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**ATINER's Conference Paper Series
PHI2021-2726**

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Environmentalists to Endorse Non-
Instrumental Value in Nature**

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This paper should be cited as follows:

Samuelsson, L. and Lindström, N. (2021). "A Counterfactual Argument for Environmentalists to Endorse Non-Instrumental Value in Nature". Athens: ATINER's Conference Paper Series, No: **PHI2021-2726.**

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8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL: www.atiner.gr
URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm
ISSN: 2241-2891
17/08/2021

A Counterfactual Argument for Environmentalists to Endorse Non-Instrumental Value in Nature

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Abstract

Environmentalists care about nature. Often, they reason and act as if they consider nature to be valuable for its own sake, i.e., to have non-instrumental value. Yet, there is a rather widespread reluctance, even among environmentalists, to explicitly ascribe such value to nature. One important explanation of this is probably the thought that it would be mysterious in one way or another if nature possessed such value. In addition, Bryan Norton's influential convergence hypothesis states that, from a practical point of view, it makes no or little difference whether we ascribe non-instrumental value to nature, given the depth and variety of instrumental value that it possesses. In this paper we provide a counterfactual argument, applying to anyone who genuinely cares about nature, for endorsing non-instrumental value in it. Even if we accept, for the sake of argument, something like the convergence hypothesis, relying on nature's instrumental value for preservational purposes is risky business for environmentalists. We also briefly consider the mysteriousness-objection to non-instrumental value in nature. We show that with respect to most accounts of non-instrumental value, there is nothing particularly mysterious about nature possessing such value.

Keywords: environmental ethics, intrinsic value in nature, non-instrumental value in nature, non-anthropocentrism, convergence hypothesis

Introduction

Environmentalists care about nature. Often, they reason and act as if they consider nature to be valuable for its own sake, i.e., to have non-instrumental value (often referred to as intrinsic value). Yet, there is a rather widespread reluctance, even among environmentalists, to explicitly ascribe such value to nature. One important explanation of this reluctance is probably the thought that such value, at least when attached to nature, would be mysterious in one way or another. So-called anthropocentrists within environmental ethics have argued that the idea of non-instrumental value in nature is problematic in various ways (see, e.g., Norton, 1995; Weston, 1996; Light, 2002; Morito, 2003), and some so-called environmental pragmatists have maintained that a focus on non-instrumental value in nature among environmentalists is counterproductive (see Light & Katz, 1996). In addition, Bryan Norton's influential convergence hypothesis states that, from a practical point of view, it makes no or little difference whether we ascribe non-instrumental value to nature, given the depth and variety of instrumental value that it possesses (Norton, 1991, 237-43). The idea is that if we vividly grasp the full width of nature's instrumental value, we see that it gives us just as strong reasons for policies and actions for environmental protection as the reasons associated with any (at least fairly reasonable) attributions of non-instrumental value to nature.

Several environmental ethicists have provided replies to this pessimistic outlook on the prospects for non-instrumental value in nature (e.g., Callicott, 1995; McShane, 2007; Samuelsson, 2010). In this paper, we add to this list of replies by providing a counterfactual argument, applying to anyone who genuinely cares about nature, for endorsing non-instrumental value in it. Even if we accept, for the sake of argument, something like the convergence hypothesis, relying on nature's instrumental value for preservational purposes is risky business for environmentalists. We can easily imagine a scenario where some crucial instrumental value that is in fact now possessed by some preservation-worthy natural entity (such as a species or a diverse and unique ecosystem) is absent. Yet, even under such circumstances, environmentalists would generally want to preserve the entity in question. In other words, the convergence hypothesis can only be contingently true, and once we acknowledge this fact it becomes clear that giving up on non-instrumental value in nature means losing an important source for providing arguments to the effect that we ought to preserve certain natural entities.

Purpose

The purpose of the paper is (a) to show – by means of a counterfactual argument – that anyone who genuinely cares about nature needs to endorse non-instrumental value in it in order to be able to theoretically defend the claims about nature (e.g., about preserving it) that they in fact want to make; (b) to show that on most accounts of non-instrumental value, there is nothing particularly mysterious about ascribing such value to nature.

Outline

This introductory section is ended with some terminological remarks, the purpose of which is to make the remainder of the text clearer and avoid misunderstandings. In the next section we develop the counterfactual argument in more detail. In the subsequent section we briefly consider and reply to the mysteriousness-objection. We show that, with respect to most accounts of non-instrumental value, there is nothing more mysterious about nature possessing such value, than about anything else possessing it. We end the paper with a short conclusion.

Some Terminological Remarks

Our argument is intended to target “environmentalists”. By that we simply mean people who genuinely care about nature and to whom nature is important – “nature friendly people”. We use the term “environmentalist” loosely and take it that the argument largely applies to people who regard themselves as environmentalists or nature friends, or who self-define as people who genuinely care about nature. It is not important to our points that the argument manages to target *everyone* who might appropriately be referred to as an environmentalist or a nature friend. The important thing is that there are such people who (1) make claims or defend policies which seem to presume that nature is non-instrumentally valuable, and (2) refrain from ascribing, or at least are reluctant to endorse, such value in nature.

When we talk about the *non-instrumental value* of something, *X*, we mean, roughly, the value of *X* that does not depend on the fact that *X* is conducive to the value of some other thing, *Y*, e.g., it does not depend on the usefulness of *X* for bringing about or cherishing some other value.¹ In that sense, the value resides in *X* itself (even if it may still depend partly on *X*’s relations to other things). Sometimes, such value is referred to as end-value, or final value: it is at the end of a value-chain (compare Kagan, 1998, p. 279). In environmental ethics (and often in other contexts as well) such value is however still usually referred to as intrinsic value, even if that is somewhat misleading (indicating that the value depends on intrinsic properties alone; see, further, O’Neill, 1992; Kagan, 1998; Rabinowicz & Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2000). We will stick to the somewhat more cumbersome term “non-instrumental value”, since we take it to be the term that best does justice to the kind of value we aim to refer to. Using this term should imply the least risk of misunderstandings.

Instrumental value, then, is the value that something has on account of its conduciveness to the value of something else, e.g., that it is useful for bringing about or cherishing some other value. However, importantly, in this paper we are interested in the contrast between views that endorse non-instrumental

¹This characterization may have to be slightly modified if we think that even instrumental properties may sometimes give rise to non-instrumental value (e.g., Korsgaard, 1983; Kagan, 1998; Elliot, 2005; Samuelsson, 2009, pp. 174-97). However, for our purposes in this paper, we need not get into these technicalities.

value in nature and views that do not. Typical of the latter views is that they defend protective policies and actions towards nature with reference to human interests or values. Hence, the instrumental values that we are concerned with in this paper are values that are conducive to human values, broadly construed, i.e., values that humans possess, that human states or properties possess, or that human communities (including humanity as a whole) or states or properties of human communities possess. Such values may for instance be possessed by human welfare, human persons, democracy, and equality between human beings. If there are non-human non-instrumental values, things can of course be instrumentally valuable with respect to them as well, but for the purpose of this paper it is the human instrumental values we are interested in. So, when we talk about instrumental values, we are talking about values that are conducive to human values.

We do not, in this paper, take a stand on which kinds of “things” that can be bearers of value. According to some philosophers, only states of affairs (like the state of affairs that *X* has its interests satisfied) can be bearers of value, whereas other philosophers (not least within environmental ethics) think that physical or abstract objects can be bearers of value (like an ecosystem, an organism, or a species). Other candidates for being value-bearers are properties and so-called organic unities (see Moore, 1903, pp. 27-29). For our purposes, it is not important whether it is some natural entity, some state of affairs involving that entity, or some property of that entity that is valuable. When we talk about the value of nature, we intend to capture all these alternative ways of understanding the precise location of this value.

This brings us to our last terminological remark. When we talk about *nature*, we are again deliberately using the term loosely. Different environmental ethicists focus on different natural entities, where common candidates are individual organisms, species, ecosystems, and nature as a whole (the biosphere), or nature areas, phenomena, or places more loosely construed. What we are after when we use the term “nature” are such entities in nature that are not sentient or conscious. These are the kinds of entities to which it has turned out to be controversial to ascribe non-instrumental value, and to which environmentalists are reluctant to ascribe such value even though it seems – on the face of it – like they endorse it.

The Counterfactual Argument

Suppose that the convergence hypothesis is in fact true, as things happen to be in the world right now. That is to say, suppose it is true that: “If reasonably interpreted and translated into appropriate policies, a nonanthropocentric ethic will advocate the same policies as a suitably broad and long-sighted anthropocentrism” (Norton, 2003, 11).² Even so, we want to

²The terms “anthropocentrism” and “nonanthropocentrism” are used in several different ways in environmental ethics, and their meanings are often far from clear (see Samuelsson, 2013). In this case, however, we take it to be pretty clear that “anthropocentrism” refers to the view that

argue, there is reason for those who genuinely care about nature to endorse non-instrumental value in it. Our moral guidelines are supposed to hold, not only given how things happen to be right now, but also given how they might be. They are supposed to cover, not only actual cases, but also potential ones. Indeed, one of the main points of moral guidelines is that we can use them in new situations to figure out what to do. Thus, one of the most common ways of arguing in ethics is to use – sometimes far-fetched – thought-experiments. In this section, we aim to show that even if the convergence hypothesis is in fact true, it might well not be. In other words, it can only be contingently true. By altering things just slightly, we will get a scenario where it is not the case that “reasonably interpreted and translated into appropriate policies, a nonanthropocentric ethic will advocate the same policies as a suitably broad and long-sighted anthropocentrism”.

Perhaps our argument can be seen as one using thought-experiments. However, we prefer to call them “cases”, since the term “experiment” indicates an artificial situation, or a setting that does not occur naturally. In any case, there is nothing far-fetched about our scenarios. We will present three cases, but it does not require much imagination to come up with more. These cases are intended to illustrate situations in which preserving or protecting nature would not further any human values, but where we are convinced that many environmentalists would still advocate preservation or protection. Although these cases are here presented as merely possible scenarios, we actually think that they are real – i.e., that there already are such cases in the world. However, we need not assume this in order to run our argument, so we need not get into the empirical debate about whether the convergence hypothesis is true – this is what we take to be the main merit of our argument, and why we hope that it contributes something to the discussion.

The Cases

The three cases below are intended to illustrate situations in which there are no instrumental values that are sufficiently strong to explain why we ought to protect or preserve the natural entities involved in the respective scenarios. In all three cases it should be assumed that no deontological constraints are involved, e.g., no human beings have a right to the preservation of the entities in question, and not protecting them does not infringe on justice.

Case 1: The Insignificant Species

Imagine a very endangered species, which is – in the eyes of human beings – insignificant. The existence of this particular species does not (and will not, if it continues) contribute to human wellbeing or flourishing (nor to the wellbeing or flourishing of other sentient beings that humans may have reason to care about). Suppose also that this species has not gained the attention of

only human beings (or states, or communities, etc.) are valuable *for their own sake* (i.e., non-instrumentally valuable), whereas *nonanthropocentrism* is the view that at least some non-human (natural) entities possess such value.

researchers. Now, perhaps there are species of this kind that even the most nature friendly people would not bother about, but for many such species we are convinced that environmentalists would still generally consider them worthy of protection – not that we should protect them at any cost, of course, but that there is *some* reason to devote resources to their protection. Indeed, environmentalists typically value biodiversity. Often, this is motivated with reference to human values, but we think that environmentalists generally prefer biodiversity even when it does not further human (or sentient) values, like in this case. Since the species in this scenario does not contribute to any human (or sentient) values or interests, if there is reason to protect it, there must be some non-human value involved.

Case 2: The Locally Threatened Species

Imagine a species that is not threatened globally, but only locally. Perhaps some lichen is threatened in a certain forest area, while it is abundant in other areas (say, in some other country). Often, environmentalists think that biodiversity, or the protection of a species, is important even locally, despite there being no threat from a global perspective. If the species in this case is not insignificant, as it was in the previous case, it might be replied that people may care about it, and that this provides reason to protect it for the sake of these people. However, if resources need to be devoted to protecting this species, these human interests must be strong enough to motivate this. In many cases, we submit, humans in general do not care about a single species (unless it is in some sense special to them) to an extent that can explain a reason to devote the resources needed to protect it. Again, we think that such a protection policy can only be motivated on the assumption that there is also some additional value involved, besides any human values that might be present. In particular, we believe that for the typical environmentalist, the question of whether this species is preservation-worthy does not hinge on the extent to which people in general happen to care about it.

Case 3: The Inaccessible Ecosystem

Imagine an ecosystem that is very difficult to access for human beings, so very few people will have the opportunity to experience it. Perhaps it is situated on an inaccessible mountain top, or deep under the sea. Suppose also, like in Case 1 above, that the existence of this particular ecosystem does not (and will not, if it continues) contribute to human (or sentient) wellbeing or flourishing. Like in the case of the insignificant species, we contend that environmentalists in general would find even such an ecosystem to some extent preservation-worthy, which requires the involvement of some non-human value.

Even if you are not convinced of all these cases, we hope that you can agree with at least one of them, and that we have managed to establish our

general point – that there are easily conceivable scenarios in which the convergence hypothesis is false.³

Possible Replies?

There are, of course, possible ways to try to reply to this conclusion, i.e., to try to maintain that the convergence hypothesis would hold even in our three cases. We do not have room, in this paper, to go through possible replies in detail, but there are some brief general remarks that can be made. First, any such reply needs to take the form of showing that the connection between some human value and the protection or preservation of nature is so strong that we cannot imagine it being broken, even in cases like the ones we have presented. Second, it is far from obvious why a view defending such a connection should be considered easier to defend (or less problematic) than a view according to which nature has non-instrumental value – after all, it has to make a controversial metaphysical claim about a necessary (or close to necessary) connection between, on the one hand, either *protecting nature* or *protected nature*, and, on the other hand, some human value, which the former is supposed to further. What are the arguments for thinking that there exists such a connection?

Actually, the only plausible such view that we can think of is a perfectionist view on prudential value (see, e.g., Wall, 2019, §1), according to which leading a good human life involves valuing or caring for *the right things* for their own sake (where not doing so means living in some form of deception, which is taken to make a human life less good). With such a view as a vantage point, one could insist that the natural entities in our cases are among *the right things*. However, at this point some explanation is needed as to why certain things are *the right things* to care about – like the natural entities in our cases – whereas other things are not – like, e.g., a pile of garbage. Here, the only plausible explanation we can think of is that *the right things* are those that actually are worthy of being cared for or valued for their own sake. That is what could explain that not caring for them means living in deception, which, in turn, is what could explain why such a life would be worse from a perfectionist point of view. But to say that a thing is worthy of being cared for or valued for its own sake is just another way of saying that it is non-instrumentally valuable. In other words, the only plausible view we can think of, that upholds the connection needed between protecting nature and human values, actually presumes that nature is non-instrumentally valuable. Thus, we conclude that our cases show that unless one endorses non-instrumental value in nature, one cannot consistently maintain that the natural entities in these cases should be preserved or protected.⁴

³For an additional, more elaborated case, which can also be used to illustrate our point, see Samuelsson, 2009, Ch. 6.

⁴Of course, one can still want them to be preserved or protected, because one simply has such personal desires or wishes, but we take it that the environmentalists we want to target with our

Why the Environmentalist Should be Worried

Now, why should the environmentalist worry about our cases? First, there might actually already be such cases in the world, but, as we stated above, that is not the argumentative route we aim to take here. Second, the mere risk that such cases might occur should be worrying for the environmentalist. If environmentalists reject non-instrumental values in nature, there is only one argumentative strategy open to them, namely, to argue – in every case where they want to preserve or protect some natural entity – that doing so would further human values (or perhaps values of other sentient/conscious creatures). And even that is not sufficient. In fact, they need to argue that the protective actions or policies they favor would further human values *to a larger extent* than alternative actions or policies. This is why we stated in the introduction that relying on nature's instrumental value for preservational purposes is risky business for the environmentalist. In other words, there is a purely empirical burden of proof on such an environmentalist: to show that the best way to further human values (understood in some way or other) is by preserving or protecting the natural entities that are at stake. And indeed, if a scenario like the ones described in our three cases should occur, the environmentalist has nothing to fall back on, no more resources to make use of. She would simply have to accept that in these cases, we should not protect or preserve the natural entities in question.

Now, we do not think that environmentalists in general are happy with this conclusion. More elaborately, we do not think that their position hinges on such empirical matters. They want to preserve these natural entities because they are *preservation-worthy* in themselves – because there is something about them that makes them worthy of being protected or preserved. However, to say that there is something about an object *X* that makes it worthy of being protected or preserved – in itself – is tantamount to saying that *X* is non-instrumentally valuable. So here we see how endorsing non-instrumental value in nature endows the environmentalist with argumentative resources that go beyond those associated with mere human values. Of course, she still needs to argue that *all things considered* the reasons for protection or preservation are stronger than the opposing reasons. But the non-instrumental value of nature provides an additional weight to put on the scales when evaluating the alternatives.

To be sure, her opponent may just reject the non-instrumental value of nature and insist that human values (and perhaps values connected to sentience or consciousness) are the only values there are. Such value-disagreements happen all the time – and we will not get into the discussion of how to deal with them here – but the opponent of non-instrumental value has no initial advantage in the debate, i.e., before we hear the arguments for the respective positions. At least that is the case if there is nothing particularly objectionable about the position that nature possesses non-instrumental value. However,

argument subscribe to something stronger than this, namely, that it is appropriate to protect or preserve these natural entities, that there is reason to do so, or that we should do so.

unfortunately, as explained in the introduction, many people – among them many environmentalists – seem to think that there is. But is there? That is the question we need to turn our attention to now.

The Mysteriousness-Objection

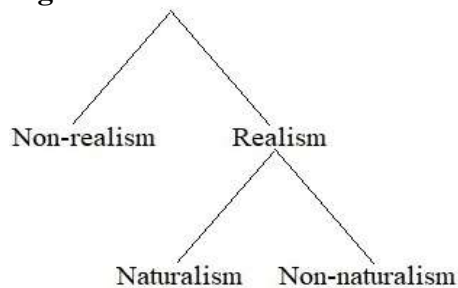
According to what we refer to as the mysteriousness-objection, there is something very odd, or problematic, about attributing non-instrumental value to nature. In short, it would be mysterious if nature possessed such value. It is not that easy to spell out this objection, since the authors who have raised it typically do not bother to develop it in detail. For these authors, it seems more or less obvious that such value attributions would be problematic. However, there are in particular two supposed features of “non-instrumental value in nature” that we find it plausible to assume are the ones that – by themselves or in combination – most often give rise to this objection: (1) such value is supposed, by some authors, to be objective in some sense (e.g., Norton, 1991, p. 235); (2) such value is not attached to experiences or anything else that directly matters in someone’s life (e.g., Jamieson, 1998). The first feature gives rise to a metaethical worry: Non-instrumental value in nature is thought to require a problematic metaphysical position. The second feature gives rise to an axiological worry: Non-instrumental value in nature is thought to require an implausible axiology. We will now briefly deal with these worries in turn.

Metaethics and Non-Instrumental Value in Nature

Our strategy in this subsection is not to argue that there is nothing problematic or mysterious about non-instrumental value; it is to show that *if* there is something problematic or mysterious about such value, then people who ascribe it to nature are in no worse position than people who ascribe it to human beings, states, or communities, etc. They are in the same boat.

There are several ways of dividing up metaethical views. The worry that we are concerned with here is a metaphysical worry – that there is something metaphysically suspect about non-instrumental value in nature, so here we present a very basic metaphysical division of metaethical positions (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Metaethical Positions*



First, one can be either a non-realist or a realist about morality and values. One may think that values exist, in some sense, or that they do not. If one is a non-realist, then, at the face of it, one rejects all values. That position excludes both human values and values in nature. Hence, it is not an option either for those who endorse intrinsic value in nature or for the critics that we address in this section. Remember, these critics favor human values (and in some cases values related to sentience or consciousness) and often want to argue for protection or preservation of nature on the bases of such human values. Some non-realists think that their value attributions are still interesting – that they are in some sense substantive and practically relevant – even though they do not point towards actual value-properties in the world. We shall not quarrel with that claim here, but only note that if such value attributions are interesting in the case of human values, they are bound to be just as interesting in the case of values attributed to nature.

Second, as a realist one can be either a non-naturalist or a naturalist. Non-naturalists believe that values (and other normative properties) are non-natural properties that exist – in some sense⁵ – in the world, or in reality. Some philosophers (most famously, perhaps, Mackie, 1977) have argued that such values would be mysterious in various ways. We shall not get into this discussion here, but just note that these arguments target non-natural value-properties as such, and not any particular position about which entities that possess them. If such values would be as mysterious as these philosophers think, they would be just as mysterious if human beings or human states possessed them, as if nature possessed them.

Naturalists, finally, believe that value-properties are in fact natural properties (but perhaps very complex ones). That they are natural means that they belong to the natural fabric of the world – they are composed of precisely the kinds of entities and properties that are studied within the natural and social sciences. An example of such a position is the theory according to which what is valuable can be analyzed in terms of the responses of an ideal observer (i.e., an observer possessing certain ideal characteristics, such as complete knowledge of non-ethical facts, the ability to reason flawlessly, and so on) (see Firth, 1952). Now, one may have all kinds of objections against naturalist metaethical views, but there is nothing mysterious about the properties they identify as being values – since, per definition, these properties belong to the natural fabric of the world. Nor does it get any more mysterious if we ascribe such values to nature. It is, for instance, an open question how an ideal observer would respond to various natural entities. So, again we see that the proponent and the opponent of non-instrumental value in nature are in the same boat. If naturalist accounts of value are problematic, that is equally problematic for them both. There is nothing *particularly* problematic about ascribing such value to nature.

To sum up, the first worry concerning non-instrumental value rests on a mistake. It is based on the assumption that those who endorse non-instrumental

⁵See, e.g., Parfit (2011, Ch. 31), on the idea of moral entities existing in a “non-ontological sense”.

value in nature need to rely on some problematic objectivist, or realist, conception of value. But they can rely on whatever conception of value that the proponent of human values relies on. If it is problematic for one of them, it is equally problematic for the other (see, further, Samuelsson, 2010). In fact, several prominent environmental ethicists who endorse intrinsic value in nature subscribe to surprisingly non-objectivist accounts of value (e.g., Elliot, 1997, p. 16; Callicott, 1999, p. 259).

Axiology and Non-Instrumental Value in Nature

The second worry concerns the question of what kind of properties values can be based on. The general idea behind this worry is that values have to be based on welfare, in some sense. There are slightly different versions of this idea, e.g., that nothing can be valuable unless it is valuable *for* someone, or that nothing can be valuable unless it matters *to* someone. Since it does not matter *to* nature what happens to it, or since nature is not a subject *for* whom things can be good or bad, nature or states of nature cannot be valuable, or so the objection goes. More generally expressed, the objection states (1) that the only plausible axiology is a welfarist axiology,⁶ and (2) that since nature does not possess a welfare (things cannot be good and bad *for* it, in terms of welfare), nature (or rather its states) cannot be non-instrumentally valuable.

The most straightforward reply to this objection is that it simply begs the question against those who endorse non-instrumental value in nature. These people typically think that other things than welfare can provide the basis of non-instrumental value (e.g., non-welfarist interests, complexity, naturalness, beauty, being or belonging to a community, various relations, and so on). Without any explicit arguments for a welfarist axiology, or against all other axiologies, the objection simply consists in an unargued denial of the opposing position. It is just another way of stating that one does not agree with those who endorse non-instrumental value in nature, and such a statement, of course, is not an argument.

However, there are independent reasons to be reluctant to accepting a purely welfarist axiology, even for those who only accept human non-instrumental values. Indeed, we are inclined to think that most people upon reflection would reject such an axiology. Many people care directly – non-instrumentally – about other things than welfare. For instance, many would subscribe to at least some claim of the following form: “Of two different worlds with the exact same amount of net welfare, one of them is better than the other (other things being equal) if it contains more of *X*”, where *X* can be, e.g., freedom, equality, virtue, democracy, solidarity, altruism, flourishing societies, human progress, knowledge, solidarity, and so on. To the extent that one is inclined to subscribe to any such claim, one is inclined to think that welfare, in itself, is not all that matters. If it is reasonable – even in the realm of

⁶A welfarist axiology states, roughly, that all and only states of welfare (understood in some favored sense – different theories favor different conceptions of welfare) are bearers of non-instrumental value. A non-welfarist axiology simply denies this claim.

human values – to ascribe non-instrumental value to other things than welfare, then there is no reason for the environmentalist to worry about there being something strange, or mysterious – as such – about ascribing it to nature.

Conclusion

The mysteriousness objection either builds on misunderstandings or confusions, or simply begs the question against non-welfarist axiologies (unless it is accompanied by further arguments), and may thus be safely dismissed. It does not provide any reason for environmentalists to refrain from making the value attributions that best suit their actual opinions. Those who want to protect or preserve natural entities, biodiversity, species, etc., can argue for such preservation or protection policies partly on account of the value they see in these entities or properties, themselves. Of course, like anyone who makes value claims, they may need to defend these claims (i.e., explain what it is, with for instance biodiversity, that makes it valuable in itself). However, they do not have to worry about their value attributions being more mysterious or problematic, as such, than any other value attributions.

It may be that it is easier to defend certain human values than to defend non-instrumental value in nature – there is certainly more consensus about some of the former – but, as the counterfactual argument shows, if we think that we ought to preserve or protect natural entities even in cases where doing so does not further any human values, then we simply *need* to defend such value. There is simply no way around it. However, environmentalists should not despair in the face of this fact. To the contrary, we think they should embrace it. After all, people who genuinely care about nature should be happy to find out that ascribing non-instrumental value to it is not particularly problematic, or mysterious, and be eager to investigate the possible bases of such value. And if they cannot find any such basis that they consider plausible, then they simply have to accept the conclusion that we should not preserve or protect nature in cases where doing so does not further any human (or other) values. Luckily, the field of environmental ethics is full of intriguing suggestions as to what may provide the basis of non-instrumental value in nature. Hence, there are many possible views for environmentalists to exclude before they need to accept this pessimistic conclusion.

Acknowledgments

This paper was written as part of the project “Future People and the Concept of Sustainability” (registration number: 2016-01535), funded by FORMAS.

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