many dichotomies, this one may be false. The two trends in ethics are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As complex and multi-faceted as humanity is, our ethical systems have sometimes blurred the line between two seemingly opposing notions: identity and alterity. Most of mainstream, Western ethics applies identity arguments. Very few authors offer alterity arguments. An alterity argument does not offer a specific set of criteria, or identity conditions as a basis of moral obligations. An identity argument in ethics means that the author provides a set of identity conditions, or morally relevant respects, R, that must be satisfied in order for an entity to be an object of moral obligations and duties.

Immanuel Kant, for example, identifies very specific features identified as being morally relevant. Someone is owed a duty if and only if they fulfill the definition of a good will. Specifically, someone has a good will or is capable of a good will if there is the proper kind of organization between the categorical imperative, her action, and the personal rule guiding her action. The categorical imperative, which is the command we always ought to follow unconditionally, states that we should never act unless the maxim guiding the action can be willed as a universal law. If an entity can assess whether a personal maxim can be willed as universal law without entailing a contradiction, then that entity has autonomy and thus the authority to legislate universal moral law. Because the morality of an action is determined by whether it is done out of respect for the autonomy that legislates universal

moral law, we must respect those with a good will in order to be morally good. Actions are only good if done out of respect for duty, which is to say respect for the authority of universal moral law. Hence, being the subject and the object of moral obligations requires a reflexive structure of one's rational will. For Kant, a being is only the object of moral obligations if it is also a subject of moral obligations. In order to be good, one must

1. Be aware of her actions.
2. Be aware of the maxim guiding her actions.
3. Assess whether the rule can be willed as universal law, and
4. Respect the autonomy of others, i.e., respect the ability of others to fulfill (3) above.

If and only if these conditions are satisfied is a person morally good. More directly to my point, one must satisfy particular identity conditions in order to be the object of moral obligations. Actions are only good if they are done out of respect for those beings that have a good will, which Kant also calls practical reason. If the identity conditions for practical reason are met, then that being is the subject of moral obligations and thereby is also the object of moral obligations. In Kant's ethics, he clearly applies an identity argument insofar as he provides a very specific set of criteria for the identity of the kind of thing towards which we have moral duties.

Given that Kant's entire approach to ethics requires considering only the internal structure and motivations behind an action, one might think that an ethics that includes an alterity argument may be found in Mill's consequentialism. According to Mill, the goodness of an action is not determined by the internal structure and motivation behind an action.

Actions are good based on the external consequences of the action. Although Mill is concerned with the external outcomes of actions rather than the internal motivations behind those actions, he still offers an identity argument insofar as beings must be sentient in order to be the objects of moral duties.

Mill's Greatest Happiness Principle tells us that actions are good insofar as they maximize universal happiness. Happiness is understood as a surplus of more pleasure than pain. Pain is the absence of pleasure and vice versa. Hence, actions are good if and only if they create more pleasure than pain overall. Implicit in this is the requirement that in order for an action to be good, the action must create pleasure or reduce pain for sentient beings. In other words, unless there are beings that satisfy the condition of sentience, then there is no moral goodness or moral obligations. Our basic moral duty is to maximize universal happiness. Hence all those who experience pleasure are the objects of moral duties. It's possible to be good only if there are sentient entities who experience pain and pleasure. Although I have a moral obligations to take the pleasure and pain of all sentient beings into account when I consider possible actions, non-sentient beings like plants and landscapes have no relevant role in a utilitarian calculation. Non-sentient entities can be morally relevant indirectly insofar as they can cause sentient beings pain and pleasure, but even when a good action involves a non-sentient being, the morality of the action is not derived from any particular identity conditions that the non-sentient being fulfills. Rather, moral obligations are entailed when beings who experience pain and pleasure satisfy the criterion of being sentient. As a matter of diversity within our species, any wide variety of

things can cause pleasure and pain—regardless of their particular characteristics. All that matters is that the beings who are sentient satisfy that condition for creating moral value. When this criterion is fulfilled, then the being is capable of being the object of moral obligations. We have moral duties to sentient beings insofar as we have a general duty to maximize universal happiness. In other words, the source of moral obligation is an identity of a certain kind, viz. Being sentient. Plants and landscapes can thus never have their intrinsic moral value justified; they can only be indirectly valuable if they cause sentient beings pleasure or pain.

Although Mill's identity conditions are quite distinct from Kant's, the criteria define not only relevant moral objects; moreover, in order to be a moral object, a being must also first be a moral subject of a certain kind. For Kant, moral subjects are rational beings capable of a good will. For Mill, moral subjects are beings capable of experiencing pain and pleasure. To say that they are moral subjects means that they are capable of a subjective experience of pain. Although Mill and Kant are often contrasted in terms of what the basis of goodness is, they share two important similarities. Both theories provide an identity argument, and both theories require that in order for a being to be the object of moral obligations, it must also be a moral subject (or self) as defined by the identity argument.

Deontology and Utilitarianism represent a large swath of mainstream ethics in the Western tradition. Although they focus on different conditions to define some morally relevant self, they both follow the same basic kind of argument: identity argument. Both derive moral goodness, obligation, and duty from a specific set of conditions that when

satisfied, constitute an identity of a certain kind. In other words, moral obligations depend on a particular identity being fulfilled. Identity arguments in ethics are insufficient to ground the intrinsic moral value of non-human natural phenomena.

There have been recent attempts to argue for the moral importance of non-humans by revitalizing the traditional views of Kant and Mill. Although these authors attempt to argue for the moral obligations we have to non-humans, the identity arguments employed prevent such theories from grounding intrinsic environmental concern. Next I will consider a couple of the more prominent attempts to argue for moral obligations to non-humans, and I will mark the limits of such efforts.

Consider Christine Korsgaard's recent attempts to ground obligation to non-humans in a decidedly Kantian way. In some essays, she explicitly relies on Kant's own arguments as a basis for moral obligations to non-humans. In others, she relies on arguments that are not taken from the Kantian tradition yet they can still be categorized as identity arguments if not Kantian identity arguments. Although some more recent essays focus on an identity more akin to the one important for Aristotle's moral theory, these arguments are nonetheless identity arguments.

In "Just Like All the Other Animals of the Earth" (2008), Korsgaard attempts to distinguish herself from other philosophers who argue for animals rights or animal liberation. Most ethical arguments, she claims, are based on identifying some similarity between humans and non-human animals. This similarity is, in most arguments, the basis of the moral value of humans. In contrast, most people who dismiss ethical arguments in

favor of, e.g., animal rights do so on the basis of some difference. Korsgaard presents her own theory as radical insofar as it is supposed to transcend this dichotomy. Yet although she claims that a difference between humans and non-human animals is the basis for our obligation to animals, she still offers an entirely traditional argument insofar as it relies on a specific set of identity conditions. Although she defines 'humanity' as a self-defined virtue of our species as the difference that justifies our obligations to non-humans, this focus on difference is not done in a way that allows the difference or alterity of the other to be revealed for its own sake. Ultimately, the virtue of humanity is defined as the capacity to recognize an inherent similarity between human and non-human animals: we are all living creatures struggling to exist in a world we did not create. So identity arguments come in two forms here. First, in order for humans to have obligations to non-humans, it requires that humans have a particular identity as beings capable of empathy towards non-humans. Second, such obligations also require that the animals, the objects of the moral obligations, are also moral subjects of a certain kind. A non-human is capable of being a moral object only if the following identity condition is satisfied: to be a living being struggling in a shared world. Hence Korsgaard, too, falls victim to universal egoism in ethics. Consider more recent articles where her justification of moral value employs an identity argument.

Action itself is normative. This is the main thesis of Korsgaard's 2014 article "The Normative Constitution of Agency". She argues that agency itself is normative. In other words, the necessary criterion for the capacity to perform an action is a normative form or organization. This means that normative standards themselves are indicated by and

constituted by agency. One of her key examples of a normative conception of agency is Kant. Kant's ethics only considers actions that are motivated by a personal rule. If the action is good, then it will be done according to a rule that satisfies the categorical imperative. Additionally, the rule must be willed as a universal law and done out of respect for the authority of that universal law. Good actions require a very specific internal organization between an action, its motivating principle, and the categorical imperative. Even bad actions are only actions if there is a relationship between an action and its rule. Not only can Kant's theory of ethics provide an example of a normative theory of agency; it also accounts for two definitive features of agency: activity and identity. When an agent acts, the action can fail or succeed because it is part of a goal-oriented activity. To say that an action is part of an activity is interesting, but more directly relevant to my point is that identity is supposedly implicated when an agent acts. In other words, the action somehow belongs to that person or expresses the individual's identity. Hence, action itself is normative insofar as one cannot be an agent capable of action unless that agent has a specific identity. Only when identity conditions are met is the being capable of actions that have normative significance.

The capacity of a moral subject or object is thus a reflexive internal organization such that actions are done from some identity while also actively defining that identity. In “The Origin of the Good and Our Animal Nature” (forthcoming), Korsgaard explicitly identifies a reflexive self-relation as the origin of 'the good', the *summum bonum*, or the thing that is good in itself. Here, she identifies the capacity to experience one's life as being

in a good condition as the morally relevant respect, R, according to which goodness is generated. Unless a being is capable of experiencing one's life as being in a good condition —which is Korsgaard's homage to Aristotle's *Eudaimonistic* ethics[44], then the being cannot generate moral goodness.

Moreover, the intrinsic moral value of moral subjects is derived from their identity. In Korsgaard's philosophy, the identity required to be a moral subject is a reflexive relation to self according to which a subject of experience is capable of either 1) experiencing her life as being in a good condition ("The Origin of the Good and our Animal Nature") or 2) goal-oriented activities manifested in actions that express an individual identity("The Normative Constitution of Agency"). For my purposes, what is most relevant is that Korsgaard employs identity arguments in either case, thus providing yet another example of universalistic egoism that is incapable of justifying the intrinsic value of non-human nature, let alone in a first-personal way. Although her applied ethical goals are to broaden the scope of beings that have intrinsic moral value, she cannot justify the intrinsic value of landscapes and plants. Landscapes and plants fail to satisfy the relevant identity conditions. Plants lack an identity that can be expressed in action and they lack conscious awareness of their own well-being. As such, they do not generate direct moral obligations. Because they cannot be moral subjects, they cannot be moral objects.

---

[44] In Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics,* he describes goodness as a state of well-being. In other words, moral excellence and moral value are derived from satisfying certain conditions that define a good condition for that kind of being. We may see this as Korsgaard abandoning the attempt to justify the value of non-humans in a Kantian, first-personal kind of way.

Tom Regan is another example of a contemporary philosopher who has attempted to broaden the scope of intrinsic moral value. Like Korsgaard, he uses an identity argument to do so. Unlike Korsgaard, he uses a different identity condition as the basis of moral value. Regan claims that we have obligations to beings who are experiencing subjects of their own lives (*The Case for Animal Rights*, 1983). Like Korsgaard, he offers necessary and sufficient conditions that when met define a kind of identity that has intrinsic moral value. Having a subjective viewpoint and being capable of experiencing one's own life is not exactly the same kind of identity considered by Korsgaard, but that there is a specific, concrete identity required to generate intrinsic moral value is indicative of the same kind of universal egoism. Although Regan's goal is to broaden the category of beings that have intrinsic moral value, because he also employs an identity argument, he is unable to account for the intrinsic moral value of the most radically different others such as plants and landscapes. Like Korsgaard, Regan's arguments are limited by universal egoism. If the goal of an argument is to prove that different others are morally relevant, then such an argument will always have limited application if the support for the conclusion is pointing out some similarity between ourselves and others. If similarity is the basis for moral value, then anything radically different could never have its intrinsic moral value justified.

Perhaps the philosopher most infamous for his cries for *Animal Liberation* is Peter Singer. Singer's animal ethics not only employs an identity argument to justify the moral value of non-humans. His justifications are also decidedly impersonal. Utilitarianism holds that the pleasure generated by actions is what gives the actions moral value. Although

Singer calls for the consideration of the pain of animals—human and non-human alike—animals only have value insofar as they are capable of pain and pleasure. If animals have moral value, it is in an indirect way rather than a direct or intrinsic way. The animals are only contingently valuable; they are only valuable as an occasion for happiness. And although their subjective experience of pain and pleasure is morally relevant, it is not relevant in a first-personal kind of way. In other words, the happiness of animals is good, but it need not be the happiness of any particular subjective experience. Singer may not be able to justify the value of non-humans on the basis of a first-personal experience, but he serves as a perfect example of an ethical theory that relies on identity arguments. Hence his views resolve in universal egoism. Just like Bentham and Mill, Singer is only able to justify the moral value for a certain kind of moral object that fulfills a certain set of identity conditions. Only if a being is capable of experiencing pleasure and pain is it a moral subject and hence a moral object.

Not only does Singer use a utilitarian identity argument in order to argue for the value of non-human animals. Marian Stamp Dawkins, in her article, "Scientific Basis for Assessing Suffering in Animals", makes it her project to explain the scientific justification for the shared identity of humans and non-human animals as beings who experience pain[45]. Dale Peterson's "To Eat the Laughing Animal" explains the immorality of eating chimpanzees in terms of the shared identity of humans and chimps as beings that laugh.

Now that I've given a preliminary definition of identity arguments and a number of examples, I note a number of abstract features of identity arguments that can be

[45] We see a similar kind of argument in the Rose, et al. article discussing the possibility of whether fish feel pain.

illuminated by the previous examples. First, recall that the preliminary definition of an identity argument is an argument according to which something only have moral value if it fulfills a set of identity conditions. Another characterization may be that the arguments used infer that only those with a morally relevant identity are morally valuable. A being has a moral identity iff it understands itself in particularly morally relevant respects, R. These morally relevant respects are the identity conditions. To say a being understands itself in morally relevant respects does not require that there is conscious, reflective endorsement. A being need not have a theoretical conscious awareness of this identity. Neither must it emotionally identify with the identity criteria. Two beings share a moral identity if and only if the two beings both meet identity conditions R. It is possible that A may have a conscious, intellectual awareness of her own moral identity, but even if B lacks such higher awareness, B can still share a moral identity with A so long as B fulfills identity conditions R. For example, a moral subject defined by Singer or Mill is a being that is capable of experiencing pleasure and pain. Some moral subjects, such as many human beings, have a sophisticated awareness of this capacity. Yet human and non-human animals share a moral identity on the basis of the pain and pleasure alone. Unless the moral content described in R presupposes a conscious, reflective understanding of self in terms of R, then B need not understand itself in terms of R or even be capable of such a thing. There are cases where conscious self-awareness is presupposed by R. In Kant's ethics, for example, a being must be capable of 1) consciously endorsing rules that can be willed as universal moral law and 2) purposefully following said rule out of respect for the authority by which such universal

laws are legislated. Although all identity arguments are alike insofar as they specify a set of identity conditions as a basis of moral value, the identities described therein need not require an identity according to which a being has reflexive self-awareness of his or her capacities. Mill's identity conditions, for example, only require that a being can experience happiness. Higher, intellectual awareness is not specified within R.

The general form of an identity argument is to claim that if A and B have a shared identity, then B is morally relevant for A as follows:

1. B is a source of value for A, i.e.,
2. Hence B belongs to a protected class with regard to A, i.e., B enjoys rightful protection against certain actions by A, where
3. the identity conditions, R, explain both the basis of value and the actions proscribed for A.

To talk about justified constraints on A's actions is not necessarily to talk about the 'rights' of a being in a deep legalistic or moralistic sense. Unless we understand a right as merely the inverse of an obligation, the term is not necessary for our discussion. To further illuminate my meaning, I now consider how this basic form is instantiated in both Kant's and Mill's ethics.

For Kant, a human, A, and another rational being, B, have a shared identity when the following morally relevant respect is satisfied: to be capable of acting out of respect for universal moral law. If both A and B satisfy this identity condition, then B is morally relevant for A insofar as

1. B is a source of value for A. The end of all good action is a good will motivated by respect for universal moral law. The authority to legislate universal moral law is the rational capacity Kant calls the good will. As such, there is an absolute, categorical imperative to respect other rational beings as ends in themselves. So if B is a rational being capable of a good will, then actions by A are morally valuable for A if they are done out of respect for all beings that satisfy R, including B. A's actions towards B only have moral value if A's actions are done out of respect for B for its own sake. Respecting B for its own sake means respecting B as a rational being, hence
2. B belongs to a protected class of beings. A has a reciprocal duty to B to respect B as an end in itself, which means to respect B as an end in itself. B is protected such that
3. the identity conditions, R, entail both the justification for the value of B and the actions proscribed for A. The good will is the source of moral authority to legislate universal moral law. Likewise, any actions that fail to respect that other's autonomy are banned. Hence it immediately follows that A's actions that treat B as a mere means to an end are morally proscribed because this is a violation of the respect owed to the identity described by R.

According to Mill, the morally relevant respect necessary for a moral identity is the capacity to experience happiness. So a human, A, shares an identity with a non-human animal, B, if both A and B are capable of feeling pleasure and pain. That an animal, B, is identical to A in this regard means that

1. B is a source of value for A. Actions are good insofar as they maximize total universal happiness. B has moral value for A because B's experiences contribute to the general sum total of happiness. Hence,
2. B belongs to a protected class of beings. B enjoys a protection according to which its experiences of pain and pleasure must be taken into consideration when calculating the net total happiness generated by an action.
3. The protections of B and the resulting proscribed actions for A directly follow from R. Because B is a being capable of contributing to universal happiness, B is hence morally valuable and B is entitled to be free of actions against it that lead to an overall detriment to general happiness. In other words, A cannot act towards B in ways that fail to either 1) take B's happiness into consideration or 2) maximize the net total of pleasures over pains. If A's action towards B (or an action that has consequences for B) generates more pains than pleasures, the action is banned by the moral system. For example, killing an animal for sport may create pleasure for A, but the pain experienced by B may outweigh the pleasure. If this is the case, then A should not kill B for sport; such actions are banned by the moral system. It's possible, however that if A could kill B to feed other beings such that the net total pleasures outweigh the net total pains. If this is the case, then there is no proscription against but rather a duty to perform actions of this kind. In either case, whether the action is proscribed or required depends on the identity conditions R.

In the philosophy of both Kant and Mill, we have clear examples of identity arguments. In both philosophies, we find arguments such that when A and B both fulfill morally relevant respects, R, then A has an obligation to B according to which 1) B is a source of value for A, 2) B belongs to a protected class of beings and as such enjoys protections that are 3) defined by the identity conditions R.

Ultimately, identity-based arguments can only succeed at proving the intrinsic value of non-human natural phenomena if they can be used to prove that there is a shared identity between humans and the non-human entity. Only if we can prove that a non-human, B, has the same identity with humanity, A, in terms of morally relevant regards, R, can we justify its intrinsic concern. Because sharing an identity is the basis of moral value, radically different others can thus never have their moral value justified in terms of an identity argument. Although the identity conditions, R, vary from author to author, each author who uses an identity argument faces the same limitation.

Another limit of identity arguments is that they fail to provide action-guiding norms insofar as when conflicts arise between individuals who share the identity described by terms R. If both A and B share an identity by fulfilling conditions R, then we can justify the intrinsic value of both A and B, but if A and B have opposed projects, I cannot justify a preference for A or B. This tension comes out nicely in Peter Singer's work. He acknowledges that at times, human interests may conflict with non-human animal interests. Although his main line of argument focuses on the claim that humans and non-human animals share an identity as sentient beings, he must introduce another kind of

identity in order to justify preference for human interests. Specifically, he argues that animals are not capable of all the various kinds of pleasures and pains to which humans are subject (Singer, *AL*, p.21). Even then, if two humans have a conflict, there is no specific action-guiding norm to address conflicts between them. We have a general rule that we ought to act in a way that maximizes happiness for all human subjects, but this yields neither resolution of interpersonal conflict between two individuals nor concrete principles of action. To maximize happiness is not a principle of action. It is a general rule. And if two people who would experience the same pleasure/pain balance based on two different outcomes, then there is no way to determine which of two outcomes is preferable. Likewise with Kant, if there is a conflict between two people's interests, then it may be the case that either's success means using the other as a means to an end. Although people have a perfect duty to preserve their own lives, if two people meet on a mountain pass and only one can proceed, then we have no concrete principle of action to tell us what action is good. In fact, no action may be good. Moreover, there is no concrete action-guiding principle offered based solely on the identity argument.

Moreover, when it comes to radically different others, there is no possibility of justifying the value of others for their own sake.

CHAPTER 3: ALTERITY ARGUMENTS AND THEIR LIMITS

Now that I have taken a look at identity arguments, I consider a radically different alternative: alterity arguments. Alterity arguments, also known as difference arguments, are similar to identity arguments insofar as they require a characterization of the other. This mode of characterization vastly differs from the arguments described above.

Alterity arguments require the following kind of characterization of an other:

1. A individuates or singles out B by way of some conception of B
2. conceives of B as different for A in some respect, R, i.e., B is an other to A in virtue of being different from A. The perceived otherness is
3. attributed to B as primitive or basic, meaning that A does not presuppose any kind of necessary similarity between itself and B.

Contrast this with Aristotle, for whom difference is always a differentiation between two similar beings. Singer, for example, differentiates between the pleasure and pains of humans and the pleasure and pains of non-human animals. Although he claims that humans are capable of more complex forms of pleasure and pain (*Animal Liberation,* Chapter 1), this difference is pointed out against the backdrop of the basic similarity between humans and non-human animals. In other words, human and non-human animals share an identity because both fulfill the condition of being sentient. This notion of difference defies the form of alterity arguments. The goal of alterity arguments is to characterize the other as it is in itself. In other words, the arguments characterize

difference as such. Importantly, the empirical, factual differences observed do not amount to a morally relevant difference.

There are a number of examples in 20th and 21st century philosophy that provide alterity arguments and characterizations of others in a way that putatively grounds moral obligations to those others. In the examples I am about to describe, one will find characterizations of an other thought of 'on its own terms' or as a being revealed as it is itself. The basis for moral value is thus a respect for the other on its own terms or for its own sake. Respect for alterity is thus the basis of moral value and the justification of any possible action-guiding principles and norms. Rather than values being based on some shared concrete identity or set of conditions, the approach itself, the aim of which is to reveal the other for its own sake, determines the basic value assumption, which is to respect the otherness or alterity of a different being for its own sake.

Heidegger, for example, embraces such a strategy under the name of 'phenomenology'. Phenomenology is a matter of revealing a phenomenon according to its logos. A phenomenon is not mere appearance but is rather an entity as revealed as it is itself. The logos of a self-revealing phenomenon is the structure or manner according to which the phenomenon is revealed in a self-showing way. Based on this characterization of his phenomenological method, we can understand his theory of truth as *alatheia*, or unconcealment. Beings themselves are true if they are revealed in a self-showing way. In other words, a discovery about a being is true if the being is revealed 'in itself' or for its

own sake. Hence, any morally relevant truths about X (e.g., that X is a moral subject) are only true if they consider this being in its own terms and for its own sake.

The supreme danger of the technological attitude is to prevent all ways of revealing that do not fall into a very specific organization according to which things only have have in terms of a pre-existing economic system. The *Gestell*, or enframing attitude is an attitude where a person only conceives of a being as a reserve of potential energy that can be transformed, used and distributed in a market economy. All revealing is always also a covering up. When I consider a mountain as a place to go skiing or hiking, then I cover up the possibility that the mountain is also a habitat for organisms. My care and concern, in short, my projects, determine which truths I reveal about something. It is as if uncovering one truth is like shoveling the dirt off of something. The dirt has to go somewhere else. The enframing attitude goes further than this basic danger of uncovering. Whereas other ways of unconcealing truths cover up other truths similar to dirt being dropped onto a plant, the technological attitude prevents all other modes of revealing similar to salting and tarring a patch of land. If, for example, instead of hiking on a mountain I blow up the mountain to extract economically valuable ore, then the mountain can never be revealed as itself ever again. That mountain is no longer a mountain. Even if our modest goal is to provide an alterity characterization of the mountain, this will never again be possible because it has been reduced to being mere goods in the market of economic exchange. Even further artistic representations of the ore could never reveal the ore as a mountain.

In “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, Heidegger claims that to truly dwell in a place, that dwelling and all accompanying building must reveal the place where one dwells in a self-showing way. Specifically, Heidegger claims that revealing a place in a self-showing way means saving, or preserving, the fourfold. The fourfold is a unification of four distinct concepts that can only be understood in terms of one another. In brief, to dwell is to initiate one's own essential being as a mortal, to await divinities as divinities, to save the earth, and to receive sky as sky. Two elements of dwelling require concrete characterizations of oneself and one's environment. Two elements require alterity, or difference characterizations of others. To dwell as mortals and to save the earth require concrete characterizations of self and others. To initiate one's essential being as a mortal means to live a finite life with a self-chosen purpose. To be mortal means to be capable of death as death, where death is not just the termination of a life but the resolution of a unified, goal-oriented life project. Death is not the end in terms of a stopping point but in terms of the goal or aims of one's life. Dwelling requires a concrete characterization of one's own life such that it displays a certain unity and coherence of projects up until death; it also requires a concrete characterization of practical possibilities in an environment. To save the earth means to preserve practical possibilities. In other words, to dwell means to know what kind of projects can be realized in the empirical world and to preserve the possibility of realizing such projects.

In addition to concrete characterizations of one's own life and the possible projects that can be realized in one's world, he also defines dwelling in terms of two alterity, or

difference-based characterizations of what are, for many philosophers, the paramount others: divinity and nature. To say that to dwell is to await divinities as divinities means to accept that divine others can never be entirely revealed as they are in themselves. Our concepts and characterizations necessarily fall short of providing a complete description of divinity. So, what we hope for from divinity is necessarily 'unhoped for' in the sense that our expectations about it could never truly capture the divine as it is in itself. Additionally, to dwell also means to receive sky as sky. Heidegger's metaphorical language means that one must be open to unexpected possibilities. Forces of nature are beyond out control and in many cases, are beyond our comprehension. Thus to dwell in a place means to accept that the powers and forces of the natural environment there can never be understood in terms of an identity characterization.

So, to dwell thus requires a very specific attitude towards the environment and towards nature. This attitude requires some identity characterizations of this other, but importantly it also requires an alterity characterization of the other. The identity characterization is required insofar as an individual must identify some concrete conditions for one's own life. For example, a farmer may initiate his own essential being-towards-death by choosing to live a life that is both dependent upon nature in an instrumental way and respectful of nature for its own sake. The farmer can save the earth by preserving the practical possibilities in her environment. Traditional agricultural practices can do this insofar as rotating crops and allowing fields to go fallow are ways of preserving the nutritional content of the soil. The farmer identifies the soil as something from which plants can

absorb nutrition for growth. This concrete possibility is preserved by such agricultural methods. Likewise, the farmer can identify the plants he grows as capable of providing himself with nutrients. Just as saving the earth requires a concrete characterization of the relevant identity of the land (e.g., as capable of providing nutrients), living a finite life with a self-chosen purpose means having a concrete characterization of one's own goals within an environment or landscape (e.g., benefiting from the land and maintaining the future possibility of benefiting from the land as best as possible).

Equally essential to dwelling are two alterity-based characterizations of others. So, even if a farmer has concrete plans for her own life and for the preservation of practical possibilities, she must also have very different kinds of characterizations of others in order to dwell. To await divinities as divinities means that if she has some conception of what is divine, she must accept that her concepts can never truly describe divinity in itself or in its own terms. Likewise, receiving sky as sky requires acknowledging that for all the concrete plans and projects one may have, these plans are always subject to forces beyond our control and beyond our comprehension. So a new pesticide or herbicide, for example, may have unintended consequences for the surrounding environment. Introducing a new species into an environment may eventually disrupt the balance of the landscape and contribute to degradation of soil quality. Hence, notions one has about divinity and nature require alterity characterizations.

Although Heidegger never explicitly makes normative claims about dwelling being good or something we ought to do, it is the manner in which we exist in our environment. Hence,

a normative dimension of dwelling is implied. Although he never tells us that dwelling is 'good', there are certain conditions that must be satisfied in order to dwell. Thus, even if dwelling is not judged in a normative way, there are normative standards for dwelling. Although dwelling is never explicitly characterized as normative, the fact that it requires a particular organization or structure means that dwelling itself has a normative dimension just as Korsgaard would infer that actions have a normative dimension because they requires a specific organization. The moral value of non-humans is justified by Heidegger's characterization of dwelling. Specifically, the value of non-human natural phenomena is based on alterity arguments insofar as the basis of moral value is not some concrete, demarcated definition of a self and an other(and that other's self). Heidegger characterizes both nature and divinity in terms such that

1. A individuates B by way of some conception of B. Heidegger does offer a description meant to provide a conception of dwelling in a place.

2. A conceives of B as different from A in some respect, R, i.e., B is an other to A in virtue of being different from A. Although we can have a unified view of our own lives in terms of concrete projects, nature and divinity can never be characterized according to some specific set of conditions. The otherness of nature (and divinity) is

3. attributed to B as primitive or basic. There is no presumed similarity between A and B. Heidegger's phenomenology, when applied to divinity, nature, or Being, never presumes that there is a similarity between a human subject and the other. Being can never be understood in terms of beings, which means that Being is so inherently different that it can

never be explained in terms of the empirical world. Even landscapes in nature and places, which can be described in terms of the empirical world, can never be understood in terms of our knowledge and understanding. Divinity is likewise inherently other insofar as it can never be fully understood.

Michael Marder is another philosopher who employs alterity arguments. His justification for the value of plants is based on a characterization of those others that is neither concrete nor explicitly demarcated. The others that Marder focuses on are plants. Marder's writings justify plant rights and question the morality of eating plants. Marder neither justifies plants' moral value indirectly nor justifies their value by arguing that they are similar to us. Whereas identity arguments can only justify the moral value of plants and landscapes as a means to an end, Marder is able to justify the value of plants for their own sake. His philosophy can also be used to justify the value of landscapes as such. Moreover, the value of plants is not some shared identity with humans. One may attempt to identify such traits as similar to or analogous to human traits, but Marder never attempts to do this. His main focus is revealing alterity rather than similarity. Plants are to be respected not because they are just like is. Marder successfully overcomes universal egoism and provides a justification for plants' moral value based on these beings considered as different, other beings. Marder's aim, like Heidegger's, is to reveal things as they are in themselves. Much of classic and modern biology has failed to do so. Scientific and philosophical characterizations of plants have often revealed plants to be entirely passive, for example. Although plants are sessile, they do have an agency of their own. They lack subjectivity in

the sense of a conscious subject, but they still have forms of activity. Importantly, Marder's characterization of the agency of plants is not in the manner of an identity argument. The difference between identity arguments and Marder's arguments are that when Marder provides a characterization of the other, it is

1. Not particular, i.e., there is no fixed set of conditions, R, that must be met in order for plants to be morally relevant. Although plants are described in concrete terms, these terms are not meant to be a fixed in a definite way. E.g., when explaining the 'agency' of plants, Marder gives a definition of agency but is also careful not to suggest that agency of plants is something we to which we can identify or ever identify completely. i.e., the characterization is
2. Open epistemically. Marder presupposes that a complete understanding of the other may be beyond the horizon of understanding, i.e., it may be impossible to identify all particular or essential features that define the other. In deed, it is recognized that the other may be
3. Structurally fluid. There is no presumption of a concrete, immutable underlying metaphysical structure or form of the other. The other may change or be changing. There may be no concrete, definite essence of the other. E.g., plants seem to lack a definitive self precisely because they are always becoming other.

To say that the other is characterized or thought of means that the other is experienced as different. A being, or phenomenon, is perceived as other and different according to the

most adequate description of a human's, A's, experience. The other's alterity or difference is not necessarily acknowledged as different in a thematized, thetic manner. Heidegger often uses metaphorical language (such as the fourfold) when describing the alterity of nature and divinity. It may be the case that A accepts or avows his or her experience as being of alterity and difference, in which case there will be a concrete thematization of A's characterization of the other. Yet A can have an experience of of alterity even without an explicit thematization thereof.

Alterity arguments require a recognition of the other and a receptivity to the difference of the other for its own sake. The other is not defined in terms of a specific set of conditions that must be satisfied. In contrast to the particular definition of an identity argument, alterity arguments are not particular. In addition, alterity argument characterizations are epistemically open. To be receptive to a radically different other is to recognize that one's own understanding and knowledge of the other may never be able to identity all of the essential features of the other. Indeed, one cannot even presume that the other has a static, stable identity. Alterity arguments require a characteristic of the other that is thus metaphysically fluid in addition to addition to epistemically open and non-particular. There may not even be an explicit thematization of the other. Authors who employ identity arguments often use metaphorical language and imagery. Poetic language is used to gesture towards some 'meaning' that cannot or is not as of yet cannot be expressed in language.

Carnap would insist that such uses of language are meaningless and thus best left to those with poetic skill; even better, such uses of language should be abandoned and replaced by non-linguistic modes of expression such as music (Carnap, p. 80). Early Wittgenstein would insist that if we cannot speak of something we must remain silent on the matter (Wittgenstein, Prop. 7). Philosophers who use alterity arguments are doing something so radically different from traditional, Western ethics that their language is also radically different.

Heidegger, for example, is infamous for his poetic and metaphorical expressions[46]. In "The Question Concerning Technology", he insists that creative, poetic expression is the only way to combat a technological attitude. Whereas enframing prevents the ability to reveal truths about things except as functionaries in an economic system, art and poetry increase possible interpretations of others ("TQCT", p. 340). Heidegger employs this manner of talking about language in "Building Dwelling Thinking", where the fourfold--the unity of earth, mortals, sky, and divinities-- is the metaphor used to understand a place ("BDT", p. 350). Indeed, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger notes that 'Being' could never be understood in terms of 'beings' (*B&T*, p.23). In other words, the metaphysical essence that underlies our empirical reality can never been explained in terms of empirical, descriptive language. Whether the other discussed by Heidegger is the natural environment (as in his later essays) or the underlying structure of reality (as in his early tome), plain descriptive language can never suffice to characterize the other.

---

[46] Indeed, Carnap's main opponent in his overthrow of metaphysics is Heidegger and his metaphorical uses of language.

Martin Buber is a spiritual thinker whose work *I and Thou* presents an ethics that attempts to respect and regard radically different others. The ultimate other, or *du*, with which Buber is concerned is divinity. He often uses examples of trees when explaining the attitude he thinks we should take towards others. The other should not thought us as a thing. When considering the otherness of a tree, Buber acknowledges that there is no knowledge of what it is like to be the tree or if there is anything it is like to be the tree. To encounter 'the tree itself' is to not have explicit characterizations of the other (*I&D*, p.8). When it comes to others, "I can neither experience nor describe the form which meets me, but only body it forth" (p. 10). To 'body it forth' indicates that there is some visceral experience of the other that can neither be experienced in its entirely nor described in propositional language.

In Ted Toadvine's book *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature,* he calls this tenuous relationship with the other the 'inherent paradox of any phenomenology of nature'. To be receptive to the other without falsely identifying with it or projecting onto it is made paradoxical because, "...to the extent that phenomenology starts from *experience*, we seem constrained at the outset to reduce nature to the range of our perceptual faculties, to frame it in terms of our spatial and temporal scale, and to encounter it in anthropomorphic terms, that is, to humanize it" (*M-P'sPoN*, p. 52). Toadvine concludes that we must both conceive of nature entirely in terms of what is descriptive but also undermine this assumption if we are to do a phenomenology of nature in the manner of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (*ibid*, p.134).

Now that I've shown how an ethics of identity works, let's consider a version of an ethics of alterity. The example I use is Michael Marder's plant ethics. Marder's philosophy represents an attempt to understand and respect something wholly different and indeed even extra-conceptual insofar as our human concepts do little to reveal the plants as they are in themselves. As innovative new research about plants begins to undermine traditional concepts about plants being, e.g., entirely passive and unfeeling, thinking in ways that outstrip our traditional concepts becomes important. Ultimately, the ability to think about ourselves and others is at the center of ethics. I have already suggested that we think of ourselves in a radically new way. Now I suggest we ought to think of others in radically new ways that go beyond the limited range of universalistically egoistic ethics. Ethics of alterity, or an ethics that strives to understand the other for its own sake, is the very crux of ethics for Marder. This other-orientation is also the crux of understanding plant thinking, which is always in itself striving towards others, towards the outside, and towards alterity. In giving us an example of how ethical thinking can strive to understand and respect the other for its own sake—and thereby avoid the problem of universal egoism—he also explains why the phenomenological method of empathy is not sufficient to understand the other for its own sake. How might we practice an ethics that allows us to value others, including very different others, for their own sake? One might think that an ethics based on empathy is a way to encounter and value the other for its own sake. Empathy is, after all,

the recognition of an other's subjectivity[47]. Perhaps recognition of the other can be sought through empathetic awareness of a other.

As Marder points out, however, empathetic awareness is always predicated upon an identification with, or, in the worst case a caricature of or a projection onto, the object of empathy. Identification as a basis for empathy means to recognize the form or structure of one's own subjectivity in the experience of the other. Projection as a basis for empathy means to falsely identify the form or structure of one's own subjectivity in the experience of the other. Very different others, such as plants, defy (or define, as it were) the limits of empathy insofar as 1) they are not subjects of experience, and 2) the kind of subjectivity owned by a plant is entirely incomprehensible within the framework of a phenomenology of conscious experience. We neither can nor should identify with plants because not only is their way of 'thinking' non-conscious but also because their way of thinking is so entirely other in many other regards.

Indeed, empathy, just like identity arguments, can only serve as the basis of the value of others who are sufficiently similar to us. Edith Stein, in her *On the Problem of Empathy*, uses the example of a dog's paw. Because I can recognize that the dog's paw is similar to my own hand, I can identify the dog as the kind of thing, that, like me, can experience pain in its sensing limbs (Stein, p.59). Empathy is only possible because there is some 'generality' shared by my hand and the dog's paw just like empathy between people is possible on the basis of the generality of the human body. In either case, plants are so

[47] We may characterize different modes of empathy, some of which identify the other as the subject of certain kinds of experiences and others of which identify the other as experiencing certain kinds of experience. Smith, in *The Circle of Acquaintance*, classifies a variety of forms of empathy, all which require some identification with the other.

dissimilar to us that it seems we could never empathize with them. Unlike us, they lack a central nervous system. Their limbs can be removed and then regrown, very much unlike a human hand or a dog's paw. Insofar as plants are not generally similar to us, they cannot have their value understood in terms of empathy. Indeed, if plants have no brain and no consciousness, then it seems that there is no experience with which we could empathize.

Plants, as non-conscious beings that still seem to have a good for their own sake, present an ideal gauge for the application of an ethics of alterity. On the one hand, it seems that we should be able to talk about plants in an ethically meaningful way insofar as there is some good for the sake of a plant itself in the way that there is not a good for an inanimate object such as a stone or a book[48]. On the other hand, the kind of good for plants has long been ignored because plants are so entirely other, or different. Neither conscious nor observably mobile, plants seem to differ more from us than conscious, ambulatory species such as primates, but they also differ from us in ways that makes it particularly difficult (if not impossible) to understand the nature of their subjectivity.

If plants are so different insofar as they are (for all we know) non-conscious thinkers, then why bother calling them 'thinkers' or attribute subjectivity to them? To clarify, the use of such terms is not meant to have the same meaning as the words have when applied to human beings. In a sense, the words are meaningless placeholders until there is a better vocabulary to discuss these issues. There is no presupposition that the

[48] Korsgaard identifies the capacity to have a good as grounded in our animal nature, or our awareness of the state of our own condition. Although plants may lack reflective and reflexive self awareness in the sense of conscious or sensate experience, plants can respond to their own condition in a way that indicates that although there may not be a conscious awareness of the condition in which one is in, there is a reflexive structure according to which the plant responds to its situation depending on what is good for its life and health.

plant is anything like us or that we can understand it in terms of what we know about thinking and subjectivity. Indeed, these are necessary conditions for an ethics of alterity: receptivity to epistemic openness and ontological indeterminacy. Words like 'thinking' and 'subjectivity' can be used as analogues for what insufficient understandings we have about the similarity between our own experiences and plants' lives. Yet we should not try to identify with them or project onto them. At each point where we mark a point of likeness or similarity, we must also be careful to point out where that inherent difference and otherness is also present and why our own human concepts are completely inadequate for capturing the multifaceted and often obscured other.

The basis of alterity ethics thus seems to be that no vocabulary could ever fully represent the concepts used to understand the other because the other itself is understood as something that outstrips our current concepts and vocabulary. Neither falsely identifying or projecting anything about the lives of plants nor fetishizing their otherness as something inherently immeasurable or mysterious, the goal with the phenomenology of plants, as it is with ethics in general, is to understand the distinctiveness of the other for its own sake while also recognizing points of commonality with myself.

So if a plant has subjectivity, in what sense is this the case? Plants interact with their environment in a way that is not entirely passive or instinctual. Plants are capable of signaling, using and storing memory, directing attention, and discerning different situations from one another to determine an appropriate response to environmental stimuli. In short, plants have intelligence. To say that a plant is intelligent is in no way to anthropomorphize

a plant. Plant intelligence may seem analogous to human intelligence in some ways, but there will certainly be essential differences, as well. Intelligence in this context does not require any conscious experience. Human intelligence, in contrast, seems tied up with our notions about the human mind, consciousness and experiential learning. Yet we can talk about the way that a plant processes information as intelligent even though the plant may lack all these things. For example, we can say that a plant is intelligent because it shows discernment in how it responds to different stimuli. Something that lacks intelligence would be unable to respond to different stimuli in appropriate ways, because it would not have some underlying principle of discernment or some way to determine which response is most appropriate. Again, just because a plant responds according to some principle of some discernment or in ways that are appropriate does not mean that the plant has some conscious experience of appropriateness or of the principle itself. Rather, the plant's activity itself is evidence that there is some principle behind the action or some mechanism according to which appropriate responses are motivated. For example, plants will send different electro-chemical signals and responses depending on the kind of stimulus encountered. If a plant is damaged by wind in a storm, for example, the response is very different from the one to damage by a predatory insect. Empirical observation has shown that the different responses to different stimuli are stable over time. In other words, the reactions are not random or consistently only one way. Plants respond according to different situations in different ways, indicating a principle of discernment or biological

mechanism that motivates an appropriate response. Intelligence is just what we call the ability to discern or the ability to respond to stimuli in a principled way.[49]

The mere fact that a plant responds at all indicates that the plant is not, as some might wrongly characterize it, entirely passive. Plants do not merely get acted upon. Plants have forms of activity. Although they are sessile and hence lack locomotion, they can and do perform other kinds of activity, such as reproduction and processing nutrition. When a predator or a harsh storm causes damage, then electro-chemical signals are transmitted that start different kinds of healing processes. Although plant cells themselves do not circulate around the plant in the way that our cells can move via our circulatory system, plant cells do create action potentials in the same way our cells do ("PIatPFoPI", p.3) The plant is a living organism and has many active mechanisms that further its life[50]. More important than the fact of a plant's activity is the fact that such activity is not merely instinctual or automatic; this is evidenced by the fact that different stimuli evoke different responses. Moreover, plants are able to respond differently based on past events in its life or based on past events that have been communicated to it by other plants. So in order to understand the way in which plant behavior can be adaptive rather than merely instinctual,

---

[49] One might say that it is not the plant itself that is intelligent but that the underlying biological mechanisms that have evolved have the appearance of intelligence. But if my interlocutor is assuming already that only individual entities and not processes or mechanisms themselves can be intelligent, then the objection already fails to accept my main premise: that to talk about the intelligence of a plant is already to suspend previously held assumptions about plants in order to see if there might be some alternative logical structure underlying our own experience of them that will help us to better understand them for their own sake. Again, we see how the method of bracketing allows us a basic guideline when doing ethics of any kind.

[50] Indeed, although John Locke thinks that conscious experience is characteristic of human, personal identity, we share with plants that they are an organization of parts for the purpose of life. He also notes that plants, like animals and people, are responsible for their own motion. The difference between animal motion and plant motion is that we cannot observe plant motion often because it is so slow it is imperceptible.

we should understand basics about the signaling processes of plants and the role of memory for plants.

Marder finds great importance in the following account of the behavior of common pea plants. In general, plants are able to communicate electro-chemical signals to other plants through the vast system of roots in which a plant participates. Plants with neighboring roots are able to receive the signals of their neighbors. Researchers at an Israeli university observed that in times of drought, pea plants are able to send electro-chemical signals to nearby plants to indicate that there is a shortage of a much-needed resource. That plants have memory is suggested by the fact that when these same plants are exposed again to drought conditions, they fare better than those plants who never experienced a drought. The 'information' received by a plant that indicates that it is in a drought has been 'saved' or 'stored' so that the plants can respond to the same stimulus in the future with more effective behaviors[51]. So here we have an instance of plants storing information and changing their responses to stimuli in a way that changes based on past events. We could call this experiential learning, but plants have no conscious experiences, or, at the very minimum, we have no positive reasons to think that this 'learning' is based on any conscious experience. Even if it doesn't make sense to call this a case of learning based on experience, it does make sense to call it learning.

Perhaps more impressive is not just that the plants who themselves lived through a drought fare better when similar conditions are present in the future but that plants who

[51] The original study Marder sites in his “Is it Ethical to Eat Plants?” comes from the Blaustein Institute for Desert Research in Be'er Shiva, Israel.

did not live through a drought fare better in drought conditions when the drought survivors had communicated information about the drought with them. In the world of a plant, information means nothing more than electro-chemical signals that are transferred between the cells of an individual organism or between one organism and another. In short, plants exhibit adaptive learning behaviors not only when they live through certain conditions themselves but also when information about the event or conditions have been communicated to them by other plants. So here we see a great example not only of plant signaling and memory but also of plants changing their behavior in adaptive ways that indicate a capacity to respond in novel ways to problems when given adequate information. Do plants have a language with a vocabulary and grammar? Not so far as we know. Do they have conscious experience? Again, not so far as we know, and just as with the question about language and grammar, we have no good reason to think they do have something like conscious experience. Yet we need not project these features into our analysis of plants in order to say that they are intelligent. It is enough that certain information, or an electro-chemical signal, is transferred within plants and between plants, and that this signaling and subsequent activities of plants show some underlying principle of discernment or a mechanism to motivate an appropriate response. Plants are not intelligent in the way that we humans can be intelligent, yet it makes sense to call these processes intelligent in some sense. In spite of these similarities between humans and plants, we should neither identify with plants or project our experiences and models of selfhood onto plants. As much as plants may seem like us, they are also inherently other.

Although a plant has subjectivity, the main reason why empathy is inadequate for understanding the plant is that plants do not have selves. Plants are not individuated, they are always other to themselves, and they lack unidirectionality of intentionality. Not only is their intentionality multi-directional, but it is also modular, Their subjectivity is alterior insofar as it is entirely different from our own and it is most often quite different from itself.

In what sense does a plant lack a self? Well, a self is a discrete, demarcated set of features that is identical to itself. In other words, having a self means having a stable set of criteria that maintain identity over time. Human personal identity can be understood in genetic terms, psychological terms or in terms of a personal narrative or story that an individual uses to understand herself. Regardless of the many different ways we can define human personal identity and as much as that identity may change over time depending on the different criteria of identity we use, plants lack any such coherent criteria to which some self would be identical—even during a single moment. For plants, there is simply a lack of demarcation between self and other. Plant reproduction is often asexual and the result of self-cloning. In this case, an individual plant's 'self' is dispersed throughout many different discrete organisms even if there is genetic identity maintained. Even more basic to the inherent alterity of what we would call a plant 'self' is the fact that what makes up a plant's intentionality and intelligence is externally constituted. Indeed, given the essentially other-oriented nature of plant intelligence, it perhaps no longer makes sense to say that plant thinking and intelligence are externally constituted insofar as plant intentionality seems to

abolish the distinction between internal and external. "As opposed to animals and humans, plants live without psychic interiority; they lack the metaphysical distinction between the "inside" and the "outside" and do not set themselves in opposition to the environment that sustains them." ("TLoP", p. 263)[52] When Marder describes the signaling systems of plants, he explains how plant signaling does not distort the original information presented in the way that human conscious experience does. Whereas we have a qualitative experience of the objects of our intentionality, plant signaling merely passes on electrochemical information. Marder lauds Nietzsche for explaining the memory of a mimosa plant not in terms of some sensible image but in terms of a 'primal quality' ("WiPT", p.126). When a plant passes along information to a neighboring plant via the intricate network of roots, the plant need not and cannot pass along this information with language and description of qualia in a way that may distort the original object of intentionality. Rather, a plant passes along the electrochemical imprint that was original presented to its own intelligence[53].

---

[52] One might note that if the extended theory of mind is true, then even for human consciousness, the division between external and internal is blurred beyond recognition. Indeed, Chalmers and Clark argue that the mechanisms that constitute our own mind and knowledge are often housed in some other thing, such as a companion who remembers names or a notepad that contains reminders to oneself. In either case, the individual's mind is still constituted in part by external factors. This does not undermine the underlying individualism in contemporary philosophy of mind, something Horgan & Kriegel argue in their 2008 article. That the extended mind theory is a new and controversial theory is evidence enough that our traditional notions of self include a much more individualistic, clearly demarcated theory of self and mind. Still, plant thinking will differ from human thinking in many other regards—for example, that plant signaling is about a mere electrochemical imprint rather than qualia.

[53] One might object that even human thinking lacks qualia and, in its essence, human thought is merely a series of electrochemical impulses in the nervous system. Likewise, plant thinking is just a series of electro-chemical impulses in the root system. The long-debated question of whether thinking is metaphysically anything other than the physical processes that underlie thinking can be set aside, however, because we note that whereas for humans, these physical processes do bring about conscious, qualitative experience, for plants, we need not assume nor should we assume that there is some conscious, qualitative experience. Perhaps plants do dream of green sheep, but the point of an alterity ethics is that we don't need to understand the other as being just like us, and when our knowledge and understanding of the other is limited, we can still try to understand the other for its own sake without projecting onto it or identifying with it.

In human intentionality, our consciousness takes something as the object of intentionality. Thought is always about something. Intentionality is always directed toward some object. Even when we think about imaginary characters in fictional universes, there is still some story about which we are thinking that we take as an object of intentionality[54]. Yet plant-thinking does not take objects, and plant-thinking is not directed from someplace towards something. In plants, the information flows according to principles of discernment, but the direction from which and towards which it flows is multi-directional. Lacking a center, or a seat of consciousness or thinking, the multi-directionality is not like the manner in which a person may multitask and thus create a series of streams of attention all radiating from a single source. For the plant, there is no individual and individuated self from which intentionality can radiate. Plant information and plant thinking flows outward from innumerable foci.

That plants radiate intentionality in multiple directions from various different foci is just to say that plant thinking is modular. Whereas human or *Dasein* intentionality is centered even when radiating towards different directions[55], plant intentionality is always already modular. As in *Arabidopsis*, a plant can have many overlapping foci of attention, as a plant exposed to drought conditions has already been getting information about the drought from neighboring plants beforehand and responds to the actual drought in the same way as it responds to the information about the drought received from other plants.

[54] This is among Thomasson's theses in *Fiction and Metaphysics*, where she explains the intentionality of fiction as directed towards imaginary figures who exist as part of a fictional narrative.

[55] As when a drummer keeps multiple different beats on multiple different drums with multiple different parts of his body, as when a classical guitarist plays two melodies simultaneously, or plays a melody and an accompanying rhythmic part, and as when a busy parent cooks dinner, watches a child, and has a telephone conversation all at the same time.

In addition, the plant responds to this abiotic stress through a number of different capacities ("PIaA", p.2.) Modular thinking means that plants have no single source of consciousness. Plants, unlike humans, radiate intentionality from a variety of foci.

Plant intentionality and plant intelligence are so inherently different from human intentionality and human intelligence that one might wonder why we should bother to use the same words to describe such different things. Frankly, whether we call it intelligence or schmintelligence—whether we call it intentionality or schmintentionality—is of little importance. In either case, the familiar word is only used as a conceptual stand-in for an idea that our philosophies and corresponding languages have done so little to truly understand. To try to understand plant intelligence and intentionality and to further attempt to understand how this is possible without a discrete and stable self is the perfect analogy for an ethics of alterity, or an ethics that is striving to understand the other for its own sake. A plant's non-identity is so totally foreign and different to our own that we cannot understand it in terms of our own concepts. But as we only have our own concepts as a starting point for discourse, let these words stand in until we have a more suitable vocabulary—if there can be such a thing for beings that are so totally other.

Another key difference between the subjectivity of plants and the subjectivity of human beings is the experience of time. Indeed, for Husserl and many other phenomenologists, time-consciousness is the most basic form of consciousness. Although plants are capable of memory and perhaps of a sort of anticipation of the future, the scale of time on which plants operate is much larger and slow-moving. As motion is measured over

time, a different kind of motion will be measured differently over time. Whereas a sunflower's daily movement spans roughly 180 degrees at it follows the sun, humans move often in a range of 360 degrees many times over the course of a day. Another feature of a plant's encounter with time is the different seasons or cycles of time experienced by a plant. The growth and movement of a plant is not only much slower over longer periods of time, but the plant's growth and movement change as the seasons change. A tree's bark can be used to tell its age because the bark grows primarily in the warmer seasons and becomes nearly static in the winter. Whereas human reproduction and growth is not so controlled by the change in natural seasons[56], plant temporality ebbs and flows with the change of the seasons. So whereas human temporality seems to flow at a pace relative to our attention and focus, plant temporality seems to flow at a pace set by nature itself.

Another feature of the alterity of plant temporality is what Marder calls the lack of self synchronicity in plants. Whereas some parts of a plant may be old and dying, even in an old plant, there is always the possibility for new growth. Although a tree may be hundreds of years old, the newest growths may be only a few days or weeks old. A plant is always as young as its newest growth and as old as its oldest growth. Until a plant dies, it is always being reborn out of itself and at the same time it is always decaying. With humans, our organs can decay at different times and at different rates, but once we reach a point of

[56] Perhaps an interesting question arises here about the extent to which people in far Northern and Southern parts of the globe are impacted by seasons, as indicated by Seasonal Affect Disorder experienced by someone whose depression onset is timed with the onset of the colder, darker months. Another comparable trait in humans would perhaps be that hair and nails tend to grow slower in colder, winter months. Even if there are certain aspects of our bio-chemical condition that are dependent on seasonal changes, the fact remains that much of our growth and nutritive processes are entirely independent of seasonal weather conditions. Human beings reproduce year-round, for example, whereas many plants only reproduce seasonally.

maturity and adulthood, there is no longer the possibility for sprouting new limbs or growing new organs. Our stem cells are capable of manifesting various body parts, but an infant's cells have already lost that capacity to be entirely self-generating. A plant is forever young in a way that humans could never be. All these features make plant temporality so inherently other than human temporality and hence so hard to grasp in the terms of our own identities: lack of self synchronicity, the seasonal change of time, and the overall slower movement as marked by time. As time is the measure by which we can mark motion, plant motion becomes further obscured because of plant temporality. Because a plant is so slow-moving, we can often fail to perceive its motion. Yet plants are not passive but sessile, which entails non-haphazard movement in a place. Unlike humans and other animals, plants do not activity insert themselves in a milieu. But unlike a mere stone, a plant does not merely passively exist as the literal building up of sedimentation over time ("OPaOS", p. 20).

As mentioned above, the other-oriented nature of a plant makes it such that a plant creates its world in common with its environment. Just as plant motion is neither entirely passive nor the result of an agent actively shaping its surroundings, so, too, plant freedom falls in the space between passivity and activity. The specific nature of plant freedom is shaped by its alterior subjectivity. First, the plant has no interior-exterior distinction. Its world is in common with its surroundings and is made in common with its surroundings. A plant is responsive to and adaptive from various loci rather than a single, unified seat of consciousness. Indeed, this other orientation is a form of plasticity, as what plants are is

always changing and becoming other. Indeed, as Marder points out, the ability to become other or to do other is the very definition of freedom coming out of the analytic, English-language tradition. In Harry Frankfurt's classic essay "Moral Responsibility and the Ability to Do Otherwise", he begins with what he takes to be a classic assumption in contemporary philosophy—a principle he calls the Principle of Alternative Possibilities. The ability to do other than what one could have is the manner in which free will has been defined. Frankfurt's ultimate aim is to show that this condition is not actually necessary for moral responsibility, but for the purposes of my work, it is sufficient to point out that he begins with an assumption about moral responsibility that hinges on this particular notion of free will. Why does he start with this notion of free will? Not only does he begin with this definition of free will because it was the widely accepted definition of the notion, but this notion of free will was also taken to be essentially moral. In other words, being morally responsible requires being an agent, and being an agent means being able to do otherwise. Being able to do other or be other than what one is was thought to be the very condition used to determine if a being can be responsible in a distinctly moral way. Whether plants have moral responsibility is an other, and perhaps uninteresting, question, but if free will is defined as the ability to do or be other, then it seems that insofar as a plant lacks a concrete self and is always becoming other indicates that plants are inherently free given their plastic nature. The freedom of plants is not the freedom of an individuated freedom that is external to and acts upon its environment. The freedom of plants rather resembles the

phenomenological notion of freedom coming from philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

What alterity arguments, and the resources of the phenomenological-existential tradition allow us to do is to be receptive to others in a decidedly moral way and to recognize features of them that are morally relevant, even if those features are inherently different, epistemically open and metaphysically fluid. This receptivity does not give us concrete, normative obligations. Only if there is something concrete defined as 'good' or what we 'ought to do' can we then identify particular duties to act in certain ways.

CONCLUSION: THE DEATH OF ETHICS

For Heidegger, death is not a stopping point or the destruction of something. To conceive of death as death is to conceive of one's finite life as having a unified, self-chosen purpose. So when I reference here the death of ethics, I do not mean the end of ethics in the sense of a stopping point of ethics. Rather, I want to conceive of ethics in terms of its goal, its purpose, its human-chosen function. Ethics, understood in a radically new way, may also little resemble classical approaches. In this sense, someone might say that the identity of ethics is so different that it means a death of sort for the tradition. But rather than decay, such an ethics celebrates creation. If ethical meanings are only generated in and validated within intersubjective communities, then we decide what is good. I suggest that in order to focus conversations in ethics and applied ethics, we employ both identity arguments and alterity arguments for justifying the intrinsic value of non-human natural phenomena and additional action-guiding principles and norms.

For example, if we wanted to address the question of whether factory farming is good, we can use both kinds of arguments. We can identify a climate as a series of interrelated organisms. We can identify ourselves as biological organisms that function within this larger whole. There are empirical facts, or conditions, that constitute definitions for what is the well-being of a landscape or a human body. Based on these concrete characterizations about what is good for humanity and the environment, it will follow whether factory farming is good or bad. If we can agree about the underlying meaning of what is good (e.g., as something that contributes to the well-being of our bodies and our

environment), then our normative ethical obligations follow (e.g., we ought not farm animals in a manner found in high intensity animal agriculture). But to make sure that we are not merely instrumentalizing the land, animals, or our bodies, we must also recognize that the above characterization may be missing out on key features of the others. In addition to being non-particular insofar as the characterization may not pick out all relevant features of the other, we must also accept that such characterizations may be revised with new knowledge or necessarily incomplete insofar as perfect knowledge is impossible. Indeed, something like a landscape may not even have a concrete set of features that define it. To recognize that our characterizations of others are metaphysically fluid will also keep us from thinking about the others in merely selfish terms. Although we can identify concrete features of ourselves and others in a way relevant to moral discourse, we must we careful to combat universal egoism by employing alterity characterizations as well.

The upshot is that we can do ethics in a logically rigorous and meaningful way. If we create social meanings for what is 'good' or what we 'ought to do', and if these meanings are validated in a social space, then we satisfy the conditions for meaning for existentialists and philosophers of language alike. So the completion of ethics requires an on-going conversation that seeks to ever expand the social space where moral meanings hold sway. If we continue to recreate and validate meanings in conversation with others, we strengthen the intersubjective basis of those moral meanings. Doing ethics requires a certain bracketing or suspension of our own biases, prejudices, and everyday assumptions.

If we truly open our minds to be receptive to others, then together we can identify relevant meanings and logical structures for moral concepts. Both semantic ascent and semantic assent are vital to transcending individual subjectivity and completing ethics in the manner described above. Only with such a suspension of the natural attitude and a recognition of intersubjective meanings will we finally get over ourselves and pursue the aims of ethics.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ambec, Stefan; Cohen, Mark A.; Elgie, Stewart; and Lanoie, Paul. "The Porter Hypothesis at 20: Can Environmental Regulation Enhance Innovation and Competitiveness?". *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy*, Vol. 7:1. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Bentham, Jeremy. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, First Ed. White Dog Publishing, 2010.

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Trans. Smith, R.G., Macmillan Publishing, New York, 1958.

Carnap, Rudolf. "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language". *Erkenntnis.* (60-81). 1932.

Clark, Andy and Chalmers, David. "The Extended Mind". *Analysis,* vol. 58, no.1. Oxford University Press, 1998. pp. 7-19.

Dawkins, Marian Stamp. "The Scientific Basis for Assessing Suffering in Animals". *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*. Ed. Singer. Blackwell Publishing. Malden, 2006.

De Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. Trans. Borde and Malovany-Chevallier. Vintage Books, Random House, Inc. , New York, 2011.

Descartes, Rene. Meditations on First Philosophy. Trans. Cress. Hackett Publishing, Third Edition, Indianapolis, 1993.

Diamond, Cora. "Eating Meat and Eating People". *Philosophy*, Vol. 53, No. 206 (Oct, 1978), pp. 465-479). Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Dietz, Thomas; Stern, Paul C.; & Weber, Elke U. "Reducing Carbon-Based Energy Consumption through Changes in Household Behavior". American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2013.

Embree, Lester. "The Possibility of an Constitutive Phenomenology of the Environment". *Eco-Phenomenology*. Eds. Brown and Toadvine. State University of New York Press. Albany, 2003.

Foot, Philippa. *Natural Goodness*. Clarendon Press. Oxford, 2001.

Foot, Philippa. "The Philosopher's Defense of Morality". *Philosophy*, Vol. 27, No. 103. Royal Institute of Philosophy. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1952.

Frankfurt, Harry G. "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility". *The Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 66, No. 23. pp 829-839. December, 1969.

Harvey, Hal; Orr, Franklin M. Jr.; & Vondrich, Clara. "A Trillion Tons". *Deadalus, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences,* co. 142(1). American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2013.

Heidegger, Martin.

Being and Time. Trans. Macquarrie & Robinson. Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1962.

"The Origin of the Work of Art",
"Letter on Humanism",
"The Question Concerning Technology", and
"Building Dwelling Thinking" from *Basic Writings*. Ed. Krell. Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1977.

Hobbes, Thomas. from *The Leviathan* in *Classics of Modern Political Theory*. Ed. Cahn. Oxford University Press. New York, 1997. pp. 78-196.

Horgan, Terry and Krigel, Uriah. "Phenomenal Intentionality Meets the Extended Mind". *The Monist*. Vol. 91, No. 2. Oxford University Press, 2008. pp. 347-373.

Husserl, Edmund.

Cartesian Meditations. Trans. Cairns. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague: 1973.

Ideas I. Trans. Gibson. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. New York, Humanities Press Inc, 1931.

Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book. Trans. Rojcewicz and Schuwer. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 1989.

On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time. Trans. Barnett. Kluwer Academic Publishers. Dordrecht, 1991.

The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1954

Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Ellington. Hackett Publishing. Indianapolis, 1981.

Kant, Immanuel. *Lecture on Ethics*. Trans. Infield. Hackett Publishing. Indianapolis, 1981.

Kerr, Suzi C. "The Economics of International Policy Agreements to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation". *Review of Environmental Economics Policy*, Vol. 7:1. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Kirchin, Simon. "Ethical Phenomenology and Metaethics". *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*. 6:241-264.

Korsgaard, Christine.

"A Kantian Case for Animal Rights". *Animal Law: Tier und Recht*, edited by Julia Hänni, Margot Michel, Daniela Kühne. Dike Verlag, Zurich, 2012

"Just Like All the Other Animals of the Earth". *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Volume 36, No. 3 (Autumn 2008).

"Kantian Ethics, Animals, and the Law". The Hart Lecture for 2012. The Oxford Journal of Legal Studies Winter 2013 33 (4) 1-20.

"On Having a Good". *Philosophy*, the Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, Volume 89, Issue 03, pp. 405-429, July 2014.

Self-Constitution. Oxford University Press. Oxford, 2009.

"The Normative Constitution of Agency". Rational and Social Agency: Essays on the Philosophy of Michael Bratman, edited by Manuel Vargas and Gideon Yaffe. Oxford University Press. New York, 2014.

"The Origin of the Good and Our Animal Nature". forthcoming in *Problems of Goodness: New Essays on Metaethics*, edited by Bastian Reichardt.

Langer, Susanne K./ Feeling and Form. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1953.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. Ballantine Books. New York, 1953.

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Penguin Books. London, 1997.

Marder, Michael.

"Is it Ethical to Eat Plants?". *Parallax,* vol. 19(1). Routledge, 2013. `

"Of Plants and Other Secrets". *Societies*, vol. 3. pp. 16-23. 2013.

"Plant Intelligence and the Phenomenological Framework of Plant Intelligence." *Plant Signaling and Behavior*, 7:11. pp. 1-8. November, 2012.

"Plant Intelligence and Attention". *Plant Signaling and Behavior*, 8:15. Landes Bioscience, 2013.

"Plant-Soul: The Elusive Meanings of Vegetative Life". *Environmental Philosophy*, 8:1. pp. 83-99. 2011.

"Should Plants have Rights?". *Thoughts/Plant Rights.* 3rd Quarter, 2013.

"The Relational Nature of the Good". *Oxford Studies on Metaethics*, Volume 8, edited by Russ Shafer-Landau. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Landes. Routledge. New York, 2012.

Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis, 1979.

Newell, Richard G.; Pizer, Wiliam A.; & Raimi, Daniel. "Carbon Markets 15 Years after Kyoto: Lessons Learned, New Challenges". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2013.

Orlich, Michael J.; Singh, Pramil N.; Sabate, Joan; Jaceldo-Siegl, Karen; Fan, Jing; Knutsen, Synnove; Beeson, W. Lawrence; & Fraser, Gary E. "Vegetarian Dietary Patterns and Mortality in Adventist Health Study 2". *JAMA Internal Medicine*. American Medical Association, 2013.

Plato. "Euthyphro" from *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, Third Edition. Trans. Grube. Hackett Publishing Co. Indianapolis, 2000.

Popkin, Barry M. "Reducing Meat Consumption Has Multiple Benefits for the World's Health". *Archive of Internal Medicine*. American Medical Association, 2009.

Rand, Ayn. *The Virtue of Selfishness*. Signet. New York, 1961.

Regan, Tom. *The Case for Animal Rights.* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983.

Rose, J.D.; Arlinghaus, R.; Cooke, S.J.; Diggles, B.K.; Sawynok, W., Stevens, E.D., & Wynne, C.D.L. "Can Fish Really Feel Pain?" *Fish and Fisheries*. Blackwell Publishing, 2012.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. Being and Nothingness. Trans. Barnes. Washington Square Press, New York, 1943.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Existentialism is a Humanism".

Sidgwick, Henry. *The Methods of Ethics*, Seventh Ed. Macmillan and Co. New York, 1907.

Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. Harper Collins. New York, 1975.

Singer, Peter. “Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism”.

Smith, David W. Husserl. Routledge Publishers, London, 2007.

Smith, David W. Mind World: Essays in Phenomenology and Ontology. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

Stein, Edith. *The Collected Works of Edith Stein*, Vol. 3: *On the Problem of Empathy*. Trans. Stein, Waltrud. ICS Publications. Washington, D.C., 1989.

Strawson, Galen. “The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility”. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*. Vol. 75M No ½, August, 1994. pp. 5-24.

Thomasson, Amie. *Fiction and Metaphysics*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 2008.

Toadvine, Ted. *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 2009.

Warwick, Peter, & Ng, Chew. “The 'Cost' of Climate Change: How Carbon Emissions Allow ances are Accounted for Amongst European Union Companies”. *Australian Accounting Review*, Vol. 22, No. 60. 2012.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. Ogden. Routledge, London, 1922.