AT HOME ON EARTH: A PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION

by

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(Under the Direction of Beth Preston)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation consists of four independent papers on ethical issues within environmental philosophy related to how persons might be motivated to take responsibility for the natural environment. The first chapter addresses a persistent gap in the environmental literature between ethical principles and the motivation to put them into practice. I attempt to mend this rift using a model centered around an expanded conception of home. People typically take responsibility for the homes and places that contribute to their sense of belonging, thus taking one's home to include the natural environment effectively grounds a principle of value that then motivates us to preserve that value. The second chapter considers knowledge barriers to taking responsibility for our natural environments. I show that the expanded conception of home provides the needed entry point for overcoming environmental ignorance. In the third chapter, I argue that our relationships with technology limit those we can have with the natural environment. Promising suggestions advocate creating focal sites—technological places that demand attentive entanglement with the material world. I embrace focal sites but critique existing claims that farms are the ideal sites. Rather, homes are ideal. They are technological places that are far more personal, accessible, and practicable. I contend that through the home as the primary focal site, we can have better relationships with technology and nature. The final chapter highlights structural barriers that make it difficult for individuals to avoid environmentally destructive behaviors. Here, I propose a model of personal, shared responsibility that begins with the roles

one might have in relation to home. This model is grounded in our sense of home and provides a strong schema for how individuals can handle structural barriers and activate their shared environmental responsibilities together.

INDEX WORDS: Environmental Ethics, Home, Epistemologies of Ignorance, Philosophy of Technology, Structural Injustice

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2018

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December 2018

Dedication

For my kids, who make home my favorite place to be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of the work on these papers was supported by a Dissertation Completion Award from The University of Georgia Graduate School.

I would also like to thank my mother and father who have given me nothing but whole-hearted encouragement throughout the long road to completion. Thanks go to Elizabeth Brient and Sarah Wright for their feedback and guidance. Special thanks is due to Beth Preston, in particular, whose patience and guidance were indispensable.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Between the Environment and Me

There is a pervasive problem facing environmental ethics. There are many good theories that tell us why we ought to treat nonhuman, natural entities ethically, but they often lack the resources to compel us to do so. They tell us to take responsibility but fail to engender a *sense* of responsibility, and I mean this viscerally. This constitutes a persistent divide between theory and practice, between knowing and doing, between understanding and caring. This collection of essays is an attempt to mend this divide. I propose that this mending must make use of materials we already have, things about which we already care and for which feelings of responsibility are *natural*. These materials are our homes.

Homes, as I understand them, are familiar places, others, and things. They include both animate beings and inanimate objects, natural and built environments, and they extend well beyond the confines of one's house or property. Homes are territories of belonging toward which, I will show, we have multiple responsibilities. I will argue that an appeal to home as the primary site of ethical subjecthood can effectively ground an ethical theory for taking responsibility and feeling responsible for the natural environments that surround us. Yet, even when this split between theory and motivation is resolved, there are still barriers to practice. In the essays that follow, I address three such barriers—epistemological, technological, and political—and suggest that the values of home and the practices of homemaking can help overcome these barriers.

Before getting to the essays, I will briefly discuss some of the relevant literature informing the discussion.

Environmental Value

I take the extant literature in environmental ethics to rest on four broadly construed models, distinguished by their appeal to environmental value. I will discuss in turn anthropocentric/genic models, valuable feature models, intrinsic value models, and valuable relationship models.

Anthropocentric models ground an object's value by either (or both) its instrumental value to humans – a thing is morally relevant insofar as it contributes to human well-being, or human evaluations – a thing is valuable insofar as humans confer value on it. For example, I ought to save the rainforest only if the rainforest is necessary for the survival of humans. Anthropocentric concerns are at the heart of international environmental policy-making and sustainable development. The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), for example, defines sustainability instrumentally as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." In this spirit, Brian Barry (1997) argues that natural resources must be managed for the sake of human beings now and in the future, but, going to the heart of this view, John Passmore (1974) insists that there are no other grounds on which value in nature could be based than the value of human life and human valuing. Humans are, thus, both the source and locus of all value.

Closely related to these are anthropogenic models. These models grant direct value to nonhuman nature, albeit human-generated. Bryan Norton (1991) argues that an environmental ethic must be so, since humans are the only valuing agents. Baird Callicott (1989) agrees, pointing out that while nonhuman nature can be the locus of value, conscious human beings are the only sources of that value.

Other models of environmental ethics are not so obviously human centered. Valuable feature models place value on morally relevant features. Most famous is Peter Singer's (1975) utilitarianism. For Singer, the capacity to suffer is the marker of moral relevancy. Any entity with this capacity is valuable and enjoys moral standing. Where Singer's model invites the criticism that it is not an *environmental* ethic because it only extends to animals (and not even all animals), others have proposed features that do extend further. Gary E. Varner (1998) points out that many living natural entities have the capacity to flourish and develop interests and are morally relevant on this basis. Freya Mathews (2003) argues that all things possess, on some level, subjectivity, and being a subject inherently and automatically requires moral recognition.

Intrinsic value models begin from the sensibility that, not merely natural features, but nature as such is valuable. This is famously illustrated in Richard Routley's Last Man Argument (1973), which shows that a last person is never justified in destroying nonhuman nature just for fun. This demonstrates that, when all human interest is removed, it is still wrong to annihilate nature, indicating that nature has intrinsic value. Holmes Rolston III (2002) argues that value can be generated without reference to human valuers or valuable human features. Rolston catalogs intrinsic value through increasingly difficult cases, showing that natural entities are holders of value, though humans may be the only *beholders* of such value. Keekok Lee (1996) takes up and contributes to both the views of Routley and Rolston, arguing that there are multiple varieties of intrinsic values. Some intrinsic values are generated and held by human beings, but the natural world, too, generates values and disvalues independent of human consciousness or preferences.

Finally, for valuable relationship models, the locus of value is the relationship that one shares with the natural environment. The most famous is Aldo Leopold's (1966) call for stewardship or "The Land Ethic." He says, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the

integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Leopold 1966, 262). As a member of this community with the capacity to do so, it is my responsibility to preserve, protect, and appropriately manage the natural environment.

I see valuable relationship models such as Leopold's as on the right track. In Chapter 2 below, I argue that while each of these models is flawed, the valuable relationship model is the most promising. As such, I propose a version of it based on our relationship to home.

Epistemologies of Ignorance

One of the barriers to taking up the model I provide in Chapter 2 is epistemological. Specifically, it is difficult to feel responsible for the natural world and act on such responsibility because of a society that is substantively ignorant in relation to that world.

Though ignorance has classically been viewed as a simple lack of knowledge, recent work in epistemologies of ignorance has shown that ignorance is a (un)knowing practice in its own right, one that is thoroughgoing and dangerous in collective contexts. Nancy Tuana and Shannon Sullivan (2007) describe the study of ignorance as such, "The epistemology of ignorance is an examination of the complex phenomena of ignorance, which has as its aim identifying different forms of ignorance, examining how they are produced and sustained, and what role they play in knowledge practices" (Tuana and Sullivan 2007, 1).

Most discussions in epistemologies of ignorance center on the phenomenon of race-based ignorance. Linda Martín Alcoff (2007) outlines four categories of ignorance that are increasingly complex, where the simplest form is a straightforward lack of information and the most complex is an ignorance that is systemically encouraged. Race-based ignorance is of the latter kind. Alison Bailey (2007) and Elizabeth Spelman (2007) give accounts of the ways that ignorance plays out and is navigated by those affected by it. Paul C. Taylor (2007) argues that race itself is

constructed by the social mechanisms of white supremacy; one such mechanism is "race thinking." Race thinking, when it constructs and clings to dangerous assumptions, ignoring historical facts and empirical data that could destroy such assumptions, produces race-based ignorance.

Charles Mills (2007), whose work establishes the basis of Chapter 3 of this volume, adds to this discussion by providing the most clear and systematic account of race-based ignorance. He argues that five interrelated cognitive processes—conception, perception, memory, testimony, and group motivational interests—are affected by race in such a way that produces white ignorance. Briefly, conceptions are affected by race through socio-historic processes that assign meanings of savagery, laziness, criminality, immorality, and subpersonhood to black and brown bodies. Perceptions are then affected by these conceptions, where what one perceives is mediated by such concepts. Here, any situation or evidence that confirms the pre-conceived notion is accepted and noted, but countervailing evidence is ignored, not perceived, or understood as an exception to the rule. Memory is affected by race through cultural white-washing of history; testimony from people of color is devalued and distrusted. Finally, race affects group motivational interests when the interests of people of color are perceived to be antagonistic to the interest of whites. One, thus, has an interest in maintaining ignorance so as to avoid any perceived harm that may follow from learning the truth.

In Chapter 3 of this volume, I take Mills' model of white ignorance as a guide for performing an analysis on what I take to be an analogous form of environmental ignorance. Though climate change denial is discussed at length in the environmental literature, a careful examination of a more substantive form of group-based ignorance in relation to the environment and its entities more broadly is largely absent.

Philosophy of Technology

The second barrier to taking up the environmental ethic of home is technological. Our relationships with certain forms of technology are such that they often inhibit ethical engagement with the natural world. The discussion in Chapter 4 is rooted in what is considered the "humanities" philosophy of technology (in distinction from an analytic, or philosophy of science, track) because of its focus on questions of culture, morality, meaning, and the politics of technology (Mitcham 1994).

In Martin Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" (1977), he draws a distinction between traditional forms of technology and what he calls "modern technology." Our use of and relationships with traditional technologies reveal something about the essence of what it is to be human, for Heidegger. The activities wherein we use such technologies draw together "the fourfold": earth, sky, mortals, and divinity. Traditional technologies let the natural world "be in its own way," and leave open the possibility for a variety of relationships to it. Modern technologies, on the other hand, conceal important truths, reshape the essence of humanity, and close down the multiple avenues for relationship with the natural would in favor of one dominant relation. Modern technology constructs the whole of nature as nothing but a "standing-reserve" or inert use-item.

Though deeply influenced by Heidegger's philosophy of technology, Don Ihde (1993) rejects Heidegger's distinction between traditional and modern technologies pointing out that the distinction is based more on romantic nostalgia than anything inherent to these technologies themselves. He argues that traditional technologies can be every bit as destructive as modern technologies, and modern technologies can be every bit as revealing as traditional ones. Peter-Paul Verbeek (2005) points out that the questions posed by Heidegger were and continue to be of central importance, though the answers Heidegger himself provides are mistaken. Verbeek

contends that Heidegger mistakenly argues that modern technology is a framework or essence of the modern world, and in doing so, he overlooks the concrete character of things themselves.

Albert Borgmann (1984) takes issue with Heidegger's emphasis on singular objects abstracted from their technological context and their everyday use in practice—yet he finds much to glean from Heidegger. Borgmann's view elaborates on the patterned character of technology identified by Heidegger, and he appreciates Heidegger's emphasis on the humble and inconspicuous character of simple things. Borgmann uses these features to develop his account of focal things—objects that invite engagement and familiarity—and focal practices—practices that center around focal things and encourage skill, social engagement, and ritual. Paul Thompson (2000) takes up Borgmann's focal practices and argues for a needed turn to focal places. As a place that requires close contact with both natural and built environments, as well as extensive use of technology, Thompson makes the case that farms are the ideal sites of focal practice.

In Chapter 4, I follow Thompson in this move to focal places, but I argue that, though farms can be focal places, they are not ideal. Thompson's view is limited in being too focused on production in isolation from reproductive practices. Additionally, farms are inaccessible to the vast majority of the population, and, finally, though his focus is farming, the type of farm he describes is better understood as one type of home. In place of the farm, I will argue that the home is a much better focal site that avoids the pitfalls of the farm while retaining the virtues.

Structural Injustice and Collective Responsibility

In Chapter 5, I consider a political barrier to taking up responsibilities to the natural world. I argue that a key difficulty to addressing environmental destruction and protection is that the problem is structural.

In her account of structural injustice, Iris Marion Young (2003b) argues that, while individuals may contribute in direct ways to the harm of others through prejudicial, discriminatory, or even violent actions, they are largely well-intentioned actors within a structurally problematic system. This system sets up "background conditions" through which one's harmful actions are seen by the social milieu as benign, expected, or even virtuous. Second, resisting this status quo can constitute an unrealistic burden on individual agents. Third, where damaging practices thrive on a structural level, personal lifestyle changes do very little to curb them. As such, a turn to some form of group responsibility is necessary.

Karl Jaspers (2000) answers these concerns about group responsibility by providing a taxonomy of guilt, arguing that collectives are responsible on political and metaphysical levels. Political responsibility is based on deeds done in the name of a nation-state and is distributed to each and every citizen. Metaphysical responsibility is based on a violation of human solidarity committed by a collective with which one identifies. Here I am guilty by association if I have not done everything in my power to stop the wrong done. Peter French (1991) argues that responsibility need not be distributed in highly organized groups. Rather, the collective as a whole is the entity responsible, though this ought not absolve individual members being held accountable for their individual actions. Joel Feinberg (1968) delineates types of vicarious, contributory, and noncontributory responsibilities in relation to one's group. For social wrongs, responsibility is distributed to all members insofar as those members are not considered outcasts by the group.

Guilt is a feature common to most models of collective responsibility, and Hannah Arendt (1987) rejects all such models on this basis. A notion of collective guilt is both erroneous and dangerous, she says. She denies that one can or ought to feel guilty for events in which one did not actively participate. However, Larry May (1996), following Jaspers, argues that

metaphysical guilt *is* a form of singling out where I am guilty of who I am in relation to the group. Where I may not or could not have done anything to change the behavior of my group, accepting my metaphysical guilt signals my rejection of those behaviors of which I am nonetheless a part. May insists that metaphysical guilt lends itself not to moral guilt, but to moral responsibility. This guilt is not collective, but shared, and opens the door for shared responsibility. Young (2003a) returns to Arendt agreeing that *any* theory of responsibility derived from guilt and liability is inappropriate to models of shared responsibility and inadequate for motivating people to take up their responsibilities. Liability models are backward-looking, assigning blame for past wrongs. They risk obscuring how one ought to orient oneself toward forward-looking responsibilities.

Young advocates a different type of responsibility altogether. She calls her model the social connection model. It builds on May's view through four main features: it does not isolate individuals by blaming them, it judges background conditions and structural harms, it is more forward-looking than backward, and it must be discharged through collective action. The types of responsibilities that correspond to the social connection model are similar to responsibilities that one may have in virtue of one's social roles or positions. These are the moral and social requirements to see that certain outcomes obtain in relation to those positions.

While I agree with Young that for cases of structural injustice we ought to move away from models that focus on liability and move toward ones that focus on roles, the model she offers only partially succeeds. In Chapter 5 of this volume, I will discuss two main reasons why. First, the way responsibilities are distributed contains a potential efficacy problem. Second, the social connection model relies too heavily on causal positionality and is, therefore, not genuinely role-based. In this chapter, I take up the shared connection model as Young first introduced it, exploring further how a turn to roles, and specifically the role of homemaker, can facilitate a

better motivation for shared action and contribute to altering the background conditions that maintain an environmentally destructive status quo.

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CHAPTER 2

AN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC OF HOME[1]

[1] Rudow-Abouharb, L. Brooke. To be submitted to *Ethics*.

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that we are surrounded by a natural environment that should be included in our conceptions of home and that this expanded conception is indispensable for an environmental ethic that is both well-grounded and practically efficacious. I show that homes act as primary sites of responsibility, establishing value in nature and a feeling that grounds such an ethic. I build on this ground by providing a set of values to which individuals can commit in order to make their homes on earth good ones.

Introduction

Home is contested terrain. The modern, western vision of home is idyllic, safe, cozy. Home is there for you, always, as an unchanging, intimate place in an otherwise risky and harsh world. But as feminist theorists have pointed out, home is not just *there* and it is not there for *you* if you happen to be a woman charged with making the home there for someone else. 'Home' is an ideal that makes invisible both the labor involved in maintaining a home and the threat of violence that all too often enforces that labor. For this reason, many feminists reject this ideal and the values associated with it. Nonetheless, it is hard to really shake that longing for home, and there does not seem to be anything particularly problematic about having or wanting a genuinely *good* home. Indeed, as Allison Weir (2008) points out, it is actually an enactment of privilege to reject home when so many people desperately need one. What we need, she says, is not a rejection of home, but a better ideal and better values. Weir is right.

In this paper, I take a serious look at the things, places, and others that ought to be included in our concept of home. I will argue that every individual is surrounded by a natural environment that should be included in her conception of home. Furthermore, doing so is indispensable for an environmental ethic that is both well-grounded and practically efficacious.

In the first section I discuss persistent problems for dominant theories of environmental ethics, namely that they fail to connect or give equal weight to value in nature and valu*ing* nature. In the second section, I rely on the work of Hans Jonas to show that ethical responsibility requires both a source of value and a feeling of responsibility toward that value to ground ethical theory. Sections three and four contain my arguments for understanding the home in an expanded sense. Here I argue that homes act as primal sites of responsibility, establishing value in nature and a feeling that grounds an environmental ethic. The final section builds on this ground by providing a set of values to which an individual can commit in order to make their homes on earth good ones.

Some Background

I will situate my model by first discussing four (broadly construed) models that I take to define the field of environmental ethics. I distinguish them based on how each model appeals to value: extrinsic value, valuable features, intrinsic value, and valuable relationships. While obviously there are many nuanced versions of each model, I will restrict myself to the most straightforward and/or leading examples of each view.

Extrinsic value models ground an object's value by either (or both) its *instrumental value* to humans – a thing is morally relevant insofar as it contributes to human well-being, or *human evaluations* – a thing is valuable insofar as humans confer value on it. I ought to save the rainforest only if the rainforest is necessary for the survival of humans; I should establish sites of protected wilderness only because people value natural spaces of aesthetic beauty. Baird Callicott (1989a) calls this first instrumental sense a "vulgar" utilitarian view, where the only entity with intrinsic value is the human being. Intrinsic value is generally understood as value that something has in itself without reference to or dependence on anything else to grant it that

value. On this view nonhuman nature does not have intrinsic value; it is valuable only indirectly as a means to human happiness or survival. Nature is only extrinsically valuable.

A major difficulty with models based on instrumental extrinsic value is that they do not appear to be *environmental* ethics at all, but merely contribute to a set of demands for prudence sake. These demands could be related to a variety of objects including, but not limited to, the natural environment. While there are certainly definitive and objective human needs that the natural environment can satisfy, these basic needs are fairly limited, making the set of indirectly valuable things similarly limited. If it turns out that we do not truly need manatees or marshes, we can feel free to destroy them. When needs are expanded to include interests and desires, we have increased the number of valuable things, but they are valuable only insofar as they can be *used*, not preserved or saved. Indeed, conceiving of anything nonhuman as a mere means or tool to human satisfaction is, by and large, what has gotten us into this environmental mess in the first place.

Other models of environmental ethics are not so obviously human centered. Valuable feature models place value on morally relevant features. Most famous is Peter Singer's (1975) utilitarianism. For Singer, the capacity to suffer is the marker of moral relevancy. Any entity with this capacity ought to be considered valuable. He says, "Where our actions are likely to make animals suffer, that suffering must count in our deliberations, and it should count equally with a like amount of suffering by human beings, insofar as rough comparisons can be made." (Singer 1979, 59) He argues this by pointing out that we tend to make an arbitrary distinction between the human species and all other species. Singer calls this speciesism and says that its logic is indistinguishable from racism and sexism, where similarly arbitrary distinctions are made. It is not species-being that begets moral consideration, but suffering, he says. Discerning whether a being suffers hinges on discerning whether that being is conscious and has interests.

"Thus consciousness or the capacity for subjective experience, is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for having an interest." (Singer 1979, 57) Determining whether a being possesses consciousness is a dubious affair, but Singer indicates that we can generally tell by comparison to our own consciousness-indicating behaviors. We might understand Singer's view as an extension of the vulgar utilitarian view above and call it utilitarianism "proper." Here, more entities and their needs/interests count.

Again, Singer's model invites the criticism that it is not an environmental ethic because it only extends to animals (and not even all animals). The natural environment surrounding sentient creatures is valuable only indirectly as means to these creatures' ends. To include more nonhuman entities, others have proposed features that extend further, such as the capacity to flourish (Varner 1998) or the possession of subjectivity (Mathews 2003), but the form of their models is much the same. Though each of these philosophers extend value to nonhuman entities, their views teeter on the edge of the anthropocentric/genic models. For each, human features stand as paradigmatic – objects of nature are valuable insofar as they approximate them.

Intrinsic value models take account of the need for more robust conceptions of value in the natural world. The moral intuition that nature has a value independent of human values and valuing is nicely demonstrated in Richard Routley's Last Man Argument (1973). We are asked to consider the moral acceptability of some final human population's act of destroying the natural world. Routley says that even if there are understandable reasons for doing so, it is never permissible to destroy all living creatures or the land. In fact, "…what these people do is to a greater or lesser extent *evil*, and hence in serious cases morally impermissible." (Routley 1973, 208) However, none of the traditional ethical theories account for this moral intuition. Of the big three—Aristotelian, Kantian, and Utilitarian—each fails to give an adequate environmental ground. Aristotle and Kant ground ethics in human rationality and, as we saw above,

utilitarianism grounds ethics by reference to human suffering. Routley points out that each is based on basic human chauvinism. Intrinsic value models provide a reassessment of value that accounts for the moral intuition here. Holmes Rolston III (1994) offers such a model that shows how value can be generated without reference to human valuers or valuable human features.

Rolston argues for intrinsic value through increasingly difficult cases beginning with the easiest case, humans. Human beings, as valuing agents, can value themselves both instrumentally and intrinsically. They can be both the source and the locus of value. Though Callicott argues that humans are the only source of value, Rolston points out that animals value a variety of things: nourishment, shelter, mates, etc. "Animals do not make man the measure of all things at all" and, beyond merely instrumental value, "Animals maintain a valued self-identity as they cope through the world. Valuing is intrinsic to animal life" (Rolston III 1994, 16). Plants, though not strictly subjects, are self-sustaining systems, points out Rolston. They grow, repair, defend, and reproduce based on a program. This program is a genetic set of information, "a plan, a proposal, a project" (Rolston III 1994, 17). We can see the plant as a manifestation of value when we understand this program to be *normative* with the capacity to differentiate between is and ought. He says. "So the tree grows, reproduces, repairs its wounds, and resists death. The physical state that the organism defends is a valued state. A life is defended for what it is in itself, without necessary further contributory reference" (Rolston III 1994, 17). That is, plants can be benefited or harmed objectively; they have their own goods that exist independent of outside valuers. "Insentient organisms are the *holders* of value, although not the *beholders* of value" (Rolston III 1994, 18). Moving to more difficult cases, Rolston argues that species, too, have biological identities that persist over time. This identity asserts itself genetically through its members but is not reducible to its members. Here, a good for the species may be a harm for the individual, but the locus of value is the *form* of life, manifest in reproduction. Again, there need

not be a valuer, but the preservation of the biological identity is valuable and valued in the innate (thus, intrinsic) ability to reproduce. He proceeds by similar argument to include valuable ecosystems, where the ecosystem serves as a fundamental unit of survival, acting through "an equilibrating of values" (Rolston III 1994, 23). His basic point is that we must look for interests and values that are appropriate to the organizational level of inquiry. Conscious, subjective interests and values are appropriate to conscious subjects; genetic and biological interests are appropriate to insentient beings and species-being.

On the surface, this model looks promising as a foundation for an environmental ethic, as value is independent of any human assessment or human feature; entities and systems are valuable *in themselves*. However, this seeming strength is, in fact, a critical weakness. Intrinsic value models end up stunting any possibility of ethical growth by assuming a moral good where there are but objective goods. John O'Neill (1992) argues that even morally wrong things can have goods of their own, conditions that contribute to their flourishing. These are objective goods—they objectively benefit the thing in question—but they are not necessarily moral goods:

> That Y is a good of X does not entail that Y ought to be realised unless we have a *prior reason* for believing that X is the sort of thing whose good ought to be promoted. While there is not a logical gap between facts and values, in that some value statements are factual, there is a logical gap between facts and oughts. 'Y is a good' does not entail 'Y ought to be realized.' (O'Neill 1992, 132)

This prior reason is required in order to ground an ethical obligation to preserve the natural environment, but intrinsic value models make no reference to what such a reason might be. And, importantly, whatever the reason is, it must be a reason directed *at* someone—someone capable of promoting the goods of others. So, while entities hold value in the sense of having goods of

their own, they lack a reason why their own goods ought to be promoted, as well as a connection to a valuing subject to whom that reason can *matter*. Moral value requires subjective valuing—the experience, the *feeling*, of an entity capable of and interested in preserving that value.

Valuable relationship models can bridge the gap between value and valuing and are the most promising of all environmental models. Here the locus of value is a relationship that one shares with the natural environment. A classic example, the land ethic, belongs to Aldo Leopold (1986), his moral prescription being, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Leopold 1986, 262). Leopold points out that traditional ethical theories manage relationships between individuals and within human communities, thus the land ethic should be understood to manage our relationship to the wider community in which we are embedded, including but not limited to "soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (Leopold 1986, 239). Here we are meant to preserve and create relationships that have integrity, stability, and beauty. "Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land. By land is meant all of the things on, over, or in the earth. Harmony with land is like harmony with a friend; you cannot cherish his right hand and chop off his left" (Leopold 1986, 189).

Leopold holds that the primary barrier to forging an appropriate relationship to our biotic community is a proper conservation education. He emphasizes that the accumulation of information about the interconnectivity of biotic systems is not enough to address the issue of active, ethical engagement with the land. Though vitally important, scientific knowledge will never be enough to motivate the striving for harmony Leopold advocates. What we need "must grow from within." He says, "No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions" (Leopold 1986, 246). And this internal change requires, not knowledge, but familiarity. We must *get to*

know nature. This call for familiarity need not (and cannot) include figuring it all out, but only by getting to know my own biotic community can I come to recognize, build, and value my relationship to it. Over all, what Leopold recommends is a new way of seeing nature, one which incorporates a deep understanding of ecological relationships as well as a rich emotional affinity for nature. And creating this affinity "is a job not of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity in to the still unlovely human mind" (Leopold 1986, 295).

Philosophically, Leopold's work has been criticized for being naïve, incoherent, or simply lacking much theoretical support. Callicott disagrees, arguing that the principles are there, it is just that Leopold has a condensed prose style and departs from the paradigms of contemporary ethics (Callicott 1989b, 76). Callicott does an impressive job of interpreting Leopold such that a robust environmental ethic emerges, arguing that Leopold's view is a thoroughgoing holism. He interprets Leopold as holding that the biotic community *per se* enjoys direct moral standing, while parts are considered only secondarily. On Callicott's reading, the real object of moral consideration is not a relationship but the community as a whole, a superorganism. On this view, my relationship to the whole is still important, for understanding my relationship to it is how I come to appreciate its value, but only the superorganism is of direct and primary value. My relationships are but means to recognize and preserve that value.

I am not sure how much of Callicott's interpretation we ought to directly attribute to Leopold, but this holistic version of the land ethic loses much of its original appeal.[2] The "naïve" Leopold is much more attractive. By calling attention to relationships that can be morally evaluated, he avoids the pitfalls of the other three models. Leopold does not categorically leave out any natural entities nor does he leave human beings completely disconnected from objects of value. Instead, Leopold highlights a valuable relationship between the health of the nonhuman

[2] Plumwood provides a strong and thoroughgoing criticism of all forms of environmental holism in Feminism and the Mastery of Nature (Plumwood 1993).

natural world and human flourishing, and there is much to glean from his from his call to preserve the stability, integrity, and beauty of the biotic community. Through storytelling and musings, Leopold invites us into a relationship of familiarity and intimacy with the natural world that is home-like.

I take as the starting point for my own model of environmental ethics the principal value of relationships and Leopold's call for familiarity as a vital feature of those relationships. Going beyond Leopold, I will argue that the relationship we ought to recognize and cultivate most fundamentally is not to an abstract biotic community, but more intimately, a relationship to our homes within the natural environment. I will show that relating to the natural world as one's home inherently includes the pieces missing from other models: valuable things, valuing subjects, and practices of valuing. Moreover, one of the key advantages of moving to home as the ground for an environmental ethic is that the character of this particular relationship urges one to responsibility. Hans Jonas (1984) argues that though it has been largely neglected in moral theory, responsibility is at the center of morality, where the feeling of responsibility is the *only* thing that can genuinely motivate us to commit to a set of practices that aim to preserve a perishable other. As such, I will begin there, with an account of responsibility which points to a foundation of ethics based on home.

Grounding an Ethic

According to Jonas, the primary condition for responsibility is "causal power." That is, one cannot be responsible or take responsibility for any object or outcome if one does not have the causal power to affect that object or bring about some outcome. This causal power has three aspects. The first is causal strength or action that has a tangible effect. The second is agential control over that acting, and third is the ability to foresee consequences. As such, causal power is

a function of power, freedom, and knowledge. The two broadest categories of responsibility, as detailed by Jonas, are the "formal" and "substantive" (Jonas 1984, 90). Formal responsibility is tied to the notion of liability. Here one is responsible for something they have caused, some deed done. Substantive responsibility is altogether different. It is concerned with actions that must be taken in order to realize certain ends.

Traditionally, formal responsibility is taken for granted in both legal and moral matters. Here, questions of intentionality, liability, compensation, and punishment are central, as responsibility is assigned based on some action taken. When one is morally responsible in this sense, they are guilty of some moral wrong committed. Even in cases wherein responsibility is not ascribed to the causal agent (where a parent might be responsible for the behavior of a child), the morally responsible party is, nonetheless, always responsible for some deed done or left undone. Though we tend to think of the conditions for legal and moral responsibility in largely the same terms, Jonas insists that formal responsibility is primarily legal and only secondarily moral. Formal responsibility is just that, purely formal. It stands as an indexical, pointing to the cause of some effect. "So understood, 'responsibility' does not itself set ends or disallow ends but is the mere formal burden on all causal acting among men," says Jonas (Jonas 1984, 92). We are actors and are each responsible for the consequences of our actions, regardless of their moral value or whether we are called to answer for them. This is to say that, under formal responsibility, ends must be given from without before any evaluation of an action can take place. Moreover, formal responsibility cannot provide the affective motivation necessary for ethics. Responsibility here is backward-looking. Responsibility is for past deeds done and the feelings of responsibility—remorse, regret, shame, guilt—are each retrospective. What formal responsibility cannot address is *positive*, or forward-looking, responsibility. Jonas says that formal responsibility admits only of counsels of prudence to avoid or screen actions ("one has

the less to answer for, the less one does") and cannot motivate action nor entail obligations (Jonas 1984, 91).

Jonas points out that responsibility has never been central in ethical theory, and the almost exclusive focus on liability is part of the reason why. It cannot give content on its own to normative behavior; it can only evaluate after the fact. But this neglect is also caused by the limited scope of classical ethical theory. It is concerned with the here and now, with interactions between individuals, and actions that impact the world in narrow ways. This was, perhaps, appropriate historically, as consequences were fairly foreseeable, localized, and relied on the permanence and security of a natural order (Jonas 1984, 123). Yet, we now exact change on massive scales and many consequences cannot be imagined in advance. We are no longer anchored by a "permanent" nature, but our actions disrupt and destroy the order to which we have grown accustomed. As Jonas says, "the *nature of human action* has changed, and, since ethics is concerned with action, it should follow that the changed nature of human action calls for a change in ethics as well" (Jonas 1984, 1). That is, we need an ethic with a sense of responsibility at its core that reaches beyond the immediate, one that accounts for, not deeds done, but deeds to be done.

Substantive responsibility provides the needed shift and it comes in two types: contractual and natural. Contracts provide the needed substance lacking in formal responsibility. They are future-oriented; what one ought to do or ought not do is explicitly or implicitly understood before any reference to consequences. Contracts require consent and are conditional. But like formal responsibility, contracts are not yet moral. I may enter into contractual agreements toward malicious ends and, though my responsibility requires I fulfill my agreements, my duties here are immoral.

Natural responsibilities, on the other hand, are inherently moral. This is because the object of any natural responsibility must be a *good* end and is good in itself without reference to anything outside of itself. As a result, any relationship to it has a moral character. The responsibility is natural because the good is a feature of nature and is derived in virtue of the particular, natural characteristics of the being on whom it lays claim (Jonas 1984, 92). To clarify, nature contains the good and as beings endowed with the causal power to promote or destroy that good, we are the ones charged with the responsibility to preserve it. Natural responsibilities do not require consent nor reciprocity. I am obligated to the object so long as I am the type of being that can perform the necessary duties and as long as I have causal power in relation to it. Moreover, objects of natural responsibility are perishable; were they eternal, I could not affect them. Finally, they must "have the power to move me" such that I *feel* responsible simply in virtue of their existence (Jonas 1984, 87). This power to move is enhanced by an object's particularity. That is, I am more easily moved by the needs of some particular natural object, a puppy, rather than the plight of all puppies in general. Though a particular puppy's plight may lead me to the universal case, Jonas insists that universality cannot evoke the affective response of feeling responsible (Jonas 1984, 92).

Jonas takes the parent-child relationship as the primal and paradigmatic responsibility relationship. The object of responsibility, the child, is a manifestation of the good in nature as a being endowed with the potential to do good and be good. Thus, the relationship has all of the features of natural responsibility—it has a moral character, it is particular (this child, *my* child), it is nonreciprocal, it does not require consent, its object is perishable—but most importantly, for Jonas, the infant has the power to move me. Nothing calls more deeply to the essence of our being, he thinks, than a helpless child:

> For when asked for a single instance…where that coincidence of "is" and "ought" occurs, we can point at the most familiar sight: the newborn, whose mere breathing uncontradictably addresses an ought to the world around, namely, to take care of him. Look and you know. I say, "uncontradictably," not "irresistibly": for of course the force of this, as of any "ought" can be resisted…I mean strictly just this: that here the plain being of a *de facto* existent immanently and evidently contains an ought for other, and would do so even if nature would not succor this ought with powerful instincts or assume its job alone. (Jonas 1984, 131)

Jonas says that the infant stands in a precarious relationship to being. The infant possesses being, but that being is contingent. It is dependent upon something outside of itself and stands on the brink of being and nonbeing as *becoming* (Jonas 1984, 134). As a result, responsibility toward the child is total, to the child's entire existence rather than a single aspect. It is, furthermore, continuous—it "dare not stop" lest the child cease existing. Finally, the relationship is one of both present- and future-oriented responsibilities (Jonas 1984, 98).

As an archetype, this relationship establishes a model on which a broad form of substantive responsibility is based. Indeed, for Jonas's purposes, all of humanity is charged with the responsibility for future humanity, all "parents," in the abstract, to all "children." Motivation lies in the particular relationship between parents and children and is then projected outward to all humankind, giving it a universal character. Each human being, insofar as she is able, ought to preserve this abstract possibility of mankind.

While the parent-child relationship serves as a valuable *metaphor* for natural responsibilities, it is misleading as an archetype. A major limitation of the parent-child archetype is the loss of motivation in its move to universality. According to Jonas' archetype, I become the "parent" of all future "children" though I have no direct causal relationship to them. This

transition is odd. After all, what makes the infant so compelling for Jonas is the feeling it evokes in its struggle for becoming, that the parent is the cause of that struggle, and the spontaneous love on behalf of the parent. But future generations are not struggling, and I may have no role whatsoever in their cause. I may not desire nor be capable of parenthood and, even if I do or I am, the notion of spontaneous love is dubious, at best, even in the case of the infant, much less all of humanity. Indeed, Jonas himself says that the partiality of love is always particular (Jonas 1984, 104). When the parent-child relationship is expanded to include all of humanity, each of the subjective conditions *necessary* for the feeling of responsibility—which, according to Jonas, is necessary to ethical theory—disappear.

This might not seem all that problematic. After all, this relationship is supposed to be a model. It is meant to provide a foundational case, the elements of which can be abstracted. Total authorship of the parent becomes the reproductive capacity of the species. The infant's struggle for becoming is the struggle for the continued existence of humanity. Spontaneous love becomes an intellectual reverence for the uniqueness of human species-being. It certainly works as an analogue for an ethics of the future. Yet, this move to abstraction and universality undercuts much of what is appealing *and grounding* about substantive natural responsibility. Its object must be immediate. It must be perishable, and the demand that its need be satisfied must be felt. It must be *particular*, having the power to move *me* through its sheer existence (Jonas 1984, 87). It is hard to grasp the demands of all humanity or imagine the needs of future generations, far more difficult to viscerally feel their claim on my actions.

In the next section, I build on much of the groundwork provided by Jonas, but I leave the archetype of the parent-child relation behind. In its stead I suggest the relationship of home. As a relationship that has natural responsibility as a central feature, it is a better model for guiding our interactions with the natural world. However, this call to make a home on earth is not

metaphorical or abstract. It constitutes a *literal* demand issuing from the world surrounding us and the urge of responsibility within us. That is, it urges us immediately and materially to preserve its being, and in doing so our own being is preserved.

Establishing Home

For Heidegger, to be human is to dwell. It is our essential character:

> *Ich bin*; *du bist*. I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. (Heidegger 2001, 145)

To dwell is not simply to be in a particular place but to be in a particular *way*. Dwelling has two aspects. One is building places in which and among which to dwell. Dwelling in a place brings the world into being, but our way of being in that world constitutes the other aspect: preservation. Heidegger says that dwelling means "to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for" and, especially regarding land, to cultivate yet nurture (Heidegger 2001, 145). Preservation is the fundamental aspect and "it pervades dwelling in its whole range;" buildings are means to foster and protect dwelling and dwellers (Heidegger 2001, 147).

Iris Marion Young (2005) begins her essay "House and Home" pointing out a curious feature of Heidegger's reflections on dwelling. The fundamental feature, preservation, is left underexplored as Heidegger delves more deeply into the *means* to dwelling, building. Her aim is to do the work Heidegger neglected but, also, to defend the home as a meaningful and necessary aspect of human existence, despite its rocky history.

Feminist theorists have criticized the ideal of home. For example, Simone de Beauvoir (1952) argues that housework is oppressive and ties women to immanence, repetitiveness, and

stasis, allowing men to carry out meaningful, creative projects out in the world. Luce Irigaray (1992) argues that men seek in women the nostalgic home of the womb in order to ground their own subjectivity. Women, too, seek and need this home, but because they *become* the home or another commodity within it, they have no ground for *their* subjectivity. They are forced, instead, to become beings-for-him; they are homeless. However, the potential oppressiveness of home is not limited to women. Homes can be places of violence for men, children, and nonhuman inhabitants. Homes are often the places where intolerance and bigotry against LGBT individuals is felt the strongest.

Young is sympathetic to these types of critiques, but she argues that they refer to a perverted conception of home. Even though homes do not always function as a place of refuge, they *should*. Young points out that each of these criticisms is leveled at a conception of home that is Western, modern, and commodified. These homes *are* isolated and isolating, but in many societies, people dwell far more widely:

> …dwelling in a wider sense occurs outdoors and/or in collective spaces, both sheltered and not… 'home' refers to the village or square together with its houses, and dwelling takes place both in and out of doors… Even in modern capitalist cities some people 'live' more in their neighborhood or on their block than in houses. They sit in squares, on stoops, in bars and coffeehouses, going to their houses mostly to sleep. The bourgeois sensibility of civic privatism, however, finds such street living disorderly and threatening. In 'better' neighborhoods and communities people discreetly and privately sit behind their houses, leaving the streets to teenagers. (Young 2005, 132)

Thus, for Young, these criticisms are undercut, to some degree, by simply shifting our understanding of what counts as a home. When privacy does not necessarily mean completely

hidden from others and identities are not linked to one house and its commodities, the values associated with home can take on a different character. Furthermore, though housework can be oppressive when forcibly assigned to one gender, homemaking is something very different. Homemaking includes housework but goes beyond the drudgery described by Beauvoir. Homemaking is meaning-making, says Young (Young 2005, 140-145).

Emphasizing the creativity of homemaking, Young says that the meaning made in caring for things and others is a living meaning. Contrary to Beauvoir's stress on futurity, Young calls attention to homemaking as a way to preserve and protect the things of the past. Where Hannah Arendt (1958) disdains the repetitiveness of labor and its household projects, Young points to the fact that labor may not create lasting monuments, but without it, these monuments could not possibly *last*. Not only would they not last, but without the activities and stories surrounding their existence and maintenance, they would have no meaning:

> Over and over the things must be dusted and cleaned. Over and over the special objects must be arranged after a move. Over and over the dirt from winter snows must be swept away from the temples and statues, the twigs and leaves removed, the winter cracks repaired. The stories must be told and retold to each new generation to keep a living, meaningful history. (Young 2005, 143)

Yet, far from being something crystalized and unchanging, the meanings of things change as the relationships we have with them change. Preserving, repairing, attending to things allows memories to persist and identities to be made. And memory is not nostalgia, Young takes care to note. Where nostalgia signifies escape; memory retains both the successes and failures, the joys and pains that make up who a person is. Memory is the anchor from which one orients oneself toward the future (Young 2005, 143). Young insists that calling on the past, reinterpreting and

reconstructing it as new events and relationships emerge, is part of the creative *and moral* task of preservation.

The home and homemaking carry political significance, as well. bell hooks (1990) calls on "homeplace" as a crucial value for oppressed groups and individuals. One's home can be a site of refuge from the oppressive structures that abound in the broader society, she says. Homeplace is where identities can be shaped and affirmed in opposition to the dominant discourse. Both ethical and political, homemaking in relation to homeplace was and is, for black women, the task to create communities of resistance, says hooks:

> It does not matter that sexism assigned them this role. It is more important that they took this conventional role and expanded it to include caring for one another, for children, for black men, in ways that elevated our spirits, that kept us from despair, that taught some of us to be revolutionaries able to struggle for freedom. (hooks, Homeplace 1990, 385)

Having a tangible place where one can create and maintain a homeplace is crucial to building a meaningful community of resistance (hooks 1990, 388). As such, she calls for a return to a culture of belonging rooted in the land, an agrarian lifestyle, and a connectedness to the natural world (hooks 2009). hooks describes her homeplace growing up as one that stretched beyond her house and into the hills, one that embraced both natural and human communities:

> Nature was the place where one could escape the world of man made constructions of race and identity…What we had learned in the hills was how to care for ourselves by growing crops, raising animals, living deep in the earth. What we had learned in the hills was how to be self-reliant. Nature was the foundation of our counter hegemonic black sub-culture. Nature was the place of victory. In the natural environment everything had its place

> including humans…There dominant culture (the system of imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy) could not wield absolute power. (hooks 2009, 7-8)

hooks maintains that rebuilding a culture of belonging is essential to black self-recovery from oppression. She insists that caring for the natural world is both an ethical and political necessity, and the cultural amnesia and denial of black connectedness to the land and an agrarian past only serves to reinforce a white supremacist State (hooks 2009).

Incorporating these insights, that the values associated with home ought to be embraced and that home is not confined to one's house, I take the relationship of home as the primal responsibility relation that can stand as a foundation for an environmental ethic. Home, here, is something over and above—perhaps not including—a built structure like a house. Home is a set of places, things, and living others. These things include items as various as dinnerware or rockfaces. Living others are humans, pets, domesticated animals and plants, as well as wild flora and fauna. As a set of places, home encompasses a range of territory that is fluid, shifting, disconnected, and not restricted to what I own. Though my house certainly qualifies, so does the street and the community among which my house is located. My home is my yard, Lake Hartwell, and the beaches of Brunswick county.

These are the places and living others that structure who I am and that for which I am responsible. The sense of "mine" at work here is akin to how I refer to my mother or my friend. They are mine, not because I control or own them, but because I belong with them in a particular and intimate way. And just as I may not have chosen my family or friends, I may or may not have chosen the set of places, things, and others that constitute my home. I belong with them nonetheless.

Considering our essential nature as dwellers, this expanded conception of home is superior, both descriptively and normatively, to the modern, western home critiqued by

Beauvoir, Irigaray, and others. Descriptively, it more accurately captures how we experience and express our relationships of home. Normatively, reconceiving home in this way contributes to a rootedness in the natural world that opens the door for a rich and robust environmental ethic grounded therein. Furthermore, the home-relation possesses each of the features characteristic of natural responsibility.

Natural Responsibilities to Home

As we saw above, natural responsibility relationships and their objects have several key features. First, the relationship does not require reciprocity nor consent. Second, the object of natural responsibilities must be both perishable and particular. It demands a commitment in the double sense that one is objectively responsible in relation to it and that it has the power to move, inciting the ethical urge. That is, one *feels* committed to it. Finally, and most importantly for ethical obligation, the object must constitute a good. I will show that our relationship to home is just such a natural responsibility relationship and is, therefore, an ethical relationship. If we take seriously this ethical relationship to home and adopt an expanded conception of home that includes the natural environment, then an ethics of home can ground an ethical relationship to the natural world.

Reciprocity

The infant in Jonas' archetypal example cannot reciprocate the care it demands. This is part of why our responsibilities to the infant are natural rather than contractual. The same holds true of our responsibilities to our homes. Though we have multiple and various responsibilities to the maintenance of home, homes have no responsibilities in return. A home may, and ought to, serve as a place of comfort and safety, but it is not the responsibility of homes to do these things.

Indeed, it is the *homemaker's* responsibility to mold and shape what the home is and can be for its co-inhabitants. A home, as a dynamic territory with both sentient and non-sentient participants, is not the type of thing that can be properly said to have a responsibility. It is something that arises as a relationship between things; our nonreciprocal, non-reciprocated responsibility is to that particular relationship. A relationship can be one of responsibility, but a relationship cannot have responsibilities. This is not to say that other inhabitants of a shared home do not have equal or shared responsibilities. In fact, insofar as other inhabitants can, they ought to share in the responsibilities to a home. Rather, the relationship is nonreciprocal in the sense that the home itself has no responsibilities whatsoever. Responsibility, here, is a one-way street.

Consent

Furthermore, the responsibilities I have to my home do not require consent. This has two aspects. First, I need not have chosen or consented to the home I happen to have. Second, I need not consent to the responsibilities I have to it. If it is my home, and I have the power to care for it, I must. Quite simply, in the beginning no one chooses their family or where they are born. Yet even in adulthood, most people do not choose all, or even very many, of the things and entities in their homes. Even where one has chosen the plot of land, every brick of the house, each item inside, one can rarely choose one's neighbors, human or otherwise. But supposing one could choose the entire set of things, places, and others of one's home, consent is not necessary for natural responsibility, where can implies must. Whether I have chosen it or not, I have responsibilities to my home. That I have these responsibilities is part of what allows home to be what it is: *my* home. These responsibilities stand as a crucial component of what binds me to this set of entities rather than some other. This is my home because I am the one who cleans, repairs,

and maintains it, because I feed and care for those within it, and because I am the one who is *supposed* to do these things, whether or not I ever do. Though I can choose not to take up these responsibilities, I have them, nonetheless. In fact, taking Heidegger seriously means that consent is actually superfluous to the idea of home. As dwellers, homemaking is something we just *do*. The question of whether or not to make a home does not arise. The question is what kind of home shall be made.

Home is Perishable and Particular

A fixed and eternal home could engender no continuing responsibilities. If everything stayed put, clean, and in good condition, there would be very little to do. But, as many of us are aware, nothing we do at home stays. One easy example—the laundry is never, ever done. In my household it is typically not done long enough for the basket to stay empty for a single hour. Yet beyond familiar, everyday maintenance and in a much deeper sense, the home requires an active engagement, an "active responsibility" says Anthony Steinbock (1995), to be what it is (Steinbock 1995, 233). Without my activity, my home can no longer be said to be mine. It is in this sense that the home, and my relationship to it, is perishable. I must repeatedly renew my relationship to home by taking up of responsibilities to it. Homemaking is a process, and the home is always becoming. Young points out that the temporality associated with homemaking is different from that of the house. Construction makes a rupture in the continuity of history and then proceeds by linear course to its completion (Young 2005, 143). The same is true of the infant. Though Jonas calls the responsibility of the parent to the infant continuous and total, it, too, follows a unilinear course to the completion of the infant: adulthood (Jonas 1984, 101, 105, & 108). Yet, the temporality of homemaking is recurrence. Recurrent though not fixed, homemaking activities highlight the perishability of this relationship to things and others. If the

special things are not arranged, if they stay in boxes, they cease to be part of my home. My relationship to something or someone cannot be familiar or homely if I neglect regular and repeated interactions with it. Many of us have had the feeling of uncanniness, when visiting a place where we have once lived, a previous home. The things, places, and others might be the same, but because our interactions with them have drastically lessened, they have become strange. We know this place, but it is no longer our home. Though the things and others themselves may not perish, the *relationship* can.

This perishability of home is directly related to its particularity. That is, the responsibilities I have to home are responsibilities to *my* home, the concrete things and others related directly to me, not an abstract concept of homes in general. This mine-ness has nothing to do with ownership but, rather, belonging, specificity, and individuation. As the sense of uncanniness shows, the condition of particularity highlights that my physical and emotional presence, along with practices of engagement are requirements. It would be odd to call Hawai'i my home when I no longer live there, I have very few friends and no family left there, and I have no resources flowing to or from there. Home is where I take and give in material, immediate, and regular ways to a set of entities that is proximate and concrete.

Demands of Home

The perishability and particularity of the home underlie the urge to take responsibility for it. As Jonas said, the object of responsibility must have the power to move me "through its sheer existence" (Jonas 1984, 87). It does this in being uniquely related to me – its particularity – and through "the unique relation between possession and non-possession of being" – its perishability (Jonas 1984, 131). The infant, as a living being, incites this feeling of responsibility through its tangible and visceral struggle to continue its existence. Yet, the becoming of the home is not

usually so apparent, largely because it does not often appear to be struggling. Indeed, the home rarely appears at all. When it does, tasks involved in home upkeep often present themselves as annoying burdens, not dire emergencies in the struggle of being. Kirsten Jacobson (2009) alludes to this when she argues that our relationship to home or, being-at-home, is primarily one of passivity. She argues that the home stands as a backdrop, an environment, or support structure in virtue of which we can carry out our own projects. Home is "there for us" so we can do other things. But as we have seen, it is the mark of an imbalanced and possibly oppressive home if it is always simply *there* for you.

Rather the home *appears* passive because one's relationship to home is so familiar and fluid, that, though one is in intimate, active engagement, one ceases to distinguish it and oneself. Heidegger talks about this in terms of *equipment* or "entities which we encounter in concern" (Heidegger 1962, 97). Heidegger says that when we use equipment, "our concern subordinates itself to the 'in-order-to'…the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become" and the equipment itself, "must, as it were, withdraw…" (Heidegger 1962, 98-99). This is the mark of something "ready-to hand." The equipment withdraws and whatever it is that we are up to, our project, is at the center of our experience.

We can understand the home as something "ready-to-hand" (Heidegger 1962). And here, Jacobson is correct to say that in carrying out projects the home withdraws. But it does not withdraw as a passive backdrop to experience. Rather, it is precisely because of an active relation to home that it can be *drawn into* experience, becoming less an object of experience and more a part of subjective experiencing. That is, both the home and I become phenomenologically transparent, much like the hammer when things are going smoothly (Heidegger 1962, 98). This transparency is not mindless or unaware, but "the kind of dealing which is closest to us," the most fundamental way that humans experience the world (Heidegger 1962, 95). Being-in-the-

world, for Heidegger, amounts to this full absorption in the readiness-to-hand of a totality of equipment, that is, familiarity with the world (Heidegger 1962, 107).

But the home, as any equipment, can become "un-ready-to-hand" when it is unusable in one's habitual way. That is, the home can become conspicuous. When the home or some part of it is missing, it is obtrusive:

> The more urgently we need what is missing, and the more authentically it is encountered in its un-readiness-to-hand, all the more obtrusive does that which is ready-to-hand become…The helpless way in which we stand before it is a deficient mode of concern…Anything which is un-ready-to-hand in this way is disturbing to us, and enables us to see the *obstinacy* of that which we must concern ourselves in the first instant before we do anything else. (Heidegger 1962, 103)

Only in its absence, disruption, or destruction does the home really appear to us as what it is: something one needs, something that depends on one's activity, something perishable. It is in these moments that the urge to responsibility is most palpable. The needed shelter of the roof is apparent when it is leaking. The imperative to fix the leak is scarcely a command. It is *felt* as a requirement. The inability to repair the home in the face of these imperatives is disturbing and deeply disruptive to our patterns of living and our projects.

Jonas points out that when we see the struggling infant, the urge to responsibility, though not irresistible, is uncontradictable (Jonas 1984, 131). The urge, he says, is all the stronger when one is the cause of that becoming being. But, as we have seen, the urge is far more compelling when one truly understands the ways in which one's own becoming is implicated in and predicated upon that other. Taking responsibility for my home is, in an important sense, taking

responsibility for myself, for the becoming of my own being. Where the infant's call issues from helplessness, the demand of home is a threat. If you do nothing, you will be and have nothing.

Home is a Good

The final feature that must be shown of home for its full-fledged status as an object of natural, substantive (and therefore ethical) responsibility is its connection to the good. In order for there to be good in the world, there must be moral subjects who carry out that good. I maintain that homes are good because they are the places within which human beings develop into these responsible beings. Homes are, thus, *the* primal sites of ethical responsibility.

Jeff Malpas (2004) argues that our relationships to place are foundational to the development of subjectivity and our capacity to experience the world.[3] A subject is always and already emplaced and its emplacement is determinative of the nature of that subject. Place is:

> …a structure within which and with respect to which subjectivity is itself established. Place is not founded *on* subjectivity but that *on which* the notion of subjectivity is founded. Thus one does not first have a subject who apprehends certain features of the world in terms of the idea of place; instead the structure of subjectivity is given in and through the structure of place. (Malpas 2004, 35)

As such, places constitute the conditions underlying the possibility of experience, where the structure of place is determinative of both the nature of the subject and subjectivity *per se*. Malpas continues:

[3]Malpas defines place as a structure, or region, of interconnected features: persons, things, spaces, abstract locations, and even the self (Malpas, Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topolography 2004, 36).

> …a concept of place might be seen to be indispensable to any inquiry into the nature of thought or agency. Indeed, there is reason to think that only if we can understand creatures as embedded in a world can we understand them as in any way capable of thought—whether believing, desiring, hoping, calculating, fearing, meaning or whatever—or indeed of purposive action. *Only a creature that is oriented and located can relate to objects and to the world.* (Malpas 1998, 36, emphasis mine)

Taking Malpas seriously establishes the essential role of places in a person's development and her experiences. But as a place of origin and constancy, the home stands as *the* foundation, a first principle in the sense that the home is at the core of the possibility for any and all human endeavors. These endeavors include, of course, *ethical* endeavors and relationships. Indeed, without homes, moral subjects could scarcely exist.

Though all places have the potential to be sites of subjectivity and agency, the home is, for human subjects, the *primal site*. The home is that through which our projects can be generated and carried out. It is both a source of and context for those projects, even when many of my activities may take place elsewhere. The home is the site from which outside activities begin and where they end, allowing us a place to rejuvenate and reset for the next day's events. The home also establishes boundaries, where the material, spatial, and social makeup of our homes is largely determinative of the number and types of projects we can have. My relationship to home, therefore, grounds and shapes the person I become and the relationships I can have. Here, home is a good in that it is foundational for the possibility of all human goods, including, and especially, ethical relationships.

Yet beyond their being the ground and source of responsibility, homes also stand as the object of our responsibilities. Our homes are often where our causal power is most operative; homes are where we can effectively *be ethical*. They provide the context and concrete others

with which I can build and maintain important relationships, where I can learn how to care for others and for things, and where I can make mistakes and be forgiven. As such, homes themselves *must be made good*. We have a natural responsibility to our homes to ensure that they become sites that facilitate the development of ethical subjects.

Having established that home is both a good and a site of obligation, I want to turn to what it is that we are obliged to do. Introducing this paper, I promised the foundation, not for ethics generally, but an environmental ethic. It remains to be made explicit, then, just how the command to make and maintain good homes is the first imperative for a robust and functional environmental ethic, one that can successfully answer the difficulties of the previous models and provide a positive, future-looking ethic of responsibility for the natural world. In the next section I discuss how a commitment to four critical values of home can guide our homemaking practices in ways that are attentive to the responsibilities engendered by the expanded conception of home.

Making a Home on Earth

The move toward establishing the home as the primary site of ethical and *environmental* responsibility is two-fold. I must accept that my relationship to home is an ethical relationship as given by its being an object of natural responsibility. Furthermore, I must adopt the expanded conception of home, which includes nonhuman natural entities and the natural environment surrounding me, in place of the modern, western conception of home. Making these moves, one enters immediately into an ethical relationship with such nonhuman natural entities. In effect, the responsibilities I would normally accept as simply given by my inhabiting a house are extended into the broader environment. If the forest behind my house now *is* my home rather than the passive backdrop for my home, the relationship between us takes on an essentially different

character, one that is ethical regardless of whether or not I choose to take up the responsibilities engendered by it. Should I fail to relate to this forest as a good homemaker ought, I fail ethically.

The difficulty now becomes how to be a good homemaker within this expanded home. An ethic of home cannot predict before the fact which actions will be good and which will be harmful. The actions recommended by this ethic will always be contextual, requiring nuance and negotiation. For example, in certain areas, where overpopulation of game animals is not an issue or where they are threatened, hunting might be morally wrong. Whereas, in areas where game animals undergo cruel, torturous deaths of starvation because populations have grown beyond the carrying capacity of the land, "therapeutic hunting" might be morally permissible (Varner 1998, 100-103).

Though particular actions cannot be recommended, they can be guided by a commitment to certain values. Allison Weir (2008) argues that there are at least four critical values of home to which a homemaker should commit and by which a household can be judged: 1) negotiation, solidarity, and openness to risk, 2) relational identities, 3) relational autonomy, and 4) reinterpretive preservation.[4] Though Weir is concerned with values that guide ethical behavior within a more traditional understanding of home and its human inhabitants, I will show how a commitment to these critical values can guide our homemaking practices in relation to the expanded home and its nonhuman inhabitants.

Negotiation, Solidarity, and Openness to Risk

Weir begins by pointing out that any connection or relationship comes with risk. While we tend to value the home as a site of safety, she argues that this does not have to stand in stark

[4] Weir bases her values on a set of critical values introduced by Iris Marion Young. Young's were safety, individuation, privacy, and preservation (Young 2005, 150-154). Weir's are meant to complement, complicate, and extend Young's account.

opposition to risk. Indeed, the ideal home should be a site where we can safely risk connection and sustain relationships through conflict. We ought not long for a conflict-free existence, but:

> …affirm home as a space of mutuality and conflictual connections to others…in arguments, in struggles, in openness to vulnerability, to critique and self-critique, and to change, with a commitment to solidarity with each other that mediates our commitment to our shared struggles. (Weir 2008, 8)

This is not only of crucial value within a home, but in those areas where homes overlap. Recognizing that relationships and homes necessarily involve conflict and risk, we are in a better position to navigate them and set limits that keep them from becoming violent or oppressive (Weir 2008, 8-9).

A commitment to acting on this value within the natural environment and with nonhuman others comes down to, first, recognizing and respecting the manifold and interrelated interests of the inhabitants of one's home. An example will help. In South Carolina, a pesticide called Naled was sprayed from planes onto the communities below in an effort to kill mosquitoes suspected to carry the Zika virus (although there had been no reports of cases of Zika originating in the area). The pesticide most certainly harmed the mosquitoes, but it also ended up killing over two million honeybees. The deaths of the honeybees, in turn, harmed the humans who relied upon the honeybees for their livelihoods (Blinder 2016).

We do not normally think of sharing a common lot with mosquitoes, but when we share a home, what affects one affects the others, for better or worse. Part of a commitment to this critical value is being attentive to these connections and negotiating them to arrive at the best outcomes for all parties involved. The community's interest in subverting the Zika virus could have been negotiated by an interest in strategies that work with the local populations rather than

against them—reducing mosquito breeding areas, wearing clothing that protects the skin, and using indigenous larvae-eating fish in local mosquito habitats (Nunes and Hoover 2012). These types of solutions point to a type of knowledge condition required for homemaking: in order to ethically negotiate the homes of those with whom we live, we must be able to get to know them. That is, we must live in, be attentive to, and become familiar with our expanded homes in the ways that we take for granted in our houses.

Relational/Ecological Identity

Weir argues for a conception of self that is not unified or stable. She stresses that selves should be understood as interdependent and that they include significant and shifting relationships. Home, then, should not be a place where I unreflexively accept one aspect of my identity as the real me, but a place where I reflect and consciously interpret and reinterpret myself in light of each of my attributes in each of my various roles. Ethically, special attention must be paid to the dynamics of power, mutuality, and dependence that characterize these multiple relationships. An essential aspect of relational, and especially ecological, identities is being able to understand *oneself* in relation to earth others. There are multiple perspectives from which I am but a backdrop; there are perspectives from which I may be an aggressor or annoyance or a friend. For example, who am I for the house sparrow when I choose to pave my driveway or trim my hedges down? House sparrows require meager accommodations. They need long grass or a few overgrown hedges, maybe some large shrubs. These needs are fairly easy to accommodate for those who have yards and gardens. But, as Kate Bradbury (2016) points out:

> The house sparrow is suffering for our modern tidy ways, for our penchants for a second or third car, for working from home, for not liking birds in the roof, for the lack of time or

> inclination to have outside space, for the halving or paving of gardens when a house is divided into flats. (Bradbury 2016)

I may consider myself an animal-lover, I may *be* an animal-lover in certain roles, but for the sparrow whose home is destroyed, I am destructive and cruel. I must be able to understand not just others' interests and needs but who I am in relation to them. This "who I am" constitutes both my factual relationships to others but also my ethical relationships to others. Who I am, in relation to the house sparrows, is a moral failure if I do not include them in my moral reasoning.

Relational/Ecological Autonomy

Here Weir draws on Frederick Douglass's notion of freedom in relation. Douglass says, "freedom does not reside primarily in individual or collective forms of ownership or control…Freedom lives or dies in the relationships forged between persons" (Weir 2008, 15). Though traditional Western conceptions of freedom regard the home as the realm of necessity, where leaving the home is a first condition of freedom, here freedom is rooted in the home. Douglass, although released from slavery, could not experience autonomy without a supportive set of relationships at home; the home is the source of spirit, he says (Weir 2008, 15). Yet freedom is more than having any set of relationships. Freedom, for Weir, is a capacity to choose (or not) certain relationships to things and others. Freedom is "to love whom and what you choose to love…to be in the relationships one chooses, and to expand oneself through relationship" (Weir 2008, 16).

A commitment to ecological autonomy obliges one to be attentive to the ways in which one's relationships either contribute to or disrupt another's ability to be in its own way. Ian Howard (1998) advocates 'good farming' in an ethically charged sense that also incorporates what I am calling 'ecological autonomy' as a virtue. He uses four English shires as his examples,

pointing out that in those shires where wild foliage was cut back or destroyed, animal wildlife acted as and was perceived as vermin. In those areas where there was patchy foliage, farmers were simply unaware of wildlife. On the farms where the foliage could grow, flourish, and be in its own way, wildlife flourished. Farmers knew and enjoyed the wildlife. Rather than fences and drainage, these farms have hedges, wetlands, ponds, and riparian habitats. Howard calls this an "ideal free market" where wildlife is negotiated, included, and let be. Local communities, too, rather than losing vast expanses of land to the plow, retain the experiences of and access to natural spaces and wildlife, allowing them to form relationships with their homes that would be otherwise barred by industrial farming practices (Howard 1998, 160-161).

Reinterpretive Preservation

The final critical value of home is reinterpretive preservation. We tend to view homemaking as an activity concerned primarily with preservation. But, worrying about harmful monuments and histories, Weir asks how the preservation of painful meanings can cause anything but misery or despair (Weir 2008, 18). She argues that preservation alone merely affirms existent meanings and structures. While some feminists have responded to this difficulty by proposing that we undermine, destroy, or shed these histories, Weir points out that the descendants of those enslaved or harmed by historical events cannot simply deny their histories. To undermine them would be to undermine themselves without a sense of redemption. But history *can* provide redemption through reinterpretation. She describes reinterpretive preservation as such:

> Through the telling and retelling of our stories to ourselves and to each other, we combine the conscious assumption of the oppressions and violence that have shaped us with the affirmation of belonging, and the transformation of the future. In doing this, we are not simply affirming our identities or our homes, nor are we rejecting them to leap into the

> negativity of the future…We are engaging in a process of transformative identification: through reinterpretive preservation we transform ourselves, and hold ourselves together, through struggle, and without denying any of the suffering and tragedy this entails. (Weir 2008, 18)

Homemaking incorporates a variety of preservation practices that I have loosely divided into four interrelated categories: maintenance, aesthetics, functionality, and meaning. I will show how, through each, we can take up this project of reinterpretation.

Maintenance

Maintenance of our homes includes the straightforward practices of upkeep. This category of homemaking is traditionally linked to the drudgery of housework, most often assigned to women and critiqued as oppressive by Beauvoir and others. However, maintenance also includes typically male-associated practices of lawn care, roof care, and fixing occasional things that break or malfunction. Taking on the expanded home, the scope of our maintenance practices must similarly expand. We must maintain the wider spaces and others in our homes. We already do, in certain ways, often by way of paying taxes. However, a commitment to reinterpretive preservation requires more active engagement.

For example, lawns and lawn maintenance practices are notoriously damaging to the environment. They use profuse amounts of water, often clean drinkable water, and remove essential carbon-regulating foliage. Many lawns are imported from other parts of the country and require heavy irrigation, chemical fertilizers, and harmful pesticides to maintain their health and appearance (Lindsey 2005, 1). Here, reinterpreting what it means to maintain the outdoor spaces in one's community can come in a variety of forms, but more often than not, *resisting* the

maintenance of lawns – not removing grass clippings or leaves or allowing "weeds" to grow – turns out to be a more ethical and environmental form of maintenance under an ethic of home.

Aesthetics

In addition to resisting the maintanence of lawns, one may decide to replace the lawn altogether. Food Not Lawns is a neighborhood-based, community-driven initiative whose motto is "Grow it, don't mow it!" (Flores 2015). The idea is to convert yard and lawn spaces into edible gardens. Gardens use 66% less water than lawns, which, on average, waste 50% of the water they receive. Gardens combat erosion and diverse gardens can trap carbon (Johnsen 2010). And, of course, gardens provide autonomy by way of access to food. But the spirit behind Food Not Lawns is to create a culture of place, "Gardening brings a family closer together and sharing surplus produce, seeds and plants builds community with neighbors and fellow gardeners. Growing food creates a sense of empowerment and gives gardeners the feeling that they have control over their food supply" (Flores 2015).

This call for gardens in place of lawns has important aesthetic implications. It is often for aesthetic reasons that home and neighborhood gardens are resisted. Neighbors and city officials describe them as messy, ugly, and eyesores (Kurutz 2012). In Miami, a family was sued by the state for an organic, yet ugly, front yard garden. The couple had violated the "aesthetics and uniformity" of the American grass lawn, and as a result, were forced to uproot their garden and plant a lawn. Interestingly, as long as the vegetables stay out of sight (in the backyard), they are acceptable, but a lawn must grace the front (Ovalle 2016). Artist Fritz Haeg, who did several art projects converting lawns to gardens, from Budapest to Baltimore, called *Edible Estates*, points out that these attacks on gardens that take the place of lawns are about reinterpreting American

culture, “about reconsidering our basic value systems and ideas of beauty” (Bittman 2013). Thus, an ethic of home *requires* a reinterpretation of what it is to be beautiful.

Functionality

Often, natural beauty is understood as opposed to function, where human intervention into natural environments disrupts or destroys that pristine beauty. However, a home (and responsibility for it) cannot properly obtain without familiarity and attachment, and necessary to the development of this attachment is active engagement. Active engagement requires much more than an occasional interaction or a distant appreciation; it is most often related to the home’s ongoing functionality. Above all else, homes must function as places to live and perform all of the activities that go with living. The value of reinterpretive preservation requires that we find ways to make our homes functional sites of and for our projects that do not thwart the projects of others or reinforce destructive habits.

An example of the expanded home as a functional site can be found in the lifestyles of Chesapeake Bay watermen. The lives of these individuals center around the Bay, being where they live, work, and spend their leisure time. David Wasserman (1997) points out that the watermen:

> … make little distinction between beauty and utility, or even between nature and human activity. They value the Bay not only as a source of bounty and delight, but also as a source of independence, its beauty closely linking with their own sense of autonomy and agency as they wrest their living from it. (Wasserman and Womersley 1997, 17)

Yet, the relationship is complicated. The interaction between the watermen and the natural world can be understood, on one hand, as one of manipulation and control. However, it is just as much

one of necessity and dependency, where the survival and health of these men is bound up with the survival and health of the Bay. In fact, it is through this multifaceted relationship that they truly get to know and form attachments to this place. as David Wasserman points out:

> While commercial fishing and coastal farming caused severe ecological damage to the [Chesapeake Bay], they also kept people in close contact with the sea and land. With the gradual but relentless decline of these activities, the bay has lost much of its importance as an ecosystem in, along, or through which people wrest their living from nature. Although recreational uses of the bay…flourish, they provide a livelihood for a much smaller segment of the population than fishing and farming once did, and involve less intimate contact with the bay's natural features. (Wasserman, Womersley and Gottlieb 1998, 191-192)

Wasserman emphasizes that with the loss of the Bay as a place of use and livelihood, lost along with it is the possibility of a deep attachment. Standing opposed to those environmentalists who see their roles as "respectful outsiders, venturing into alien territory and leaving nothing but footprints," the watermen have a robust sense of home. To them, traditional preservationist strategies are sanitized, inauthentic and miss the point (Wasserman and Womersley 1997, 19). Instead, they have a profound interest in protecting the Bay in the spirit of reinterpretive preservation. Here, strategies give due attention to functionality—the need for humans to live in and use nature—while recognizing that this need not stand opposed to other critical values of home.

Meaning

Woven through each of these aspects of preservation is meaning-making. Homes have strong meanings for all those who share them, and the reinterpretive preservation of meaning can come

in a variety of forms. For some, reinterpretation can mean bringing new meanings to bear on the past.

Deep River, Connecticut used to be known as “the Queen of the Valley.” Deep River was queen because it was made filthy rich by dealing in ivory (Joyce 2014). The cruelty involved in ivory poaching is now widely known, and the small town of Deep River thrived for over one hundred years due to its participation in this trade (Kahumbu 2013). Developing a new method of processing ivory, the small Connecticut town manufactured all sorts of ivory products (Joyce 2014). At one time the artifacts, history, and prosperity that came from the ivory business were a source of pride; they are now a source of collective shame.

The residents of Deep River know their history well and have come together to address what they see as their particular responsibility to stop the ongoing ivory trade. One resident says, “We were the largest importer of tusks anywhere in the world. So we have a special responsibility and we have a unique opportunity to say, ‘We are sorry we have done this, but we want in some way to help stop the slaughter now’” (Joyce 2014). Another says, “There’s a lot of debt owed to the elephant here” (Joyce 2014). To pay this debt, the citizens have initiated the Elephant Tusk Force that teaches schoolchildren the history of the town and lobbies on behalf of the elephant to end the ivory trade. The efforts for increased responsibility seem to be working. School children write things like, “We drove one of the gentlest species on the planet to the brink of extinction,” and “Our blood and elephants’ blood are one” (Kahumbu 2013). The citizens of Deep River are preserving the meanings of their home in ways that are consistent with an ethic of home. They reinterpret the meaning of the ivory trade for their hometown, and their past shapes how they take responsibility here and now. Naming the elephant its town icon and erecting a statue in its honor, a plaque at its base reads, “Deep River remembers its debt to this majestic creature as it looks forward to a new future as ‘Queen of the Valley’” (Kahumbu 2013).

Each of these critical values provides a guide to action under an ethic of home. Weir established this set of values to guide our behavior within the confines of a traditionally understood home, but as I have shown, they can and should apply far more broadly to the expanded homes we inhabit. In fact, they are indispensable to taking seriously the claim that the home can be the foundation for a genuine environmental ethic. Having established that the home is a good to which we have responsibilities, these critical values establish how that good ought to manifest itself in action. Namely, the good is manifested by actions that follow from a commitment to negotiation and risk-taking, to understanding oneself as having an ecological identity, to respecting the ecological autonomy of nonhuman others, and to practices of reinterpretive preservation.

Conclusion

What I have offered, by way of a distinct version of valuable relationship, is a robust environmental ethic that avoids the pitfalls of the dominant models of environmental ethics. Where these models fail to bridge the gap between things and beings that are valuable and the valuing subjects who must ultimately act to preserve that value, an ethic of home provides solid ground from which to take responsibility for the natural world. As Jonas makes clear, our responsibility to the natural environment and the entities therein cannot be based solely on a form of formal responsibility, or liability. Formal responsibility can only account for past deeds done and counsel against the performance of certain acts, but it provides nothing in the way of guiding future-oriented actions. For this, we need a substantive, natural responsibility grounded in an object that is particular, perishable, immediate, and above all, good. I argued that we can find such an object, and a basis for an environmental ethic, in the home. As the original site of the becoming of subjects, subjects who can do and preserve good, the home is a good as the

primal site of ethical responsibility. Furthermore, when we understand this home as reaching beyond the house out into a territory of familiarity and belonging, one which includes places, nonhuman entities, things, and both the natural and built environments, ethical responsibility extends to its reach. And one's responsibility, here, is to make a good home. Making a good home requires that homemaking activities are guided by certain values, and I argued that the values of negotiation and risk-taking, ecological identity, ecological autonomy, and reinterpretive preservation are, minimally, those to which we ought to commit in order to establish an ethical relationship to the natural world.

An ethic of home goes to the root of what it is to be a human on this earth, a dweller. Dwelling is the way in which we are, the essential nature of human beings; making homes comes naturally. I cannot help but make a home on this earth, but I can do so better or worse. I can do so with attentiveness or absentmindedness, with care or indifference. Heidegger closes his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking" with a reflection on the problem of homelessness. He sees the real problem not in the lack of houses but that we do not understand the "real plight of dwelling," that dwelling is never done though we are always doing it. We "must ever learn to dwell." Heidegger says, "What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight?" (Heidegger 2001, 159). To understand dwelling as *the plight* means to recognize that our essential character as homemakers pervades the whole of what we do. Thus, how we do it, *how* to make a home on earth is the central ethical question. I believe that this environmental ethic of home sets a path toward an answer.

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CHAPTER 3

ENVIRONMENTAL IGNORANCE[5]

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue that environmental ignorance is a group-based form of substantive ignorance that is analogous to race-based ignorance. I use Charles Mills's analysis of white ignorance as a model for environmental ignorance, showing how they are structurally similar, function in similar ways, and sometimes overlap. While race theorists have offered promising solutions toward eliminating race-based ignorance, I argue that something far more is needed in the environmental case. For this task, I incorporate Mathews' notion of "encounter," arguing that an expanded conception of home provides a better entry point into the conceptual overhaul needed to overcome ignorance and adopt an ethical stance toward the natural environment.

Introduction

There is little better evidence that widespread ignorance is at work in relation to the natural world than the fact that the President of the United States does not "believe in" climate change. Flying squarely in the face of nearly unanimous scientific consensus, President Trump ran on a platform that insisted that there is no problem. He vowed to back out of the Paris Agreement, which, by now, he has done. He and his supporters are working to minimize the Environmental Protection Agency, abolish crucial environmental regulations, and expedite environmentally hazardous projects. Ignorance at this level is a powerful and growing barrier to the possibility of any genuine environmental ethic. In this paper, I argue that environmental ignorance is a group-based form of substantive ignorance that is analogous to race-based ignorance. I will use Charles Mills's (2007) analysis of white ignorance as a model for environmental ignorance. I will show how they are structurally similar, function in similar ways, and sometimes overlap. While race theorists have offered promising solutions toward eliminating race-based ignorance, I argue that something far more is needed in the environmental case. I turn to Freya Mathews's (2003)

contemporary panpsychism as a possible solution but ultimately conclude that it is too radical for most Americans to willingly embrace. Finally, incorporating Mathews' notion of "encounter," I will argue that an expanded conception of home provides a better entry point into the conceptual overhaul needed to overcome ignorance and adopt an ethical stance toward the natural environment.

Epistemologies of Ignorance: Simple and Substantive

We can think here in terms of two broadly construed accounts of ignorance.[6] The first, I will call "simple ignorance" and the second, "substantive ignorance." Simple ignorance is simple because it is a straightforward lack of knowledge. We may think of this form of ignorance as a feature of a subject in relation to a set of propositions or questions at a given time where 1) the subject does not know the truth value, 2) believes wrongly about the truth value, or 3) has no strong views (suspends judgement) about the truth values of those propositions (Bromberger 1988; Peels 2010; LeMorvan 2011). Substantive ignorance is something altogether different. It is better understood as something one *does*. This sort of ignorance is characterized by one's participation in certain epistemic practices that maintain or encourage simple ignorance.

The simple account of ignorance has received the most traction in classical and traditional (analytic) epistemology. Socrates understood his own ignorance in this way, claiming to know only that he knew nothing – largely, I take it, through the suspension of judgement. Aristotle's discussion of ignorance as a potential moral excuse also relies on a conception of ignorance as not knowing. One may act *by reason of ignorance*, where one lacks knowledge of certain relevant particulars (that some information was supposed to be secret, for example). This

[6] For detailed taxonomies of ignorance see Michael Smithson's *Ignorance and Uncertainty: Emerging Paradigms* (Smithson 1989) and "The changing nature of ignorance" (Smithson 1991), as well as "Humankind and the Environment: An Anatomy of Surprise and Ignorance" (Faber, Manstetten and Proops 1992).

lack of knowledge is excusable, says Aristotle, for the most part. But one may also act *in ignorance*. Here one lacks knowledge of a custom or law (Aristotle 2009, 39-41). This lack of knowledge is inexcusable. Analytic philosopher Gilbert Ryle (2009) argues that ignorance is wrongly understood as stupidity, carelessness, or inability. Rather, ignorance is a consequence of these. Stupidity causes a lack of knowledge (Ryle 2009, 14-15). More recently, debates within analytic epistemology focus on whether ignorance is an absence of true belief (Peels 2010) or an absence of knowledge (LeMorvan 2011). Either way, ignorance is a mere lack of something, whatever that something may be. Where this lack is culpable, it is generally treated as a matter of neglect. I lack knowledge of something I should have known.

While substantive ignorance has received far less attention in analytic Western epistemology, it has not been entirely neglected by philosophy. Indian philosophers as far back as 500 BCE have tackled issues surrounding a type of substantive ignorance known as *avidyā*. *Avidyā* describes a vast illusion about the true nature of reality. Whereas we believe that individual entities, birth, death, and change are all features of reality, these are false beliefs. The truth is that reality is pure consciousness—Brahman—an eternal, changeless reality to which we are all identical (Kaplan 2007, 179). *Avidyā* is a pervasive ignorance that is maintained by interests and practices that contribute to this false worldview. It is not merely a lack of knowledge, but an epistemically dysfunctional way of approaching the world. For most schools of Indian thought, *avidyā* is a fundamental existential problem, and, in one way or another, philosophical discourse is concerned with either its removal or debating its character (Doherty 2005; Kaplan 2007).

According to Sandra Harding (2006), Karl Marx also wrote extensively on issues of substantive ignorance, focusing on "interested ignorance." This form of substantive ignorance is characterized by unconscious class interests. Harding explains that latent class interests of those

in the upper strata of society inform the accepted standards in many areas, but most importantly for us, they determine epistemic standards. Marx emphasizes the influence of bourgeois interests in deciding what counts as good science. These interests determine the standards of objectivity, rationality, and legitimate areas of scientific inquiry. With "the scientific community" acting as a gatekeeper of knowledge and inquiry, unaccountable to outside criticism, ignorance becomes embedded in epistemic practice (Harding 2006, 24-25). Harding says, "Marx provided the first extended account of just how knowledge projects are always located in social structures of their era" (Harding 2006, 26). Substantive ignorance, here, can be understood as a knowledge *project*.

Feminist and critical race theorists have since taken up, critiqued, and expanded Marx's exploration of class-based, interested ignorance to include gender-, race-, and sexuality-based interests. One such example is Charles Mills's (2007) examination of white ignorance, a form of substantive ignorance generated by race. In this analysis, Mills shows that five interrelated cognitive processes are affected by race in ways that yield deficient epistemic outcomes. That is, being white plays a causal role in ignorance. This causal mechanism is not physico-biological, but social-structural (though it operates through the physico-biological) (Mills 2007, 20). While it may not affect each and every white person, white ignorance is nonetheless a pervasive group phenomenon that is sustained by a myriad of practices that do not correct the malfunctioning cognitive processes, but, rather, encourage them.

Mills points out that white ignorance is not the only group-based ignorance to operate on such a pervasive and systemic level (he mentions also male ignorance associated with sexism), and in the next section I will argue that ignorance related to the natural environment is another substantive, pervasive, group-based phenomenon that is analogous to white ignorance. I will begin by discussing Mills's analysis of white ignorance followed by a similar analysis of eco-based ignorance. Ultimately, I will show that where one's membership in a particular racial

group can affect cognitive processes and undermine one's ability to form true beliefs about oneself and others, here one's membership in a particular culture can perform a similar role in relation to the environment.

White Ignorance

Mills's analysis focuses on individual and social processes of cognition. He details five that are affected by race: conception, perception, memory, testimony, and motivational group interest (Mills 2007, 23). Mills points out that these processes are in constant interaction and, though the analytic separation is artificial and the traces of all are in each, separating them is nonetheless helpful. I will briefly discuss each, taking perception and conception together, as does Mills.

Conception/Perception

As Mills points out, the idea that humans perceive without the interference or mediation of concepts has long been discredited. There is no raw perceptual given. Perceptions are simultaneous conceptions, Mills says, and these conceptions influence what and how we perceive (Mills 2007, 24). This is a fairly basic tenet in social epistemology. Relevant here is that racialized concepts, such as white normativity, influence perception in racialized ways. Mills says, "Whiteness is originally coextensive with full humanity, so that the nonwhite Other is grasped through a historic array of concepts whose common denominator is their subjects' location on a lower ontological and moral rung" (Mills 2007, 26). One example is 'savage.' Built into this conceptual category is 'uncivilized,' 'inferior,' 'primitive,' and 'subhuman.' When white colonizers employ this category in referring to an entire continent of peoples, direct perception of them is mediated by it; one sees *through* the concept:

> Even a cognizer with no antipathy or prejudice toward Native Americans will be cognitively disabled trying to establish truths about them insofar as such a category and its associated presuppositions will tend to force his conclusions in a certain direction, *will constrain what he can objectively see*…. (Mills 2007, 27, emphasis mine)

As a result, these colonizers experience no cognitive dissonance when describing lands as newly discovered or empty. Given the conceptual framework through which they experience the world, they actually perceive the lands as empty of fully-human inhabitants, built structures, technologies, or civil societies.

In the past concepts like these were used in justifying inequitable treatment, but now white normativity lives on through "strategic color blindness" (Mills 2007, 28). 'I don't see race' really means that a white person need not, and often does not, cognize herself as *raced*. Race does not have to play a significant role in her self-identity, even though it may have factored significantly into her socio-economic position. White Americans do not need to know or give credence to the long history of systemic and social inequality that granted them resources and advantages while denying them to people of color. As a result, whites often see institutions as fair and impartial. They may not perceive discrimination as discrimination, but rather perceive prejudiced treatment or differences in socio-economic standing as stemming from individual shortcomings or differing cultural values. Mill concludes, "In both cases white normativity underpins white privilege, in the first case by justifying differential treatment by race and in the second case by justifying formally equal treatment by race that – in its denial of the cumulative effects of past differential treatment – is tantamount to continuing it" (Mills 2007, 28).

Memory

Mills says that "collective amnesia" and the cognitive process of memory underlie this ability to readily deny effects of the past. Social memory is sustained by textbooks, ceremonies, holidays, statues, parks, monuments, and art (Mills 2007, 29). In the United States, textbooks, holidays, and memorials are sanitized of memories that cast a negative light on whites. Easy examples are Columbus Day, Thanksgiving, and the surrounding ceremonies; subtler are stereotypes and jokes. It can only be a peculiar stereotype that "black people don't/can't swim" if one has forgotten, was never taught, or ignores the history of exclusion from pools and beaches faced by black Americans (Woods 2011). Collective memory and amnesia are representations of reality and constitute our collective identity:

> At the level of symbolism and national self-representation, then, the denial of the extent of Native American and black victimization buttresses the airbrushed white narrative of discovery, settlement, and building of a shining city on this hill. But the editing of white memory...enables a self-representation in which differential white privilege, and the need to correct for it, does not exist. (Mills 2007, 31)

Control of memory is political, and decisions about what is remembered lie in power relationships of sex, race, and class. This battle for control is ongoing. Universities have faced attacks on ethnic studies courses that teach history from the perspective of colonized and oppressed communities (Polletta 2017). Public schools are facing increasing criticism for their sanitized versions of slavery (Turner 2018), and there are ongoing fierce, and sometimes violent, debates on the presence of confederate monuments in public spaces (Dubenko 2017).

Testimony

Mills points out that this sanitized history is much easier to maintain when non-white testimony is discredited or altogether silenced. Using examples like Kant's dismissal of a black carpenter's views because his black skin meant he was stupid, laws that equated the testimonies of seven black men to that of one white man, and the violent terrorism exacted upon black witnesses of white crimes during Jim Crow, Mills demonstrates the widespread and continuing suppression of black testimony. Here, race affects the cognitive processes through the misassignment of credibility. Miranda Fricker (1998) calls this process "testimonial injustice." Fricker shows that as social knowers, we rely heavily on the testimony of others, and we have developed ways to demarcate reliable and unreliable sources. She calls these markers "indicator properties" (Fricker 1998, 162). Those possessing the operative indicator properties have credibility and rational authority. Race is one such working indicator property, where whiteness indicates credibility and blackness the opposite. This creates a situation where black testimony is "aprioristically rejected," and white testimony is given the decisive *benefit* of the doubt (Mills 2007, 32).

Conditions under which non-white testimony is rejected, suspect, or held to higher epistemic standards allow the vast majority of knowledge production and dissemination to remain under the control of a single group. White Americans, "learn to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that this set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority" (Mills 1997, 18). This means that the interests of this group can be served by the telling of certain stories and the silencing of others without any appearance of wrong-doing. The whiteness of virtually all the key figures in our own discipline provides an easy, straightforward example (Mills 2008, 1384).

Motivational Group Interest

The role interest plays in individual cognition is well-known. I notice in a particular setting what is relevant to me and my interests, I seek evidence in relation to what concerns me, or I hold various incompatible beliefs based on some fiction I wish to maintain. Countervailing evidence is frequently dismissed or seen as an exception to an established rule. But what is not sufficiently understood is the role of *group* interests in cognition. Specifically, "…vested white group interest in the racial status quo…needs to be recognized as a major factor in encouraging white cognitive distortions of various kinds" (Mills 2007, 35). Mills points out that investing in this false reality has been psychically required for colonization, the enslavement of non-whites, and the ongoing oppression of people of color. Linda Martín Alcoff (2007) points out:

> If it is true that most people prefer to think of themselves as moral or at least excusable in their actions, then in unjust societies those in dominant and privileged positions must be able to construct representations of themselves and others to support a fantasyland of moral approbation. (Alcoff 2007, 49)

In order to maintain the self-image of a good person, I cannot let myself know the true extent of my role in maintaining oppressive structures, and when I do know, it is difficult to go against group interests and beliefs. Even when morality and self-image are not at stake, Mills cites research showing that whites still tend to see black interests as opposed to their own (Mills 2007, 35). Gender theorist, Michael Kimmel (2008), provides an example from his appearance on a television talk show entitled, "A black woman took my job." Sitting opposite four white men who claimed they were victims of workplace discrimination, he posed the obvious but *not-so-obvious* question, "Where did you get the idea that it was your job? Why isn't the title of the show 'A black woman got *the* job,' 'A black woman got *a* job?'" (Kimmel 2008, 10). The

reasoning here goes, black interest in a job, in that job, is black interest in *my* job. This sense of entitlement sets up a perception that black equality is discrimination against whites.

Drawing the discussion back to the interconnection between each of the cognitive processes, Mill says:

> Inevitably, then, this will affect white social cognition – the concepts favored (e.g. today's "color blindness"), the refusal to perceive systemic discrimination, the convenient amnesia about the past and its legacy in the present, and the hostility to black testimony on continuing white privilege and the need to eliminate it to achieve racial justice. (Mills 2007, 35)

The take away here is that one's racial group interest *motivates* faulty cognition, encouraging adherence to the other processes above. Taken together these five processes not only drive poor epistemic practices but stand as a barrier to correcting them.

Environmental Ignorance

I now turn to how these cognitive processes can be affected in relation to natural entities and the environment. I will begin by showing how dominant conceptual frameworks have mediated perceptions of nonhuman nature over time. By dominant, I mean Western/European conceptual categories. This is important because it identifies to whom I refer when I say that "we" participate in these ignorance-producing practices. Obviously, there are many cultures and peoples who do not share these categories or histories of thought, including many Western Europeans, and some of these cultures are those that have been colonized and silenced using the devices of both white and environmental ignorance. My discussion will focus primarily on the environmental ignorance of Americans and the Western/European conceptual categories we have

inherited. I say "we" because I include myself in this group and not because I assume my reader belongs there.

Conception/Perception

Though the history of European thought includes some veneration, appreciation, and animation of nonhuman nature, it is largely one of denigration (White 1967; Williams 1973; Woods 2011). Where the leading conceptual category for racial ignorance is white normativity, here it is human exceptionalism. Val Plumwood, in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (2003), traces the long history of human exceptionalism from its rudimentary beginnings in Plato, its fruition in Descartes and the rationalist/Christian tradition, to its continued dominance. Human exceptionalism is connected to a deeply embedded and thoroughgoing dualism. Dualism here should not be confused with dichotomy or difference:

> Dualism…imposes a conceptual framework which polarises and splits apart into two orders of being that can be conceptualised and treated in more integrated and unified ways. But dualism should not be seen as *creating* difference where none exists. Rather it tends to capitalise on existing patterns of difference, rendering these in ways which ground hierarchy. (Plumwood 1993, 55)

This dualism establishes a chasm by radically excluding human-being from all other forms of being (Plumwood 1993, 49). On one side of the chasm is humanity, rationality, and morality. The other side, the whole of nonhuman nature, is undefined in itself, defined, instead, relationally. It is a complete lack of truly human features, having no value of its own (Plumwood 1993, 52). It is therefore subject to domination and instrumentalization (Plumwood 1993, 53). All other forms of being become either resources or the backdrop of human activity. They are

homogenized such that "[d]iversity and multiplicity which are surplus to [human] desires need not be acknowledged" (Plumwood 1993, 54). All interconnectivity with and dependency on entities in the natural world are denied and "backgrounded" in order to maintain this dominance (Plumwood 1993, 48). These five features—radical exclusion, relational definition, instrumentalization, homogenization, and backgrounding—are structural aspects of the logic of dualism and are found in all its forms.

Plumwood sees the stirrings of dualism in Plato, "…the body and the passions belong in Plato's account to a sharply distinct lower realm, homogenized and defined by exclusion, to be dominated and controlled by superior reason, and to be used in its service" (Plumwood 1993, 70). Plato's account of human exceptionalism is rudimentary, however, given that being apart from nature is something one can attain to, not what one essentially is. Being virtuous is a practice of cultivating one's reason and becoming less animalistic. The full break with nature comes with the dominance of Christianity and the rationalist tradition:

> …with Enlightenment rationalism the emphasis shifts away from the virtue-based account…to a theory of consciousness as the focus of the self. Responsibility for maintaining human hyperseparation correspondingly shifts from an account of human virtue to an account of nature and the body as pure mechanism, devoid of any elements of mind, which is now identified with consciousness. In the contemporary outlook…the mechanistic world-view plays the crucial role in sustaining human/nature dualism, although it is often supplemented by new exclusionary accounts of human identity…. (Plumwood 1993, 108)

Within this new scientific worldview, nature is defined as a lack. It lacks purposiveness, agency, creativity, and, most importantly, it lacks any and all features of mind (Plumwood 1993, 110). In

the Christian view, which underlays the scientific view, nature signifies death (White 1967, 1206). Life and salvation belong in the renunciation of this world. Lynn White, Jr. (1967) says that the victory of Christianity over paganism "was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture," embedding into our daily habits and forms of thinking its prescriptions for interpreting our relationships to the natural world:

> God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his domination over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image. (White 1967, 1205)

However, as White points out, even though the Christian religion has lost its stronghold, our science and technology have grown from its values and attitudes toward nature. These attitudes are almost universally held in the West by Christians and non-Christians alike. He says:

> Despite Copernicus, all the cosmos rotates around our little globe. Despite Darwin, we are *not*, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim. (White 1967, 1206)

This conceptual baggage has the effect of causing mass misperceptions (especially moral misperceptions) of the natural environment. Natural entities are perceived largely in relation to human purposes or interest without regard to their own. They are perceived not as individuals but as interchangeable tokens of a type, where the whole of nature becomes "the environment," the non-distinct backdrop of human activity.

Furthermore, the radical exclusion of humans from nature causes mass misperceptions through the denial of mind, reason, emotion and language to all nonhuman nature. Perceiving through the conceptual category of human exceptionalism, any behavior that admits of some human feature is explained in terms of something else. Vicki Croke (2014) points out that though the behaviors are similar, "We love. They bond. We form friendships, they maintain social bonds. We feel jealous. They resource guard. We have sex, they copulate". Even when the behavior is *identical*, the "resource guarding" of the chimpanzee is of an entirely different (and lower) ontological and ethical order than my jealousy. The order for plant life is lower still. Although plants decide when and where to send their roots to help or compete with others (Dudley and File 2007), communicate with each other (Babikova, et al. 2013; Karban 2008), have several senses (Chamovitz 2012), and can remember and learn (Latzel, Gonzalez and Rosenthal 2016), you best not call it that. Those who refer to nonhuman behaviors in "human" terms are told that they speak in metaphor, that they wrongly anthropomorphize. But anthropomorphism is itself a bizarre notion that reinforces human exceptionalism. I anthropomorphize if I misassign a properly human trait to the nonhuman world, but in the spirit of Kimmel, where did we get the idea that these are *our* traits? We got this idea because we misperceive the world on a massive scale, taking ourselves as the center from which all others are defined. Taking a view from the margins, then, invites the discovery that so-called "human" traits are ubiquitous in nature, and have been since long before the emergence of humans.

Memory

These perceptual and conceptual errors influence and are influenced by memory. Where the histories of people of color are largely subordinated to white histories, histories of the land are altogether missing. Aldo Leopold (1966) says:

> Many historical events, hitherto explained solely in terms of human enterprise, were actually biotic interactions between people and land. The characteristics of the land determined the facts quite as potently as the characteristics of the men who lived on it…We are commonly told what the human actors in this drama tried to do, but we are seldom told that their success, or the lack of it, hung in large degree on the reaction of particular soils to the impact of the particular forces exerted by their occupancy. (Leopold 1966, 242-243)

He tells the story of the American Southwest, where the land could not tolerate the overgrazing of the livestock brought there by pioneers. Once a land of rich and fertile soil, the erosion caused by such practices has drastically reduced arable land (Leopold 1966, 242). Now the Southwest is primarily known for its cattle, not its crops. Without heavy irrigation, crops just will not grow. Leopold points out that the humans merely discovered, but did not control, what the land would allow, and what the land allows determines what human activities can flourish there. He concludes, "In short, plant succession steered the course of history" (Leopold 1966, 243).

Leopold laments that natural history is a discipline of catalogue and classification, dealing only "incidentally with the identity of plants and animals, and only incidentally with their habits and behaviors" (Leopold 1966, 209). The living animal and its relationship to human beings are scarcely noted. When these relationships are taken up, they are in complete isolation from human history. Reinforcing the logic of dualism, histories that highlight our utter dependency on climatic, plant, and animal forces are ignored, denied, and silenced, much like the histories of those who did and do live attentively engaged with these forces.

The rich and various relationships between Native American cultures and the natural world are known only in simplified and tokenized ways. Living by the land or through subsistence-based practices is a marker of some preliminary status of being, prior to "civilized"

culture or full humanity. Our histories reflect "progress" and the overcoming of these lifestyles, which are scarcely examined in themselves. bell hooks (2009) also draws attention to the mostly forgotten history of black agrarian culture, one not captured by the myopic focus on agrarian life as enslavement. She recounts a legacy of black empowerment stemming from connectivity with the natural world:

> …I was taught to see myself as a custodian of the land...to cherish the land…I learned to see nature, our natural environment as a force caring for the exploited and oppressed black folk living in the culture of white supremacy. Nature was there to teach the limitations of humanity, white and black…Working the land, nurturing life, caring for crops and animals, had given black men of the past a place to dream and hope beyond race and racism, beyond oppressive and cruel white power…. (hooks 2009, 42-43)

Yet this history is barely known:

> It was always the experience of black people living in large urban cities who defined black identity. No one paid any attention to the lives of rural black folks. No matter that before the 1900s ninety percent of all black people lived in the agrarian South…We have forgotten the black farmer, both the farmer of the past, and those last remaining invisible farmers who still work the land. It has been in the interest of imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy to hide and erase their story…. (hooks 2009, 41, 43)

Here, as well as with testimony, white ignorance and environmental ignorance overlap, meaning that both race and human exceptionalism contribute to misrepresentations and the "forgetting" of human connectivity with the land.

Testimony

The case hardly needs to be made that testimony from the natural world is ignored and devalued. As far as most Americans are concerned, entities of the natural world do not communicate. Yet, there are human communities who live and believe in ways that give features and entities of the natural world communicative agency. Freya Mathews (2003) argues that since it has been a hallmark of the Western knowledge project to reject any personification or interiority to nonhuman entities, indigenous cultures that retain or validate these features are primitive, backward, pre-rational, or superstitious (Mathews 2003, 76). Ethnoecologist Marc Wohling (2009) points out that even where indigenous knowledge is championed by non-indigenous environmentalists, it becomes co-opted and reified by them. He says that we are taking, "what is essentially a varied and dissimilar array of local, secret, and sacred knowledge and transforming it into a universal wisdom" (Wohling 2009, 2). Anthropologist J. Peter Brosius (1997) echoes this concern. "In presenting [indigenous] knowledge as wisdom or insight having a sacred quality, one is imposing a falsely universalized quality on a range of peoples, and thereby collapsing precisely the diversity that defines them…" (Brosius 1997, 65-66). The point here is that even where nonhuman nature may have its spokespersons in some indigenous cultures, the message is either not taken up or inappropriately distorted. This amounts to a testimonial injustice toward those who might bring the testimony of the nonhuman world to bear on human affairs.

Of course, there are many non-indigenous advocates for the natural environment. They are often seen as either extremist and militant or loopy, tree-hugging hippies (Bashir, et al. 2013). Those who speak in ways that challenge human exceptionalism are marginalized, mocked, and ignored, as their ideas conflict with mainstream American interests and are seen as impediments to progress. Following Mills, these conflicts are related to group motivational

interests, and in the next section I will discuss two types of groups whose interests sustain environmental ignorance: corporate and cultural.

Motivational Group Interests

Corporate Interests

Corporate interests are probably the most insidious. Often industries have a positive interest in downplaying information, hiding information, or producing false information about how their activities affect human and nonhuman communities. Here, ignorance is operative in two primary ways. First, industries are strategically and willfully ignorant and, second, they manufacture ignorance and doubt in attempts to control public knowledge.

In "Commons Ignorance," Wendy Wagner (2004) outlines a series of ignorance producing and maintaining practices perpetrated by large industries in efforts to maximize profit often at the expense of affected communities. These practices allow industries to remain ignorant of environmentally dangerous practices and products. For example, her studies found that large industries, or "regulated actors," systematically resist researching and documenting adverse consequences of their activities and products. Research is expensive and there is little to no market benefit to proving that something is safe. It might reveal bad news that could require more testing, at best, and tort liability, at worst. As such, industries benefit from remaining ignorant about the effects of their activities and products.

Not only do industries resist producing their own information, they invest in obstructing research from the outside, manufacturing uncertainty, and disseminating false information in order to maintain an ignorant public (Wagner 2004, 1625-1658). Regulated actors have superior physical and epistemic access to their activities, products, and their effects, and they can use this access to increase costs for publicly funded research efforts or bar outside access completely.

When adverse information is produced from the outside, actors refuse to participate in further research and "will invest as much time, money, and energy in discrediting information on the adverse effects of their activities that they expect to lose if credible information is ultimately produced that can be used against them" (Wagner 2004, 1649). Tactics include obscuring scientific consensus, attacking research—by "making groundless challenges about the methods used, the reliability of the data collected, the qualifications of the researcher conducting the study, or by suggesting that the review processes are flawed" (Wagner 2004, 1653), attacking researchers—by issuing "unsupported allegations of scientific misconduct, harassing subpoenas or depositions, and burdensome data-sharing requests" that distract and intimidate (Wagner 2004, 1655), and financing counter-research "designed to refute third-party research, either by producing different results or by suggesting that the results of the independent research cannot be reproduced" (Wagner 2004, 1656). Furthermore, Wagner's research shows that our environmental laws both allow and encourage this strategic production of ignorance (Wagner 2004, 1677-1694).

This results in a public that is profoundly ignorant about the practices of industries that permeate their lives, the products they regularly consume, and the effects of these practices and products on the natural environment. Even if one wanted to know, the barriers to getting accurate information are too great. Market and legal incentives, nefarious business practices, and political lobbying create a structural barrier to removing environmental ignorance. Yet, even when we can obtain knowledge, we tend to have little interest in doing so.

Cultural Interests

Environmental subordination and exploitation are imbedded in our lifestyles. Looking at just one aspect of American life, food consumption, reveals a myriad of environmental trespasses—toxic

insecticides, shipping emissions, animal emissions, land degradation, and staggering amounts of food waste, to name a very few. The list is longer, and there are similar lists for almost every daily activity of each American. Considering how reliant upon environmental exploitation we are, we have a vested interest in environmental ignorance. We can hardly function without seriously ignoring the natural environment and how destructive our lifestyles really are. For some, destructive lifestyles, and the denial thereof, constitute important aspects of cultural identity.

Those who deny or remain skeptical about the realities of climate change are often dismissed as being simply ignorant. The idea is that they lack the appropriate knowledge or even the capacity to understand the scientific data that supports the existence of anthropogenic climate change. However, scientists have found that a lack of scientific literacy or ability to reason quantitatively has very little to do with it. Dan Kahan, from the Yale Cultural Cognition Project says:

> In effect, ordinary members of the public credit or dismiss scientific information on disputed issues based on whether the information strengthens or weakens their ties to others who share their values…among ordinary members of the public, individuals with higher science comprehension are even better at fitting the evidence to their group commitments. (Yale University 2012)

This phenomenon of "cultural cognition" is an unconscious process by which one's group interests and values, or one's personal interest in forming beliefs in line with one's group, shape perceptions and the evaluation of evidence (Kahan, et al. 2012). Thus, knowing more does nothing by way of eliminating substantive ignorance. In fact, the more scientifically literate and numerate one is, the more one will cling to one's party line (Yale University 2012). As former

South Carolina Republican Congressman Bob Inglis puts it, "All I knew was that Al Gore was for it, so I was against it" (Inglis 2013). Once a climate denier himself, he now works to get more Republicans to acknowledge the risks associated with climate change. He faces an uphill battle and usually finds that those who might be initially swayed are silenced or fear speaking up. He says that just a few loud voices succeed "in cultural norming and [cause] everyone to sit there not willing to cross the current tribal orthodoxy" (Inglis 2013).

The "tribe" on the other side appears to be doing better; at least the environment is a significant player among most progressives' values. But one wonders what role it actually plays. The stand-off at Standing Rock over the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline provides a salient example, where the interests of the oil industry and local governments clashed with native interests in preserving sacred sites, the integrity of the land and water, and their rights to sovereignty. Though thousands of supporters poured in to help the Standing Rock Sioux, their support was a mixed blessing. On one hand, the activists who joined the cause drew national attention to the issue and eventually met with some, albeit temporary, success. On the other hand, many of these activists and supporters had their own agenda. Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux, David Archambault II says of the protesters:

> As this grows and it gets bigger and bigger, and as it evolves, the interest isn't really for water anymore. It's more about a conflict between law enforcement and the water protectors and trying to hold ground or trying to advance and that's not what this is about…It's easy for different environmentalists, different people to come, and they have their own agendas. There's no way that we can keep everybody focused on the same things. (Archambault II 2016)

Though the environmentalists and other activists were likely well-intentioned, their view of the issue and of the land was political, and the interests of native peoples and the various entities making up the land and water were largely ignored. Archambault continues:

> There's a lot of waste. It's a distraction from the water. If we're about this environment, we would be protecting Mother Earth. We wouldn't be hurting her. And yet…there's no regard…. When I look at that camp, I always think: What's going to happen when this is over? Who's going to clean that up? Who's going to put that land back to its natural state? Before this entire movement started, that was some of the most beautiful land around…. Now, it's occupied by people… I heard that they're digging pits down there for their human waste. That's a flood zone. So when the floodwaters come up, that waste is going to be contaminating the water. We're no different than the oil company, if we're fighting for water. (Archambault II 2016)

Despite differences between the political left and right, the underlying metaphysical and practical commitments are essentially the same. By and large, Americans are committed to a consumer culture that places human interests and needs above all else. What often makes the difference between a progressive and a conservative in her daily habits and relationship to the environment is which products she buys, which car she drives, and what kinds of foods she eats. Quite obviously some products are better for the natural environment than others, but a green commodity market merely perpetuates (and masks) a commodity culture in the guise of environmental moralism (Parr 2012). Hyperconsumerism and accumulation as fundamental aspects of American identity remain unquestioned as consumer activism constitutes the bulk of our environmental protectionism and, furthermore, are completely at odds with a genuine

concern for the integrity of the natural environment. As Adrian Parr (2012) puts it, a *green* commodity market is oxymoronic (Parr 2012, 19).

Even where one's group interests might appear to be aligned with environmental interests the actuality is that a more basic interest in Americanized standards of living and status motivates our actual practices. Indeed, most interest in environmental protection is, at heart, an interest in securing resources and a habitable planet *for humans*. For white ignorance, white interests are set against black interests; the analog for environmental ignorance should be that human interests are set against the multitude of interests in the natural world. However, the situation here is worse or, at least, more thoroughgoing. Conflicts over the state of the environment are usually conflicts of interests between various human groups. The interests of the natural world are either denied and ignored or are given only indirect consideration insofar as those interests contribute to the longevity of the human species. The sad truth is that the interests of the natural environment are scarcely within the purview of most Americans, even those who purport to be most interested in it.

Dispelling Ignorance

White ignorance has here served as a model, an overlapping analogy for environmental ignorance. Just as race affects cognition in epistemically deficient ways, so does Western/European cultural ideology. Our metaphysical commitments along with our systems of value and dominant lifestyles create a group that is substantially ignorant of the natural world. It would seem that the solutions to these group-based ignorances might also be analogous. Yet, while many of the remedies offered by epistemologists of ignorance are important steps toward eradicating race-based ignorance, these steps are not adequate to address environmental ignorance.

The changes called for by race theorists are primarily related to better epistemic practices and/or call on attitudinal shifts. For example, Paul C. Taylor (2007) advocates "radical constructivism," which is a truth-generating, ignorance-bashing racial discourse combined with revolutionary patience and faith.[7] He says that classical race theory sees humans as divided into distinct, hierarchical types. Each type is assigned its own physical, moral, and mental characteristics. The radical constructionist view, on the other hand, understands races as groups of similarly situated people. Their situations are made similar by social mechanisms that asymmetrically distribute social goods among them. He says, "each race comprises people who stand in similar relations to the stratifying mechanisms of white supremacy." That is, "To know that Betty is black is to know that she would have had to ride the Jim Crow car in 1940s' Georgia" (Taylor 2007, 138). Taylor argues that the radical constructionist view of race can begin to overcome ignorance by illuminating the historical and on-going patterns of meaning-making and how these meanings are assigned to certain bodies. Here, racial discourse does not solidify metaphysically distinct races, but undermines them by exposing their historical origins and patterns of change. Furthermore, it gives us the tools to alter and assign meanings in more responsible ways.

The radical constructionism advocated by Taylor is a promising suggestion. However, one of the main reasons why this proposal, and others like it, can be useful for ignorance-bashing in relation to racial ignorance is because "behind" race is a human being. That is, whether you operate on the classical view that humans are divided into types or the radical constructionist view that race refers to similar situated humans, both are ways of describing groups of humans. Though white normativity denies full humanity to people of color, once the epistemic barrier is

[7] Other suggestions are given by, among others, Charles Mills, who calls for a recovery of the past through factual and corrected conceptual retellings of our shared history (Mills 2008) and Elizabeth Spelman, who considers James Baldwin's call for a black-led forgiveness through "pity-laced love" as a way to dispel ignorance (Spelman 2007, 122).

removed and full humanity restored, full moral standing falls into place necessarily because human beings are *already* at the center of all moral considerations. Thus, a central aspect of this and other solutions to white ignorance is a method to dispel erroneous thinking and validate the full humanity of people of color. Taylor does this by showing that race is not an essential feature delineating types, but a series of historical patterns and social meanings assigned to certain bodies.

Alas, the natural environment is removed by a far greater epistemic chasm. Though there are deeply imbedded conceptual frameworks that construct people of color as lesser persons, knowers have an entry-point into better knowing practices: our shared species being. In the spirit of Lorraine Code's *Ecological Thinking* (2006), we can engage in practices of responsible knowing in efforts to overcome both our simple and substantive ignorances in relation to race because, as human, we have points of commonality through which narratives, histories, pity-laced love, and discourse can bridge our differences. Bottom line, in remedying race-based ignorances, I can largely *retain* a Western worldview without any fundamental conceptual shifts. However, our views about our relationships to the external world and the natural world are pulled from our deepest metaphysical commitments. The divides between mind and body, matter and spirit, human and nature are the bedrocks of Western civilization and culture. Thus, for the environment, undermining ignorance seems to require a complete conceptual overhaul. The conceptual work required to both dispel substantive ignorance about the environment and treat it ethically takes far more than a bridge; it would seem to require a full demolition with a new foundation. Luckily, Mathews brings a bulldozer and blueprints.

Experimenting with Environmental Gestalt

Mathews argues that the Western worldview preempts an ethical epistemological stance toward the natural world. Because nonhuman nature is understood primarily as mechanistic, non-sentient, lacking purpose, and lacking inherent value, we approach it as a world of *things*:

> For while there can be no moral or spiritual objection to our investigating a thing—seeking to lay bare its internal mechanisms, to penetrate its mysteries—when the thing in question is a pure object, to adopt the same approach to a subject is an altogether different matter. Prima facie it constitutes a transgression and intrusion, a violation of the moral self-ownership that the subject enjoys as a self-realizing system, and that renders it a being for itself and not for others. (Mathews 2003, 76)

In response, she advocates adopting a worldview wherein entities of the natural world, as well as the natural world as a whole, are understood as possessing a subjectival dimension. Attempting to know a subjectival world is essentially different than approaching an objective world of things. Under this conceptual framework, we are already and always engaged in an ethical relation to earthly beings.

Mathews, thus, invites us to assume a metaphysical stance that erases the divide between subject and object, a stance that conceives of the world as a unified subject constituted by almost infinite subjectivities. This is a radical reversal in Western orthodox metaphysical underpinnings. She convincingly argues that matter is not something fundamentally devoid of spirit, mind, soul, intention, and will, but is the ground and source of these things. In reconceiving matter as participating in subjectivity, it makes little sense to posit a great chasm between human-being and other forms of being. Though not every entity is privy to the complexity of subjectival

systems like animals, each share in some degree of subjectivity and can be treated as such. Mathews calls this "contemporary panpsychism."

Adopting a panpsychic perspective enables one to more easily make sense of the world and treat it appropriately. Furthermore, panpsychism puts us in a better position to dispel ignorance about the natural world. By placing humanity among innumerable subjectivities, the driving conceptual category of human exceptionalism can be purged from the cognitive processes. Environmental destruction then becomes an urgent moral problem, wherein eliminating environmental ignorance is both an epistemic virtue and a central moral good.

Yet, dispelling ignorance as a knowledge project can become problematic under this view, as Mathews questions epistemological projects altogether:

> Is this quest [for knowledge] an intrinsic good, the definitive telos of humanity? Must the world be known? Does it, simply by existing, invite us to investigate it? Are there no moral or spiritual constraints on our curiosity? Do we have a right of unlimited epistemological access to things? (Mathews 2003, 75)

She sees knowing itself as problematic and antithetical to how subjects should be treated. Using the world as a means to gather knowledge is an affront. For Mathews, the appropriate stance toward subjects is *encounter*. She describes it thus:

> To encounter others…involves recognition of and contact with their independent subjectivity, where such recognition and contact inevitably give rise to a certain respect for their integrity and sympathetic concern for their fate… To encounter an other is to approach it as another subject with whom it is possible to have a relationship…and from whom it is possible to elicit a response. Since encounter involves contact with the subjectivity of the

> other, it is always bilateral; it can be said to have occurred only if the other has *allowed* us this glimpse into its interiority. (Mathews 2003, 76-77)

Mathews says that encounter is a completely different practice than knowing. When we encounter, our aim is not to explain why, what, or how something is; we engage another just as it is. Put simply, "Where knowledge…seeks to explain, encounter seeks to engage. Knowledge seeks to break open the mystery of another's nature; encounter leaves that mystery intact" (Mathews 2003, 78).

Mathews recognizes that certain forms of knowledge are necessary for survival but that they can be largely descriptive. Descriptive knowledge confronts the world in its givenness, and this form of knowledge can be gained in an overall "context of encounter," where respect informs and sets the limits of all pursuit (Mathews 2003, 79). Her contention is that, if the aim of the knower is knowledge, then her project is likely to fail and, more importantly, it is at the outset unethical. "Encounter takes moral and spiritual precedence over knowledge," she says, and because encounter involves attentiveness and interest, it can "incidentally and spontaneously" yield knowledge (Mathews 2003, 78). However, one's aim must be encounter if knowledge is to be gained ethically; knowledge of other subjects must be peripheral to the main task of respecting them.

Given that substantive ignorance is something we do rather than a set of beliefs we have, any solution is going to require the replacement of poor epistemic practices with better ones. This is precisely what panpsychism and encounter give us. Knowledge acquisition projects that aim at knowledge about the natural world relate more directly to simple ignorance. They do little (or nothing) to change substantive ignorance producing and maintaining practices that guide our behavior. This is all to say that, even if I know more facts about nature, as long as I conceive of the natural world as mere mechanism or instrument, I will continue to engage it in essentially

the same ways. I cannot accept the testimony of nonhuman entities if that testimony is preemptively understood as lacking all epistemic value. Mathews points out, "The failure to even raise the question about the moral appropriateness of our epistemological stance to the world reflects the metaphysical premise of the Western knowledge project." (Mathews 2003, 75) The charge is that, if we neglect the ethical dimension of responsibly knowing nonhuman nature, we actually reinforce the orthodox epistemological project. Thus, eliminating environmental ignorance requires both a set of practices that do not reproduce commitments to the Western knowledge project (encounter), as well as a new conceptual foundation that fundamentally includes the natural world within the sphere of ethical consideration (panpsychism).

What we find in Mathews is a promising starting point for alleviating environmental ignorance. Her contemporary panpsychism goes to the heart of the conceptual problem by undermining human exceptionalism. She does not advocate acquisition of knowledge or a mere replacement of false beliefs with true ones. Rather, she invites us to participate in a set of practices that compels us to perform an environmental Gestalt-switch, replacing a worldview that isolates us (epistemologically and ethically) from the natural world to one through which our relationships to natural entities are taken as given, as obvious, and as ethical from the outset.

Alas, adopting contemporary panpsychism is not without serious difficulties, and the problem is one of application. We have here a worldview that takes matter to be subjectival. This is *fundamentally* different from a worldview that takes matter to be objective. This sort of reversal overturns and delegitimizes complicated and thoroughgoing systems of core beliefs, ones on the basis of which all other beliefs are held and connected. My concern is that these two metaphysical systems are so profoundly opposed that they are utterly incommensurable, and if they are, then one cannot simply *choose* one over the other. That is, contemporary panpsychism may be impossible for the average American.

Deciding to Believe in Incommensurable Worlds

Two forms of incommensurability are detailed by Steve Fuller (1988) in his seminal work, *Social Epistemology*: textual and ecological. Textual incommensurability is related to language and translation, while ecological incommensurability describes the disconnect between opposing worldviews. The latter will concern us here. Ecological incommensurability is illustrated by the duck-rabbit illusion, or Gestalt-switches in general. Fuller says that Gestalt-switches are small-scale paradigm shifts, literal shifts in worldview. I am suggesting that just such a shift in worldview is being asked of us by Mathews.

Fuller examines two strategies, the instrumentalist's and realist's, for navigating incommensurable worldviews. Instrumentalists argue that each worldview, Western or panpsychic, is one way of interpreting reality. As such, each "viewer" can use a neutral "observation" language by which they can describe to each other why they read reality the way they do. The realist strategy, on the other hand, operates on the assumption that the more recent a theory describing reality, the better it must be. Fuller comments on how this latter strategy tends to place those of us imbedded in the Western worldview in the best position for truly understanding reality. Thus, as Mathews also noted, any culture that purports to communicate with nonhuman nature and make claims on this basis are merely relying upon prescientific explanations. According to the realist, what they are *really* talking about is whatever contemporary Westernized scientists have to say concerning the matter (Fuller 1988, 118). The two strategies differ, but what they share is that both require the knower to stand outside of the two incommensurable worldviews deciding how to merge them or to translate one into the other. But this outside is rarely, if ever, available, and the very issue at hand is how someone firmly established in one worldview might come to adopt another.

The trouble with the realist's strategy is fairly straightforward. The realist does not recognize both worldviews as legitimate and credible views of reality. The realist does not fit the two worldviews together; she merely corrects the "mistakes" of the other, seemingly archaic, view. One worldview simply *becomes* the other as all phenomena of the old world are explained in newer terms.

The instrumentalist's strategy seems more promising. Her task is to negotiate a neutral observation language with the other worldview holder that can be used to describe and understand both worldviews. There are two possibilities. To arrive at a shared language, the instrumentalist must either assume some sort of shared ontology between the two views or must extract each party from their respective worldviews to start the language from scratch. The first solution merely assumes that the two views are not incommensurable after all, and the second is simply impossible. An instrumentalist negotiating a new language must make a tacit assumption that the other shares *her* basic ontology. Otherwise, she cannot be sure that they are even communicating (Fuller 1988, 119-120).

What we find is that the only way for either strategy to wholly succeed is if one worldview is relinquished in favor of the other. But this should not pose a problem. After all, the point is to shift from a worldview wherein the nonhuman world is but a collection of objects to a view wherein the whole world and all its parts are subjects. We, therefore, ought to adopt a more *realist* strategy, except we work the other way around, replacing the Western worldview with panpsychism. Not so fast, says Fuller.

Fuller points out that it is highly unlikely that I could identify all core beliefs comprising my own worldview:

> The members of a worldview are said to hold, perhaps unconsciously, a core set of beliefs and attitudes that can be detected in the various expressive media of their culture, such as

> art, philosophy, literature, and science…Since virtually no one in the culture can think beyond the core set of beliefs because they appear self-evident, chances are that the core is much less articulated than its importance would seem to merit. (Fuller 1988, 121)

This is to say, not only is it virtually impossible to identify which of one's own beliefs need replacing, but it is completely impossible to identify the core beliefs of the new worldview to put in their place. Even if they could be identified, the idea that I could *choose* to swap some beliefs with others is untenable.

In "Deciding to Believe," Bernard Williams (1973) points out that it is absurd to think that one could choose to believe something. This idea undercuts what a belief is: something that aims at truth. Williams argues:

> If I could acquire a belief at will, I could acquire it whether it was true or not; moreover I would know that I could acquire it whether it was true or not. If in full consciousness I could will to acquire a 'belief' irrespective of its truth, it is unclear that before the event I could seriously think of it as a belief, i.e. something purporting to represent reality. At the very least, there must be a restriction on what is the case after the event; since I could not then, in full consciousness, regard this as a belief of mine, i.e. something I take to be true, and also know that I acquired it at will. With regard to no belief could I know—or, if all this is to be done in full consciousness, even suspect—that I had acquired it at will. But if I can acquire beliefs at will, I must know that I am able to do this…. (Williams 1973, 148)

Though still a matter of debate in contemporary epistemology, I am inclined to follow Fuller and Williams in thinking that much of what we believe is not subject to voluntary control, and certainly not those core beliefs that serve as the basic building blocks of a worldview. I am not saying that Mathews's panpsychism is impossible for everyone. Perhaps there are some who,

while somewhat imbedded in the Western worldview, have enough surrounding ecology appropriate to making the Gestalt-switch between matter as object and matter as subject. Yet, for many of us, panpsychism is incommensurable with the environment to which we are attuned. There is simply no way of toggling between the two.

Nonetheless, this is not to say that we cannot persuade ourselves to obtain or alter certain beliefs by roundabout routes. We can take up projects that might sway our beliefs. It seems quite easy and uncontroversial that in regard to simple ignorance we can willingly embark on missions to gather information on topics about which we lack knowledge. I submit that even as we try to overcome more challenging forms of substantive ignorance, it is possible to come up with projects that orient better epistemic practices. To be fair, this is really what Mathews is asking of us. She means her contemporary panpsychism as an experiment. But to really take up this type of project, one aimed at a complete conceptual overhaul, we cannot begin where we wish to end, as does Mathews. We need some point of entry where we already have rich and complex relationships to nonhuman entities, even those that we consider to be nothing more than objects. I suggest that such an entry point can be found in the home.

Encounter at Home

Regardless of what specific form one's home takes, it is always a collection of things and others among which one belongs. We share an intimate and unique relationship to these things and others not usually found in other spheres of our lives. A central aspect of this relationship is a sense of responsibility. I am responsible for the collection of things and others that belong in my home in a way that I am not responsible for some other set of things and others. If both my door and my neighbor's door are falling off the hinges, it is my door, and not my neighbor's, that I

ought to fix, and accordingly feel the pangs of that ought. As I have argued elsewhere,[8] this feeling of responsibility to my home is something essential to that relationship, and having a home is something essential to my being human. That is to say, it is part of who we are to be homemakers and care for those homes. The responsibilities we have to our homes need not be reciprocal nor causal (I am responsible whether or not I broke my own door), and they extend to all things and others who belong with me in my home.

Because of the centrality of responsibility to relationships of home, homes stand as unique sites wherein we can begin the practice of encounter. Indeed, many of us already engage the home in this way. The human and nonhuman others with whom we share our home are the most obvious recipients of our care and attention. Here, it makes perfect sense to speak of the family dog as being jealous or having friends. Those of us with nonhuman companions readily communicate with them. There is no worry about heading to the "nut-house" and, quite the contrary, it would seem bizarre and cruel to refuse such communication. It is apparent to anyone who regularly engages with nonhuman animals that they have rich emotional lives, that they have purposes and projects, that they can be curious or sad, that they sometimes ask for affection or to be left alone. Where scientists may chastise us for such language and supposed anthropomorphism, within the home, the real absurdity lies in denying these features.

The less obvious recipients of our care are things. Yet, at home our things are not mere objects but meaningful parts of our lives. Iris Marion Young (Young 2005) says of home making:

> [It is] both dwelling among things in ways that endow them with meanings, and also preserving the things and their meanings. We care for the meaningful things in our home

[8] Chapter 2, "An Environmental Ethic of Home."

> and aim to preserve them from loss, breakage, or the elemental damage of water, dirt, and heat. Some we take out now and then to look at and touch, often with an audience to whom we tell their meaningful stories. Then we carefully return them to their places, where they are safely preserved in their meaning. There are the things whose loss we mourn in the case of fire or theft, because for us they are both priceless and irreplaceable. (Young 2005, 159)

As Young here shows, our things are more like *members* of our homes, and we care for them in both the sense of taking care but, just as much, in the sense of loving. It is indicative that I do not have this relationship to things in someone else's home. I (ought to) have respect for those things, but I do not love them and I feel no responsibility toward them. In one's home, both things and others participate in making that home what it is, and as a member I must participate with these things and others to maintain and preserve this shared relationship.

While panpsychism may still be a stretch (though I think we do have animistic *tendencies* at home), within the home the practice of encounter is not something foreign; it is our primary way of being. I do not approach others and things with an intention to dissect or prod. As Young says, in dwelling with and preserving my home, my aim is meaningfulness and familiarity, not knowledge. Furthermore, I have no real interest in being or maintaining ignorance in relation to the home.[9] If I do participate in practices associated with substantive ignorance, I will soon lose my home; I *must* care for and maintain my home, I must build relationships and familiarity, if it is to stay my home.

[9] It would be prudent at this stage to clarify that I am here referring to a good home. 'Home' is a concept of much debate and there is plenty to say about bad, dangerous, and oppressive homes. But here I am talking about what homes ought to be and what we generally try to make them. In an oppressive home, one might have an interest in ignorance. For example, historically men have instrumentalized and backgrounded women and women's work in the home in ways we could call "male ignorance." Home has been and is too often still a site of oppression. However, it is in part because our homes ought to be sites of autonomy, respect, safety, and care that violations thereof are so egregious.

Take the cognitive processes involved in environmental ignorance. Let us say that I treat and experience the things and others in my home as mere objects lacking meaning or significance (conception/perception). I do not know or care to know their histories, I do not include them or perceive them as part of my own stories (memory). I refuse to engage anything they might communicate with me or simply deny that they communicate anything at all (testimony). Let us say that I deny all purpose to their being other than their being there for me. Let us say that I perceive any interests they might have as opposed to my own, and my needs, wants, and interests always take priority (motivational interests). It is actually quite easy to imagine an environment like this. Picture a hotel. It is somewhere I might visit and might even enjoy for a while, but such a place could not be my home. Indeed, it is precisely *because of* these disconnected characteristics, the lack of relationship and familiarity, that it is not my home. I do not belong there, and that might be what makes it enjoyable for a time. That I get to escape the responsibilities of home might be why I want to stay longer! But if I do stay, were I to move into this hotel, it would only be through building relationships with the things and others that surround me that the place could ever begin to feel like home. And once it feels like home, my concern and inclination to care for it naturally follow.

The point here is, even though Mathews issued a seemingly impossible call to adopt panpsychism and encounter the natural world as subject rather than mere object, what we find in our relationship to home is the legitimate possibility of initiating such a practice. Indeed, my claim here is that, within such confines, we kind of already do it. This means that if we want to take these practices and use them to eliminate environmental ignorance, we have got to get our home out of the house.

I have previously argued that we must understand our homes as far more expansive than we often do.[10] Our homes are really wide-ranging, shifting, and not necessarily connected territories that include multiple people, nonhuman others, things, and places. When I refer to my home, I do not (and ought not) mean only my house. I mean a whole host of entities that include my house, the woods behind my house, my street, my parents' house, the lake, the park, etc. and all the entities and others therein. Importantly, my home always includes the natural environments that surround and participate in what makes houses and streets and parks. Therefore, just as I have responsibilities to my house-home, I have responsibilities to my broader home. If we can genuinely commit to this conception of home, if I recognize the that natural environment outside of my house is just as literally my home as what lies within in its walls, I will feel the pangs of loyalty and responsibility to it. Just as I mourn the loss of my keepsakes to a fire, I will mourn the loss of an open field of grass, wildflowers, birds, and insects to a new church parking lot. Home is where Mathews's challenge to encounter can really begin. Before I could ever hope to ethically know the broader environment or earth as a whole, I must start by encountering my own home and becoming familiar with it.

Conclusion

I see a commitment to encountering our homes as a crucial practice for undermining environmental ignorance. Practices of encounter can realign the distortions in one's cognitive processes through direct experiences that stand in opposition to the Western cultural paradigm. Again, though we cannot change our epistemological commitments and ways of being at will, we can set up projects that lead us toward new ways of perceiving and conceiving. Most significantly, encounter at home undermines patterns of human exceptionalism. Nonhuman

[10] In "An Environmental Ethic of Home," Chapter 2 of this volume.

companions are already often seen as full-fledged members of our homes. A commitment to encounter those that participate in our homes can make apparent the rich and various projects of other nonhuman animals. As I become familiar with them and their needs, I am in a much better position to know how my activities disrupt or contribute to those needs. As I get to know them, they are no longer mere tokens in the background of my projects; they come to the fore as participants in my daily experience. Though I cannot hope to know each and every natural entity, familiarity with my home and its inhabitants becomes *individualized*. The more time I can spend encountering my home, the more its story intertwines with mine. Just as a keepsake has a meaningful story to be preserved and retold, I can share meaningful experiences with natural entities that also beckon me to preserve, protect, and remember. Most of all, as I incorporate the natural world into my home, I can come to care about it, and I feel the pangs of responsibility. I can no longer maintain a disinterested stance. I want and need to know about it so that I can best care for it. I can ignore these pangs and refuse the call to responsibility, but I do so at the cost of this place that is now my home.

Environmental ignorance is a form of substantive ignorance, meaning that it is a set of practices, something we do, some way we are. Any solution to it will have to be similarly substantive. I cannot simply know more, I have to do better, epistemically. But in the case of environmental ignorance, it is not enough to just do better epistemically, I have to do better ethically, because I cannot do better epistemically, here, without the ethical dimension. My un- or non-ethical relationship to the natural environment is what drives my epistemologically problematic relationship to it. This is why Mathews is so helpful. Mathews advocates a practice of encounter which is ethical at its core, the epistemological dimension being but a by-product. But the difficulty with encounter, at least Mathews's version of it, is that it requires me to take what I *know* to be a mere object and believe that it is a subject. Most of us just cannot do that.

What I have suggested here is that, though we cannot turn objects into subjects at will, in our homes we tend to, quite willingly, treat some objects as subject-*ish*. We enter into relationships with them, care for them, and take responsibility for them. Indeed, we encounter them. If we can take up a different challenge, an easier one, to cast our conception of home much wider, we can then take this subject-*ish*ness more broadly and begin to chip away at those forms of thought that keep environmental ignorance in place.

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CHAPTER 4

FOCAL PLACES AND THE TECHNOLOGICAL ENCLAVE OF HOME[11]

[11] Rudow-Abouharb, L. Brooke. To be submitted to *Techné*.

Abstract

In this paper, I show that our relationships with technology limit those we can have with the natural environment and that the number and character of technological devices detaches us from others and the natural world. I explore promising suggestions for overcoming such a technological paradigm that advocate engaging focal things, focal practices, and focal sites. I embrace these solutions and argue that our homes must stand at the center of focal practices.

Introduction

I recently offered my dad a smart watch. I had an extra after the manufacturer had failed to fix a fairly minor issue I was having and sent me a brand new one. My dad was excited about it, but my mother, in effect, forbade his acceptance of my gift. She said that she would never accompany him camping, on hikes or bike rides or anywhere, if he was wearing that watch. His phone already ruins so much of their time in natural environments, and she would accept no further disruption. Absolutely not. Since my parents spend most of their lives camping and outdoors, it was an easy decision. I felt bad for my dad; he looked so disappointed. But I think my mom is on to something, something many philosophers of technology and environmentalists have long known: technology disrupts and "ruins" our relationships with the natural world.

In this paper, I take up my mother's concern about the ways that technology shapes our relationships to the natural world. In the first two sections of the paper, I will show that our relationships with technology limit those we can have with the natural environment and that the number and character of technological devices detaches us from others and the natural world. In the third section, I will explore promising suggestions for overcoming such a technological paradigm that advocate engaging focal things, focal practices, and focal sites—technological places that demand attentive entanglement with the material world. In the final section, I

embrace these solutions but critique existing claims that farms are the quintessential focal sites. I argue that, instead, our homes must stand at the center of all focal practice. They are technological places that are far more personal, accessible, and practicable. I contend that we must begin with the home as the primary focal site in order to create an alternative to dangerous technological patterns.

Heidegger and the Problem of Modern Technology

According to Martin Heidegger (1977), technology was not always like this. Traditional technologies had a different character than the modern technologies with which we surround ourselves today. Posing "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger asks what technology is and how it relates to what it is to be human. He says we can answer the question about what technology is in two ways. The first is anthropological and straightforward. Technology is an instrument, a means to an end. This answer is correct, of course, but Heidegger says that it is not yet *true*. It does not give us much; it does not tell us anything about what technology *is*, essentially. In this deeper way, technology stands as something more complicated. Heidegger reminds us that the word 'technology' stems from the Greek '*techne.*' *Techne* refers to the skills of a craftsman, to the arts, and is a form of *poiesis*, "it is something poietic" (Heidegger 1977, 13). But *techne* is also connected to *episteme*, knowing. *Techne,* Heidegger says, is being an expert in something, "entirely at home," completely familiar.

In "Building Dwelling Thinking" Heidegger associates more explicitly the connection between being at home (*episteme*) and craftsmanship (*poiesis*), "We attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building" (Heidegger 1971, 143) While not every building is a dwelling, built or made things have as their goal dwelling, and dwelling is the manner in which humans abide on the earth, our basic character of being (Heidegger 1971, 158). We are dwellers.

Dwelling is making a home, being at home on the earth, but also caring for and preserving, cherishing and protecting. Dwelling as building or making brings something forth that does not bring itself, says Heidegger, in the sense that it "makes something appear, within what is present, as this or that, in this way or that way" (Heidegger 1971, 157).[12] This might seem fairly obvious. In Heidegger's example from "The Question Concerning Technology," the ceremonial chalice is brought-forth from the silver, where what lay only in multitudinous potential is made to appear as a singular actuality by the craftsperson (Heidegger 1977). But there is more to this appearance and unconcealment; bringing-forth is grounded in revealing, and technology is really, in essence, a mode of revealing. Heidegger says:

> Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth. (Heidegger 1977, 12)

The poietic mode of revealing found in traditional technologies is characterized by an openness of possible relationships to the material and to the natural world. Here technology is a letting-be in both the sense of bringing into being and in the sense of allowing something to retain its own character and be in its own way. And there is something almost sacred here. The bringing-forth of *techne* initiates a gathering. Traditional technologies gather the fourfold—earth, sky, divinities, and mortals—into made things and this gathering of the fourfold makes a location, makes *room*. These are the places within which we can dwell among made things and the natural world. Thus, Heidegger says that the nature of building is letting dwell and that, "things

[12] Nature also brings-forth but does so itself. It is, therefore, *poiesis* in the highest sense, according to Heidegger. "For what presences by means of *physis* has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (*en heautoi*). In contrast, what is brought forth by the artisan or the artist, e.g., the silver chalice, has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth not in itself, but in another (*en alloi*), in the craftsman or artist" (Heidegger 1977, 11).

themselves preserve the fourfold *only when* they themselves *as* things are let be in their presencing," and this is done when we "nurse and nurture the things that grow, and specially construct things that do not grow" (Heidegger 1971, 149).

In "Building Dwelling Thinking" we can see the stirrings of a distinction that is explicit in Heidegger's later "The Question Concerning Technology." He says, "*Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build*" (Heidegger 1971, 157). And in "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger makes clear that modern technology is not a building in the ways that are a part of and conducive to dwelling. It does not gather or preserve the fourfold. Though it too reveals, it is not revelation by bringing-forth. Modern technology, in contrast, reveals by challenging-forth. Heidegger describes modern technology as exacting upon nature a demand to supply energy and resources that can be saved, stored, extracted, and used.

> Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve. (Heidegger 1977, 17)

Where the traditional windmill merely turns, allowing the wind just to *be* in its own way, the modern coalmine demands the output of coal. This "setting-upon" unlocks and exposes, "driving on the maximum yield at the minimum expense" (Heidegger 1977, 14). Challenging-forth nature, we transform it into a standing-reserve, a storehouse of energy and resource, which is then distributed. This distributed product can be interchanged. The natural world thus loses all uniqueness and individuality as it is transformed into a place of mere use-value, and "whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object" (Heidegger 1977, 17). Where bringing-forth gathered the fourfold into things, leaving open a myriad of ways of being and possible relationships, revealing, here, becomes an interlocking path. Challenging

revealing is characterized by regulation, order, and control. Providing the limits of human activity, it enframes and our relationship to technology and non-human nature are one dimensional. Enframing is the essence of modern technology, Heidegger says, and it conceals all other modes of revealing:

> Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological. (Heidegger 1977, 21)

The human activity of gathering the fourfold and making room in which to dwell is replaced by mechanistic making, transforming who we are. We no longer dwell; we order. This modality is not fixed or inevitable, but we are limited by technology. Given the way that technology orders and structures our world, we are pushed in a single direction, carried away by the process, and even our modes of thinking become ordered in this way. The danger here is twofold. First, once we view all of nature as a mere use-item, humanity suffers the same fate. We are incited to challenge-forth other humans, and humankind becomes standing-reserve (though never a *mere* standing-reserve, says Heidegger). Second, through ordering and challenging-forth, the whole of nature is but an object of research, a construct of one's own conceiving. Here, we no longer dwell in or confront a world but find ourselves in a solipsistic no-place, as all objects disappear "into the objectlessness of standing-reserve" (Heidegger 1977, 19).

Technology and Dualism

Val Plumwood's (1993) analysis of the metaphysics of dualism, a metaphysics that characterizes the Western worldview, is helpful for understanding Heidegger's view of modern technology.

Plumwood demonstrates how the logic of dualism constructs a world of contrasted pairs: male/female, human/animal, master/slave, mind/body (or matter), culture/nature, rationality/animality, production/reproduction and so on (Plumwood 1993, 45). This dualistic framework, according to Plumwood, lends itself, almost necessarily, to a logic of domination, as dualisms rest on mutual exclusivity and tend to render one side of the pair subordinated to the other. She says:

> …negation is the key axis of comparison among implicational systems. If negation is interpreted as otherness, then the way that negation is treated provides…an account of how otherness is conceived in a given system. Classical logic supplies an account of otherness which has key features of dualistic otherness. The negation of classical logic is a specific concept of negation which forces us to consider otherness in terms of a single universe consisting of everything. In classical logic, negation (~p) is interpreted as the universe without p… [W]hat is important for the issue we are considering here is that ~p *can then not be independently or positively identified, but is entirely dependent on p for its specification*. Not-p has no independent role, but is introduced as merely alien to the primary notion p. (Plumwood 1993, 56)

Since not-p has no independent definition, it is subordinated to the "controlling center" or the "master" that stands as the standard by which all otherness is defined. The entire universe is, thus, p-centered. "The very features of simplicity which have helped to select classical logic over its rivals are implicated here. In the phallic drama of this p-centred account, there is really only one actor, p, and ~p is merely its receptacle" (Plumwood 1993, 57). Considering the contrasted pairs above, it is easy to identify the not-ps. Animal is that which is not human; nature is that which is not culture, and body or matter is that which is not mind. And each not-p stands in the

service of master p. These pairs (among others) constitute the major forms of oppression in western culture where the dominant side enjoys definition, particularity/individuality, and value, whereas the subordinate side is instrumentalized, backgrounded, and homogenized (Plumwood 1993, 43-54).[13]

Returning to Heidegger, we can understand his worries about modern technology in terms of this dualistic logic. For Heidegger, engaging in and creating traditional technologies put us in a position to know the natural entities amongst which we dwell. To use or create artifacts in such a way that the material and surrounding nature is let be in its own way, I must approach both in their particularity. I cannot tokenize them or deny my dependency on them; attention to these relationships are essential to the process of bringing-forth. Modern technology, however, is a prime exemplar of the ills of the logic of dualism. The whole of nature is homogenized, and understood as a resource well, lacking both meaning and purpose. It is defined wholly in terms of the fulfillment of human wants and needs, valued only insofar as it contributes to the maintenance and continuation of the vast technological order known as "progress."

Instrumentalizing nature, humans of this "technological age" are challenged-forth to order and mechanize nature as rendering it easily calculable, controllable, and infinitely useable (Heidegger 1977, 21). Furthermore, nature is backgrounded as relationships of causality, responsibility, and indebtedness shrink, says Heidegger, "into a reporting" a mere "system of information" (Heidegger 1977, 23). Technology as material culture dominates nature, and our relationship to it is saturated with the logic of dualism. The whole of nature is not-p and we its masters.

[13] Plumwood details five features of dualism: relational definition (that the universe of ~p is defined solely in terms of p), instrumentalization, homogenization, backgrounding (denial or ignoring of dependency), and radical exclusion.

The danger of this relationship to modern technology and its dualistic framework, for both Heidegger and Plumwood, is twofold. First, it results in a profound estrangement from the world. Heidegger says:

> Meanwhile man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: It seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself. (Heidegger 1977, 26-27)

Humankind is therefore completely homeless, without any world in which to dwell. Man cannot build a location, cannot make room, for he finds only himself and his ordered constructs. He finds only the standing-reserve. Second, the relationship presents itself as natural and totalizing. As such it "hides" any way out. This is an inherent feature of dualism:

> Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture…which treats the division as part of the natures of beings construed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, and hence as not open to change. (Plumwood 1993, 47-48)

Furthermore, when the essence of technology lies in enframing, limiting—as it does in modern technology—all other modes of interpretation and ways of being are stifled and truth itself is hidden, "Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing… [It] not only conceals a former way of revealing, bringing-forth, but it conceals revealing itself and with it That wherein unconcealment, i.e., truth, comes to pass" (Heidegger, Question 1977, 27).

Beyond Heidegger

This view of the ills of modern technology is not without its critics. Albert Borgmann (1984) believes that Heidegger is right to identify a problem related to modern technology and that there are a couple of key starting points toward a solution within Heidegger's view. However, there are significant weaknesses to address. Borgmann's goal in his highly influential work *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (*TCCL*) is to correct and to extend Heidegger's account of traditional and modern technology. I will begin, here, with Borgmann's criticisms. But first, Borgmann notes that *TCCL* is concerned with modern technology. Where he uses only 'technology,' he means 'modern technology' unless otherwise noted (Borgmann 1984, 12). We will get a sense of Borgmann's understanding of modern technology later, once we work through his criticisms of Heidegger, but I mention this here to say that while discussing Borgmann, I will use 'technology' has he does.

Borgmann's primary critique comes out in *TCCL*'s Chapter "Focal Things and Practices" (Borgmann 1984, 196-210). His first worry is that Heidegger's account of traditional technology is plagued by hopeless romanticism and nostalgia. His examples of traditional technologies that gather the fourfold are bound to a particular place and time. Borgmann points out that when Heidegger speaks of a wine jug, he is likely picturing a rural setting where such jugs are part of both daily and festive ritual. Under these particular circumstances, the jug might serve to gather and disclose the fourfold, but without this context it is difficult to understand how a jug might play such a role (Borgmann 1984, 199). The point is, Heidegger's nostalgia puts traditional technology in places and times that are inaccessible and unfamiliar to most, and as a result, makes a solution to the problems with modern technology similarly remote. Because of the way that he has characterized traditional technologies, Heidegger cannot and does not offer much in

the way of a solution. He questions the role that fine art might have to play, but ultimately concludes that only a god can save us (Borgmann 1984, 199, 286).

Borgmann's second worry concerns the ways in which Heidegger seems to suggest that the way to recapture a better connection to technology is to seek and abide in "pretechnological enclaves" (to be read, here, pre-*modern*-technological enclaves). Borgmann thinks that this suggestion is misleading and dispiriting, given the dubious likelihood that any such enclave exists. Even if it does, Borgmann thinks that it would be the technological context surrounding it that sets it apart or brings it to the fore such that it could be understood as gathering or revealing. We should not be seeking some sort of escape from technology, says Borgmann, but a new way of engaging it (Borgmann 1984, 200).

Finally, Borgmann points out that Heidegger's account is almost completely lacking in any social or political context. In his examples, we are privy only to the viewpoint of the thing, never the person who participates in the gathering facilitated by using the thing.

> Though Heidegger assigns humans their place in the fourfold when he depicts the jug in which the fourfold is focused, we scarcely see the hand that holds the jug, and far less do we see the social setting in which the pouring of the wine comes to pass. (Borgmann 1984, 200)

Borgmann emphasizes that a better relationship to technology is forged through human practices and social ways of being, and not by isolating and contemplating individual objects.

For Borgmann, the weaknesses in Heidegger's account point the way toward a better solution. Borgmann says that Heidegger gives us two crucial points to develop. The first exposes the character of modern technology as patterned. He says, "the peril of technology lies not in this or that of its manifestations but in *the pervasiveness and consistency of its pattern*" (Borgmann

1984, 208), and as long as we remain ignorant of the ways that technology then patterns our behavior and limits the possibilities of relationships, then simple things will always appear to us as "burdensome, confining, and drab" (Borgmann 1984, 199). But simple things are important. The second crucial point to take and develop from Heidegger is his insistence upon the inconspicuous and humble character of things and practices that gather the fourfold (Borgmann 1984, 200). These things and practices, says Borgmann, "flourish at the margins of public attention" and are scattered, lacking (at least for now) any unity that would give them an essence (Borgmann 1984, 199-200). This is not to say they are absent from daily life but that amongst the dazzle and convenience of "devices," they stand in the background of our concerns.

Things and Devices

In his chapter "The Device Paradigm," Borgmann goes beyond Heidegger, first, in an attempt to correct and develop his point about the patterned character of technology (Borgmann 1984, 40-48). Like Heidegger, Borgmann draws a divide between two categories of technology: things and devices. A thing, says Borgmann, "is inseparable from its context, namely its world, and from our commerce with the thing and its world, namely, engagement. The experience of a thing is always and also a bodily and social engagement with the thing's world" (Borgmann 1984, 41). A thing is a *focus*. A thing demands familiarity and, often, the use of skill. Using the example of a woodstove, he explains that it gave a house a center, a place where family gathers. Coldness marked morning, where warmth indicated when to start the day'. Managing a woodstove required bodily engagement with time and the seasons, with smells and weight, wood and fire, learning and skill. In using such a thing, one participates in a "focal practice." Focal practices bring together social engagement, skill and know-how. For Borgmann, that the technology's machinery, or "the means," remains unconcealed is important and connects to the potential for

knowledge, skill, and the development of one's character. Here, even though the ends are, perhaps, the final purpose of any technology, the means are crucial components for using things. Means invite engagement.

A device, on the other hand, is marked by ease and availability. Borgmann points out that as technologies become more available, their machinery and, relatedly, their demand on our skill both shrink from view. A device is understood almost entirely in terms of its ends. In contrast to the woodstove, we might consider the thermostat. The machinery is almost entirely absent to the user. Rather than requiring a host of knowledge and skill in relation to several aspects of being, I need only know how to press a button. Borgmann says that this highlights the two distinguishing features of a device: radical variability of means and the ever-increasing availability of ends. What he means by radical variability is that though the machinery of the thermostat might change radically and quickly, my use of that technology remains largely the same. I likely will not notice that anything has changed at all, other than, perhaps, the convenience of use. This is connected to the other distinguishing feature, availability.

As machinery shrinks and means require no skill, technologies become increasingly available. This availability is marked by disposability and by products becoming relatively carefree (Borgmann 1984, 47). He points out that paper napkins are designed to be thrown away and thus require almost no care. Even complex and incredibly expensive items like iPhones are designed by manufacturers to be obsolete after a few years; cell phone contracts encourage disposal and upgrade after but a few months. In fact, smart phones might be the epitome of the device. One can virtually live out one's entire life through the phone: ordering food and clothing, messaging friends and family, conducting meetings and other workplace activities, playing games, watching shows, turning out lights, and even adjusting the thermostat. All of this can be done anywhere with WiFi or data, taking availability to its seeming limit. Other than using the

restroom, almost all daily activities can occur through a single device. Here the ends of the smart phone and all other ends converge, making the means all but disappear.

Borgmann entertains an objection that argues that disengagement from means comes down to scientific, economic, technological illiteracy. There is nothing inherent to the technology that makes engagement with its machinery impossible (Borgmann 1984, 47). Borgmann responds that even with such an education, a world of devices still stands distinctively apart from a world of things. He says that interaction with devices would be completely cerebral because they increasingly tend to resist caring practices, repair, skill, and bodily engagement (Borgmann 1984, 48). Furthermore, the social and political context surrounding devices is anonymous. "The machinery of a device does not of itself disclose the skill and character of the inventor and producer; it does not reveal a region and its particular orientation within nature and culture" (Borgmann 1984, 48). Borgmann insists that the means of devices, therefore, remain necessarily unfamiliar.

Here the pattern concerning Borgmann emerges. As more things become devices, the less I am invited into engagement with the surrounding world. And Borgmann points out that this technological turn is not limited to highly complex machines like the iPhone. Even traditional things like wine have transformed into devices. Wine is now "technological wine." Once regionally specific wines made with care, skill, and lots of time are now transforming into the mass produced and standardized wine found on every grocery shelf. This is a telling example, emphasizing that devices need not be complicated machines. Even the most mundane objects become marked by ease and availability under the device paradigm (Borgmann 1984, 49).

Furthermore, as technological objects characterized by disposability and ease surround us, the caring activities and skill that once occupied much of our day-to-day lives are replaced by

indifference and ignorance toward objects. I no longer approach the world as an arena of concern, but as that storehouse and resource well about which Heidegger warned.

Focal Things and Practices

The second way Borgmann goes beyond Heidegger is by extending his account of the character of things, specifically focal things. Recall that Heidegger seems to advocate a sort of escape from technology by suggesting that we ought to encounter focal things in "pre-technological enclaves" (Borgmann 1984, 200). Borgmann argues that any such enclave must nonetheless be understood in relation to its broader technological context. In this sense, technology cannot—and ought not—be escaped. Rather, we should embrace certain technological spaces where focal things can appear in their context, especially their use-context. Borgmann insists that focal things can only really come to the fore and be objects of focus through human practices that engage those things (Borgmann 1984, 200). Going beyond Heidegger, Borgmann advocates encountering focal things where they appear, scattered throughout our daily lives, and committing to practices that preserve, appreciate, and draw us into relationships with these things. He says, "without a practice an engaging action or event can momentarily light up our life, but it cannot order and orient it focally" (Borgmann 1984, 207).

Focal practices are central to Borgmann's solution to the problem of technology. In contrast to the pattern created by devices, a focal practice can create habits and a pattern of its own. For example, Borgmann says that the central meal of the day is a focal event par excellence:

> It gathers the scattered family around the table. And on the table it gathers the most delectable things nature has brought forth. But it also recollects and presents a tradition, the immemorial experiences of the race in identifying and cultivating edible plants, in

> domesticating and butchering animals; it brings into focus closer relations of national or regional customs, and more intimate traditions still of family recipes and dishes. (Borgmann 1984, 204)

Yet, it is not enough to try every now and then to share a meal with one's family. Focal practices are distinct from a series of *individual* decisions or actions that may have a focal spirit. A practice is defined by its rules and it requires a commitment to the "regular reenactment of a founding act" such that the practice can serve as a centering force (Borgmann 1984, 207, 209). That is, one must commit to the "great meal" as a regular and central event in the daily life of the family.[14]

The value of committing to focal practices over and above individual instances of engaging focal things is two-fold. First, it protects focal things from "technological subversion" (Borgmann 1984, 209). Having committed to a family meal, I can resist the temptation to run through the drive-thru on the way home or resorting to microwavable meals. I am encouraged to plan ahead, thinking forward to the meals that must be prepared. I must pay attention to the ingredients I buy, I am invited to experiment with recipes, and I can enjoin others in this task. In this focal practice, focal things stay at the fore of my experience guiding my engagement and enhance my skill. Focal practices like this can create an *ethos* that resists being overtaken by ease, availability, and the means/ends pattern of device technology (Borgmann 1984, 207).

This *ethos*, or way of life, brings out the second value of focal practices: they build character. Imbedding into habit the patterns created by focal practices guards against human

[14] Though Borgmann says that the great meal is the focal event par excellence, he recognizes that there is a wide variety of focal practices to which one might commit and around which to orient one's life. He invites this plurality of focal practices that bring out the unique character of individuals and families and does not think that, should you commit to running, gardening, or any other focal practice, it is in any way problematic (Borgmann 1984, 213).

frailty, says Borgmann (Borgmann 1984, 209). Focal things and practices give our lives a depth and integrity prohibited by device technology by setting up centering or foundational acts:

> The human ability to establish and commit oneself to a practice reflects our capacity to comprehend the world, to harbor it in its expanse as a context that is oriented by its focal points. To found a practice is to guard a focal concern, to shelter it against the vicissitudes of fate and frailty. (Borgmann 1984, 207)

Borgmann says that the repetition of these centering practices establishes and reinforces virtues like excellence, attention, patience, and devotion. Given that the danger of device technology lies in its pervasive and patterned character, overcoming the device paradigm comes by participating in "an equally patterned and social commitment" to focal practices that challenge and disrupt it overwhelming force (Borgmann 1984, 208). Borgmann is careful to emphasize that focal practices should not become routine to the point of stagnation but need to be "empowered again by the reemergence of the great thing in its splendor" (Borgmann 1984, 209). Borgmann concludes that developing skills, values, and virtues surrounding our commitments to an ethos of focality, we become more grounded, thoughtful, and caring beings.

Focal Things to Focal Places: Farming as Quintessential Focal Practice

Borgmann's solution is clearly on the right path but only goes part way. Building on this account, Paul Thompson (2000) suggests that Borgmann's can be read as being too focused on things as sites for focal practices, arguing that places are far better suited for such practices. Furthermore, Borgmann's account admits of a plurality. That is, a focal practice can center around almost anything, from dinner to running or playing an instrument. No focal thing necessarily takes priority over another, "we should embrace and develop our peculiarity and join

it with those of others and through this connection experience and enjoy the fullness of humanity" (Borgmann 1984, 213). The point is to establish the appropriate practices surrounding the things we have and enjoy. Thompson thinks that this plurality of priority obscures the essential characteristics of focal practices. First and foremost, says Thompson, focal practices must be tied to a place.

Thompson points out that Borgmann can easily be read as a "Kantian environmentalist" (Thompson 2000, 175). What he means is that it often appears as though Borgmann conceives of places as mere thing- (or device-) filled spaces. Thompson resists this conception, emphasizing that things are always in a place, and while they contribute to the particular character of a place, their use and character is also determined in relation to the place of which they are a part. He says that, "a notion of place is used to acknowledge that specific environments exhibit features that differentiate them from other environments," a differentiation that is not reducible to the things "in" it (Thompson 2010, 131). I cannot come to know a place by knowing a catalog of things found there. I come to know a place by being there, through habitation. Through this process of habitation and familiarity, I, too, am shaped by the place:

> Surely our sense of becoming beings who have a place must be derived from the way that a place contributes to that process of becoming, a process that must include the material as well as the spiritual work that sustains life. (Thompson 2000, 177)

Thompson argues that, if he is right about Borgmann's emphasis on things as the focus of focal practice, we are missing something crucial. That is, focal practices that prioritize things are not enough create an ethos that stands against the paradigm of technology. A way of being is produced, in large part, in relation to a *place* of being, a place that one inhabits. Place, taken in a robust, dynamic sense, is crucial to focal practice. He says that "focal practices are intended to

remediate a world where subjects act in response to environmental forces," and for this reason focal practices must involve habitation of places. I must develop practices and habits that govern the ways I engage places. Though we must engage real things with material practices, we should do so through our embeddedness in focal places, rather than focusing strictly on focal things. Our concern over things should be limited to how those things contribute to or take away from the focality of a place. "The focal things to which [focal practices] are attached may be things indeed, but *they must be things that allow one to dwell in a place*" (Thompson 2000, 178, emphasis mine). Things matter, but they matter especially insofar as they contribute to a focal place.

But this shifted emphasis to place is not yet enough. Seeking the essential characteristics of focal practices, Thompson has revealed that they must involve habitation and materiality, or being in a place amongst things. Yet, this does not address Thompson's worries about plurality. Will any place do? Can the office be as focal as the mountains? While Thompson might concede that one can perform some focal practices almost anywhere, he does think there is a hierarchy of focal places. This hierarchy is based on a place's relationship to material production.

For Thompson, those practices that respond directly to place are the most central focal practices, and productive work accomplishes this best. "Production on this view, is an ontological process that yields the person as it shapes the place." That is, production is central here in its role of producing *being*. He goes on. "To take this notion of production seriously in material terms demands a hard look at eating…" (Thompson 2000, 177). But while Borgmann used the great meal as the focal event par excellence, Thompson goes beyond the table, to the farm. He says:

> When focal practices and things are interpreted in light of their role in the production of existence, they imply a hierarchy, and it is this hierarchy that leads one to farming, in my

> view. Practices and things that are more comprehensive of and fundamental to production have a correspondingly greater claim to significance…It is in this sense that farming is a quintessential focal practice and a crucial topic for the philosophy of technology. (Thompson 2000, 180)

Thompson argues that farms are places where the land is truly inhabited, places that one can make one's own. Farmers who are familiar with and attentive to the land in its uniqueness thrive, as do communities that are organized around the needs of their farmers. Farms are sites of skill, craft, and tool-use that go well beyond those needed directly for growing food. Farming centers, orders, and unifies myself and others in a way other practices cannot and "demands the engagement of mind and body with the world" (Thompson 2010, 115-116). The farm's relationship to producing and sustaining life makes the farm, for Thompson, the paradigm of productivity. Indeed, "Farmers produce not only themselves, but also all who eat through farming" (Thompson 2000, 177). Not only is farming the quintessential focal practice, it is the quintessence of our being (Thompson 2000, 180).

Thompson recognizes, however, that not everyone can or should farm. For those who do not, he recommends practices that bring one closer to farms. Here he returns to Borgmann's "culture of the table." He says that the culture of the table can serve as a link to sustainability and agrarian ideals (Thompson 2010, 120). He recommends shopping at farmers' markets to participate in seasonality through the foods available, providing a first step to reconnecting to natural cycles. Additionally, one can interact with farmers face-to-face and economically support those who are living up to the ideals of focal practices in focal places. Thompson says, "With a little luck, you may brush up against someone who is actually living out a life premised on self-reliance and stewardship" (Thompson 2010, 121).

Yet, Thompson's championing of farming and farms as paradigms of focal being is a bit perplexing. Though he insists on the materiality of practice, railing against a retreat into contemplation, he talks about farming as a practice containing lessons to consider and farmers as having ideals to imitate. He says that "While we may not become farmers in contemplating farming as focal practice, perhaps we will better understand the place that we have cultivated in this world, and how to guard it" (Thompson 2000, 180). Seemingly, for most of us, the farmers' market and the table are as close as most of us can get to quintessential focal practices and, I suppose, the quintessence of our own being. There is something odd about insisting on the superiority of focal practices in which so few of us can genuinely participate, ones that I am lucky to "brush up against." How much good does it do for farming to be the ideal focal practice, if all we can do is *think about it* that way? What we really need are focal practices that we can do in the places where we are. We need to be able to participate in an ethos that is attentive to *the materiality that actually surrounds us*.

Home as the Center of Focal Practice

I agree with Thompson that a shift to place is important and that some focal places are better sites than others at establishing an ethos that grounds our relationship to the world. I disagree, however, that farms can provide what is needed for most people to participate fully. As such, I will argue that homes stand as a better candidate for centering focal practice. Thompson's farming solution is limited for four reasons that an emphasis on home can address. The first two stem from Thompson's emphasis on material production. First, read through Plumwood's analysis, Thompson posits a classical dualism between production and *reproduction*.[15] Doing so prevents Thompson from considering the vital role played by repetitive and reproductive

[15] Plumwood attributes this particular dualism to Marx (Plumwood 1993, 45).

practices, things that Borgmann emphasized as inherent features of focality. Second, in remaining wedded to such a dualism and adhering traditional constructions of home as a site of reproduction and consumption, Thompson overlooks the ways in which homemaking practices *are* productive.

Thompson's third limitation is an issue of accessibility. While many of us are removed from farming and cannot participate in farming practices, all humans must participate in some form of homemaking. Not to be able to do so is generally considered a profound deprivation. Though accessibility is a limitation Thompson considers, his solution to live vicariously through farmers or participate only indirectly is inappropriate and leaves materiality and habitation behind. Finally, Thompson argues that the farm is the best place for the formation of certain important virtues. I will show that the vision of the farm Thompson describes his one more properly understood as and more representative of a homestead. There is nothing essential to the farm that develops these virtues but a certain type of home that, for Thompson, happens to *include* a farm. Home provides a technological enclave wherein we can participate directly in focal practices that constitute and produce our being. In what follows, I will discuss each limitation, and remedy, in turn.

Preservation and Reproduction

Homes are largely associated with preservation activities that are characterized as reproductive. Thompson does give passing consideration to preservation and homemaking activities but dismisses them saying:

> One might, of course, be dedicated to a place without farming it. Many people are dedicated to the preservation of natural or historic places, or to the beautification of their homes. While these kinds of dedication might also create focal practices, farming unifies

> ‘achievement and enjoyment of mind, body, and the world’ in a way that preservation and beautification cannot. (Thompson 2010, 115)

Here we see Thompson adopt an all too common view that takes dedication to one’s home as subordinate to what one does outside of the home. This is a clear example of the type of dualism Plumwood identifies as ubiquitous in Western thinking. She argues that dualism “imposes a conceptual framework which polarises and splits apart into two orders of being that can be conceptualised and treated in more integrated and unified ways” (Plumwood 1993, 55). These two orders of being are split along gendered lines where subordinated members of contrasted pairs are associated with the feminine. We see here Thompson advocating such a split between productive activities, like farming, and nonproductive activities, like reproduction, preservation, and beautification. As Thompson said, “Practices and things that are more comprehensive of and fundamental to production have a correspondingly greater claim to significance” (Thompson 2000, 180). This, too, is gendered, as traditionally in Western cultures homemaking is done by women; farming is done by men.

The emphasis on production backgrounds the crucial role played by preservation practices. Iris Marion Young argues that a devaluation of home undermines the experience of many people, especially women, who engage homemaking as a profoundly meaningful human project (Young 2005, 138). She says:

> Homemaking consists in the activities of endowing things with living meaning, arranging them in space in order to facilitate the life activities of those to whom they belong, and preserving them, along with their meaning. Dwelling in the world means we are located among objects, artifacts, rituals, and practices that configure who we are in our particularity.... [These objects] must be protected from the constant threat of elemental

> disorganization. They must be cleaned, dusted, repaired, restored; the stories of their founding and continued meaning must protected from careless neglect or accidental damage caused by those who dwell among and use them, often hardly noticing their meaning as support for their lives. (Young 2005, 142)

Thompson emphasizes the significance and necessity of the production of being within a place yet, by downplaying the role of reproductive and repetitive activities, neglects the preservation and the continued care of that being. Though much of housework is drudgery and repeats incessantly, without these life-preserving activities, production never gets off the ground. Young continues, "The preservation of the things among which one dwells gives people a context for their lives, individuates their histories, gives them items to use in making new projects, and makes them comfortable" (Young 2005, 142).

Dissolving the Production/Reproduction Dualism

However, homemaking is not just housework, nor does it stand as a mere support for the activities of creativity and production. It, too, is productive. Interestingly, Thompson did highlight one of the productive aspects of home in his discussion of the culture of the table. He says, "Dining with friends and family grows into a rich form of sociability. Cooking grows into a craft with true elements of art" (Thompson 2010, 121). But even here, the table is an only indirect or deficient mode of focal practice where, "The thoughtful procurement of food and food ingredients links one with farmers and vendors," the superior focal practitioners (Thompson 2010, 121). But the making of meals is *itself* creative and productive act, as is raising children and, quite plainly, the *making* a home and all that that entails. Young points out:

> Homemaking consists in preserving the things and their meanings as anchor to shifting personal and group identity. But the narratives of the history of what brought us here are not fixed, and part of the creative and moral task of preservation is to reconstruct the connection of the past to the present in light of new events, relationships, and political understandings. (Young 2005, 144)

In the home, we produce meals, art, music, relationships and, of course, the conditions for life. But crucially, homemaking produces the self and identity. Young points out that preserving, repairing, attending to the home allows memories to persist and identities to be made. Memory retains the successes and failures, the joys and pains that make up who a person is. Memory is the anchor from which one orients oneself toward the future (Young 2005).

Kirsten Jacobson (2009) argues throughout her many works on phenomenological experiences of home that the home is central to identity formation and maintenance. For her, home provides a structure of familiarity that shapes the lived body. Across the multitude of types of homes, there is a "shared core" that constitutes, "a developed way of being that is marked by a sense of 'my own' or, more properly, '*our* own,' an intersubjective *way* of being that is familiar and secure (Jacobson 2009, 356). This way of being is both physical and psychological, as even our movements are patterned by the demands of our childhood homes. Our bodies "pair" to the surroundings and through this pairing we become able to move through our first world. Here we develop our habits of bodily comportment and movement. Our first home-place "lives" in our bodies long into adulthood and "extends beyond any tangible house-structure, addressing the very way in which we find ourselves existentially at-home in a world" (Jacobson 2010, 221). In all these ways, the home acts as a holistic center for the production of being.

Furthermore, despite Thompson's focus on the farm as a site of productivity, farming is profoundly *reproductive*. Indeed, the reproductive character of the farm—the fact that the products of farming must be immediately consumed and produced again—led philosophers to see farming itself as a subordinate activity. Hannah Arendt (1958), for example, explains at length a classical division between labor, work, and action. Labor is cyclical, repetitive, close to the ebb and flow of material being. Its products are fleeting. Work creates *works*, lasting objects and monuments. Action, too, is fleeting, but done properly, is lasting, immortalized in human cultural memory. Here, too, there is a hierarchy placing labor at the very bottom. And under this pervasive view, *both* farming and housework are counted as laboring activities.

All this is to say that farming is itself associated with necessity, repetition, and reproduction. To show the value of farming, to bring farming to the top of the hierarchy, is largely *a good thing*. Arendt's distinction admits of the same old dualisms that Plumwood illuminates, and Thompson does, in some ways, undermine those classical distinctions. But what he does not do is undermine the dualism itself. Instead, he makes a case for understanding the farm as a site of productivity and creativity that subordinates its character as reproductive and mundane. The take away here is that Thompson is hasty in dismissing the home as a site for deeply meaningful and formative focal practice. The home is a place where production and reproduction can scarcely be separated, and farming can only be cast as primarily productive within a framework that denies the preservative and reproductive practices that make crop yields possible.

None of this has yet established that home stands in any *better* a position than farming. At most it raises home to a status that is similar to the farm. But the home does stand in a better position because, for the most part, all of us inhabit homes.

Accessibility

Thompson makes a great deal of inhabitation and materiality as essential characteristics of focal practice. This is why he sees the farm as such a primary place. At the farm, I work with and on the land, with and among things, for and alongside others. I shape the place as it shapes me. Yet, as Thompson is well aware, most of us are not and cannot be farmers. As nonfarmers we need somewhere else to inhabit and perform our practices. My suggestion is another site of inhabitation and materiality: one's home.

But one should not take this to mean that homes are the subpar substitute for those of us who cannot participate in farming. Rather, home's accessibility has a primordial quality; having a home is an *a priori* condition for any sense of access whatsoever. Home overcomes the limit of accessibility not just because we all have access to homes, but because homes constitute the very ground of our being. All of our activities, all practices, radiate out from the center of home. In this sense, focal practices should be understood as having a grounding center, and that center is in the place that we originally and fundamentally inhabit. Furthermore, though Thompson's view is limited to agricultural societies, many human societies now and over course of history are non-agricultural. Nonetheless, the people of non-agricultural and even nomadic societies all have homes. Home has a priority as a site for practice not because it dominates over other sites or places of habitation, but because it serves as the ground and starting point for *human habitation itself*. The loss of access to one's home helps to demonstrate this. Young points out:

> The deprivation we call "homelessness" concerns not only the dangers of death and illness that prolonged exposure to the elements brings, but also being stripped of a sense of self by not having a space for daily routine and to keep and enjoy certain meaningful things of one's life (Young 2005, 159)

Moreover, a deeply flawed relationship to home constructs the "outside" world as wrought with "threatening places," a condition known as agoraphobia (Jacobson 2011, 2). A fracture in the relationship to home is a marked feature of world alienation, where one loses or never finds one's style of being. Bernd Jager (1985) says of this rift:

> "A fully inhabited world is at the same time also a fully embodied world. Alienation – painful discordant embodiment – is itself a loss of access to the flesh of nature; it means the suffering of a 'no' of things. Alienation is the fatal enclosing of the powers of the body within its own skin – a forced, brooding selfishness. Alienation is ultimately the failure of inhabitation and embodiment." (Jager 1985, 219)

And to lack a home completely would be to lack a connection anything worldly, losing worldly functionality altogether (Jacobson 2009, 356). This is all to show that one's inhabitation of home forms the basis of one's self-identity and one's way of being in the world. If we wish to develop habits, patterns, and, ultimately, an ethos that can successful challenge the device paradigm of technology, where else *could* we begin but at home?

Virtue Development

I do not think that Thompson is altogether mistaken in his claims about farming, and, in fact, most of the ways he suggests for us to engage with farming and farmers take place within the home. He is right that a certain type of farming encourages the formation of virtues: stewardship, self-reliance, social solidarity, and industriousness. He says of stewardship:

> Far from seeing nature as something to be deployed or mastered, the agrarian steward looks to nature for a sense of place, an understanding of the underlying structure that informs

> personal values and gives meaning to human life…. Agrarian stewards allow nature to have a strong voice in choosing our goals for us. (Thompson 2010, 82-83)

He says that self-reliance is the "preeminent small-farm virtue" (Thompson 2010, 83). This is because on the farm one must work for food and the production side of consumption is illuminated. Furthermore, small-farm life promotes simple hard work, or industriousness. He says that the link between work and reward is clear even to children, who are given chores that make immediate, visible, and meaningful contributions to the family's well-being (Thompson 2010, 83).

But note here two important, and interrelated, things. First, these virtues are not necessary products of farming. As Thompson himself points out again and again throughout *The Agrarian Vision*, contemporary farming is by and large industrialized and commodified farming. His vision is to find an *alternative* to industrial farming. This alternative requires committing to these agrarian ideals *before the fact*; they are not the products of farming itself. He says, "Clearly these virtuous habits are not universally inculcated in everyone who participates in my agrarian vision of agriculture, but perhaps the vision itself can spark the creation of virtues in the hearts of many who do not farm" (Thompson 2010, 83). That is, these virtues are not something inherent to nor limited to farming life. They are virtues to which we can commit, and according to Thompson, should commit to *at home*. Indeed, given the home's central place in character and identity formation, it stands as the best possible place to take on and enact these virtues.

Second, exactly what is Thompson's vision of agriculture? He says:

> The central agrarian goal is embodied in the way the independent family farm successfully integrates the classical virtues and provides the most reliable environment for the moral

> development of families and, in turn, of the individual person. The technology of the industrial farm, in contrast, prevents the farmer from hearing nature's feedback and allows the pursuit of excesses that take the form of vice. It has all the faults of employment outside the home, in that it does not instruct the family in the value, nobility, and constancy of work and instead encourages the development of a moral personality structured around consumption and pleasure. (Thompson 2010, 57)

If we consider carefully the type of farming that Thompson advocates, we find that his "agrarian vision" is one of a small family farm, a farm where the family works and lives, a farm that is ultimately *a home*.

I think that one reason Thompson sees these "agrarian" ideals as so easily incorporated into the lives of nonfarmers is because these ideals are not necessarily agrarian at all. We can make our homes sites of stewardship and self-reliance, all while we impart to our children the value of simple hard work. Recognizing that our homes go beyond the boundaries of our walls or yards, we can participate in practices of community building and solidarity—just consider the incredible outpouring of aid nationwide to the individuals and families rendered homeless by Hurricane Harvey. Farming is a positive addition to these practices, and I do not mean to minimize the necessity of food production to the maintenance of life. Rather, I see farming as a focal practice that *stems from* values and commitments made, in the first place, at home.

Conclusion

When Borgmann proposes focal things and practices as a way to overcome the dangerous and increasingly pervasive pattern of device technology, he says that finding a technological enclave is crucial. We need to be surrounded by technological things, rather than escaping into the wilderness or "pre-technological enclaves," so that we can commit to practices that will become

part of our everyday being. Borgmann thinks that it is through the repetition and habit created by focal practices that we develop character.

Thompson, in worrying about Borgmann's plurality of focal practices, argues for a hierarchy that places farming, as such a technological enclave, on the top rung. Given farming's limitations, in its stead, I am proposing to understand the home as a center, a starting point for focal practices. Home, too, stands as both our original and primary technological enclaves and is the principal site for human development. The process of becoming begins here. It is at home that I begin creating habits, making commitments, forming character and moral sensibility. Home is a place I inhabit necessarily. Rather than looking to some other place for the quintessential focal practice, I ought to begin engaging the materiality, tools, and things in the place where I am and the place that is essential to the process of creating who I am.

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CHAPTER 5

TOWARD A SHARED HOME ON EARTH[16]

[16] Rudow-Abouharb, L. Brooke. To be submitted to *Journal of Political Philosophy*.

Abstract

In this paper, I take the position that our political philosophies and models of political responsibility ought to be applicable to both human and non-human issues of justice, especially issues of structural injustices. I will argue that current models fail to do so and propose one that is similar, but with important changes, to Iris Marion Young's social connection model of political responsibility. My own role-based, forward-looking model of political responsibility focuses primarily on addressing structural injustices faced by the non-human, natural world by way of the role of homemaker.

Introduction

In this paper, I take the position that natural entities and the environment as a whole have a place in considerations of justice. As such, our political philosophies and models of political responsibility ought to be applicable to both human and non-human issues of justice, especially issues of structural injustices. I will argue that current models fail to do so and propose one that is similar, but with important changes, to Iris Marion Young's (2003) social connection model of political responsibility. In the first section, I explain structural injustice, followed by a section arguing that the natural world ought to be understood as subject to this form of injustice. I then move to evaluate several models of political responsibility and in the final section argue for my own role-based model of political responsibility that focuses primarily on addressing structural injustices faced by the non-human, natural world.

Structural Injustice

In 2013, the city of Miami Shores required Tom Carroll and Hermine Ricketts to uproot their 17-year-old, front-yard garden. If they refused, they would have to pay $50 a day in fines. They

sued the city for violating their rights, but the judge agreed that the city could regulate "aesthetics and uniformity" (Dennis 2016). They were growing food organically without the use of pesticides or anything that may harm neighbors. This is not an isolated incident. The expectation of home-owners and many renters is that they maintain a lawn in front of their homes. Lawns cover more than 40.5 million acres of land in the United States and are America's largest irrigated crop, using approximately 20 trillion gallons of water per year. (Dubner 2017). At home, watering the lawn accounts for 50 to 75 percent of a household's water use in summertime, and the vast majority of water used is fresh drinking water (Diep 2011). Furthermore, Americans use 10 times more chemical pesticides per acre on this crop than farmers use on theirs (Wargo, Alderman and Wargo 2003). The environmental impact of lawns is staggering, but they remain the aesthetic standard (and often, the legal requirement) for homes, businesses, schools, and even highway medians.

If it was just lawns, one environmentally destructive law or practice, it would be much easier to address and overcome. But our resistance to front-yard gardens is just one example of a multitude of social practices and political policies that, taken together, operate at a structural level. Structural problems are a combination of individual and collective actions that create, reflect, and reinforce an ecologically dangerous status quo. This acts as a formidable barrier to living ecologically, sustainably, and taking responsibility for the natural environment.
Iris Marion Young (2003) rgues that structural injustice is a special moral problem that is not adequately accounted for by looking to the actions of individuals or particular policies of a state. She says:

> Structural injustice, then, exists when social processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a

> wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them. (Young 2003a, 52)

Rather than speak of a fixed or stagnant structure, Young says that structural injustices are caused by shifting and dynamic social-structural processes. These processes have four characteristics. The first is what Young calls "objective constraint" (Young 2003a, 53-56). She says that we often experience life in society as objectively constraining. That is, social-structural processes set up certain paths of behavior toward which we are guided or coerced. For example, many individuals are constrained to eating meat. While one is not actively forced to eat animals, the practice occurs almost automatically or appears inherently appropriate or inevitable. And should one choose another path, like vegetarianism or veganism, one will likely experience social pressures (disapproval from family, friends, and the culture at large) and material constraints (lesser access to non-animal sources of food) to return to the "right" path.

Yet even though we may experience life in society as constraining, we do not see the source of this constraint in any particular individual or institution. It is not just that my mom disapproves or is offended by my vegetarianism or that the restaurant up the street has no vegetarian options. It is the cumulation of family, friends, restaurants, servers, low-priced options in the grocery store, school lunches, entertainment and advertising, etc. Animal consumption is simply *the* way of life in most of America. Conforming to this way of life is the path of least resistance; it is the standard against which all other paths are arduous.

The second feature of socio-structural processes is positionality—how one's social position relates to other social positions systematically (Young 2003a, 56). Social positions can be based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and/or religion, and how one's race and class are related to other races and classes will position one within society prior to any particular interaction and will condition the possibilities and expectations within that interaction. Social

positions can also determine how one stands in relation to constraints. That is, my social position might make vegetarianism an easier or more difficult path to take.

Third, Young points out that though analyses through a structural lens seems obscure the agency of individuals, social structures *are* nonetheless produced in action. The result is that, when an individual acts, she both attempts to actualize what she intends but she also tends to reproduce the relationships, expectations, and rules that guide her actions. This indicates that structures are recursive. People know the rules and expectations of their surrounding milieu and pattern their behavior within these expectations. This process of conformity is not necessarily consciously intended; it is rather a matter of routine. "However uniquely individual we think we are, many of our most mundane actions manifest internalized bodily comportments and reactions—the habitus—that are typical of people in similar social positions" (Young 2003a, 61). That is, even though one may willingly and enthusiastically choose to eat animals, one does so within structures that encourage and reward meat-eating. In following through with this choice one also reinforces the very structure that makes such an action the most socially acceptable option.

Thus, the unintended consequences of the actions and accumulated outcomes of individuals who act on their own intentions (and generally not in concert with others) constitute the final feature of socio-structural processes.

Each of these four features—constraint, positionality, recursive action, and unintended consequences—interact to create structures that can produce oppression and injustice. Young follows Rawls in insisting that structure is the primary subject of injustice, but this does not negate the role that individuals also play. Injustice taken on a structural level refers to normative judgements on a broad or macro view, one that considers how actions occur within and reinforce institutions that then produce outcomes that we deem unjust. But we ought to, nonetheless, make

micro-level normative judgements that refer to direct actions or interactions between individuals that may be moral wrongs or contribute directly to unjust structures. She says that making this distinction:

> ...does not imply…that individual actors need not be concerned with issues of justice in their individual choices and interactions. On the contrary, only if we are so concerned can we hope to make the structural changes that undermine current injustices. It does mean, however, that as individuals we should evaluate our actions from two different irreducible points of view: the interactional and institutional. We should judge our own actions and those of others according to how we treat the persons we deal with directly…. We should also ask whether and how we contribute by our actions to structural processes that produce vulnerabilities to deprivation and domination….” (Young 2003a, 73)

As we are dealing with structural injustice here, I ought to make clear toward whom the injustice is directed. We often hear the phrase “environmental justice.” This phrase refers to the equal treatment of all persons, regardless of race, gender, class, and sexuality, in relation to environmental law, regulations, policies, and practices. That is, it relates to how *people* are affected by our use of natural entities and the environment. Environmental justice is *not* my concern in this paper. Rather, my effort to find a way out of this particular form of structural injustice is based on how our practices affect natural entities and the environment themselves. I am not looking at environmental justice but justice for the environment.

Justice for the Environment

One may wonder, however, how justice for the environment is possible. After all, justice is a feature of human societies, often implying contractual agreements or reciprocal duties. It relates

to how law and practice come together to form the conditions of life within a community of persons who themselves shape those laws and practices. It seems as though natural entities cannot participate in such a system. They cannot enter into contracts and we rarely expect that animals have or will perform any duties toward us. While our treatment of the environment might be a *moral* issue (and it certainly is, as I have argued elsewhere (Rudow-Abouharb 2018)), does it really make sense to also classify it as a violation of justice?

In *Animal Minds and Human Morals*, Richard Sorabji (1993) details a history of philosophical debate surrounding this very question, yet primarily insofar as it relates to animals. How do animals, ancient Western philosophers wonder, fit into a schema of justice? For many ancients the answer is that they simply do not—justice, they argue, requires rationality. Yet, there are some notable examples of those who see it differently. Diogenes, for instance, claims that animals are far superior to humans because they do not need duties, reason, or contracts. Animals exercise justice and virtue in such a way that they "involve no toil;" they come naturally (Sorabji 1993, 160-161). Many Stoics see justice as a feature of communities or of belonging. Animals might be said to extend a rudimentary form of justice to their own, yet, as they lack membership to the human community (one, again, based on rationality), they owe no justice to us nor we to them (Sorabji 1993, 124). Pythagoras and Empedocles argue that it is not community or belonging that binds us to animals, but kinship. We are constituted by the same elements, there is "one breath" that permeates us all, and the belief in reincarnation means that any given animal might genuinely be one's relative (Sorabji 1993, 131). We have special relationships with them; they are our friends, and Empedocles goes so far as to say that universal law extends to everyone, requiring that no one kills living things (Sorabji 1993, 157). None of these is a full-blown theory of justice for the animals, but they have made their way through time into more contemporary considerations.

Mary Midgley (1998) advocates a contemporary view that falls somewhere between the Stoics and Pythagoreans. She points out that animals *are* members of our communities, especially more so than distant humans, and one has special duties or responsibilities to animals based on these relationships. Midgley argues that instead of trying to identify in-groups, priority and obligation are better understood in terms of "claims," claims like fellowship, admiration, gratitude, kinship, gratitude, special need, justice, and special responsibility (Midgley 1998, 30). Importantly, the categories of special need, justice, and special responsibility overlap:

> By 'special responsibility', I mean claims arising from our own acts and the acts of those with who we identify. These are claims of the kind which rest on someone who has, for instance, taken charge of somebody else's life to the extent of persuading him to change his dwelling-place or his occupation. Politically, this sort of claim affects, for instance, a colonial power which has for its own advantage altered its subjects' life-style irreversibly, or even a large-scale buyer which has done the same thing. Both these sorts of claims can arise without blood-relation, acquaintance or admiration, and can on occasion be strong enough to override all these considerations. (Midgley 1998, 31)

Similar to the Pythagoreans, such claims have a universal character: they hold in whomever they might be found, animals included. Midgley highlights the fact that animals experience great need. This need is quite often related to human action, and as such we can also think of animal claims politically (Midgley 1998, 31). One such case might be domestication. Grace Clement (2011) argues that justice is owed to domesticated animals, in particular, because we have rendered them largely incapable of caring for themselves. We have forced them into a dependency relation with our community, and they are thus holders of certain rights and exact obligations on our part.

Here, we have seen plausible arguments for how animals could fit into some conceptions of justice, but animals only get us part way there. We need to make the case that the multitude of natural entities, including the environment as a whole, deserves a place in our considerations of justice. In the now classic *Should Trees Have Standing?* Christopher Stone (2010) makes just such a case.

First, Stone points out that we already accept as recipients of justice some once unlikely entities. We recognize trusts, corporations, joint ventures, municipalities, partnerships, and nation-states as right-holders. These entities, for legal purposes, are considered "persons". Furthermore, we once denied legal recognition to groups of entities that we now take for granted as quite obviously included, like women, people of color, and children (Stone 2010, 1-2). His point is that any time an outsider vies for inclusion, the idea is at first "unthinkable":

> The fact is, that each time there is a movement to confer rights onto some new 'entity,' the proposal is bound to sound odd or frightening or laughable. This is partly because until the rightless things receives its rights, we cannot see it as anything but a *thing* for the use of "us"—those who are holding rights at the time." (Stone 2010, 3)

Even though the idea might seem strange, Stone is seriously proposing giving legal rights to the environment and the natural entities within it. This proposal, therefore, moves to include the natural environment in considerations of justice. Stone points out that natural entities are not holders of legal rights. He says that a legal right is such that some public authoritative body must be prepared to give a review of actions or processes that threaten it. However, to be a *holder of legal rights*, three further criteria must be met:

> All three, one will observe, go toward making a thing count judicially—to have legally recognized worth and dignity in its own right, and not merely to serve as a means to benefit "us" (whoever the contemporary group of rights-holders may be). They are, first, that the thing can institute legal actions *at its behest*, second, that in determining the granting of legal relief, the course must take *injury to it* into account; and, third, that relief must run to the *benefit of it.* (Stone 2010, 4)

Unsurprisingly, natural entities lack them all. For natural entities, there is an obvious barrier to the first; they cannot by themselves initiate judicial review. As for the second, there is no inherent barrier, however when some legal action has been taken involving a natural entity, the court now does not take injury to it into account. That is, injuries are always referenced to human beings. If the river is polluted, legal action can be taken, but it is for the sake of the human population that uses and perhaps relies upon that river, *not* for the sake of the river itself. Stone cites several cases where environmental activists have had to resort to claims about harms to their lifestyles or aesthetic preferences, rather than focus on the egregious wrongs done to the natural entities themselves. In fact, there *must* be such a claim of harm to a human—even but one—in order to bring a case for any multitude of other creatures.[17] The same is true of benefits. When a natural entity is threatened or harmed, it is the harmed human who is the recipient of any benefits awarded.

The implications of this are many. For just a few examples, while a grove of trees and its inhabitants might be greatly harmed, the direct harm on a human might be so minimal as to negate any legal claim to action. Where a group of humans might come together to file a suit,

[17] For example, Stone mentions a case wherein a species of crocodile was endangered by the building of a dam, and just such a strategy was used. "To secure standing, a member of one group testified that she had, in 1986, 'observed the traditional habitat of endangered Nile crocodile there and intends to do so again, and hopes to observe the crocodile directly,' and that she 'will suffer harm in fact as the result of the American…role…in overseeing the rehabilitation of the Aswan High Dam'" (Stone 2010, 39).

their interests and harms might be too various to constitute a coherent claim. Even if there is demonstrable harm to a human and the grove, any human affected may not care, may have an interest in continuing the harm, or filing a suit on their own behalf may be cost prohibitive (Stone 2010, 5-6).

On Stone's view, it is thus a matter of justice that natural entities be designated appropriate representatives to advocate and manage their affairs. He argues that "we should have a system in which, when a friend of a natural object perceives it to be endangered, he can apply to a court for the creation of a guardianship" (Stone 2010, 8). He says that the benefit of such guardians goes beyond the courtroom into "a host of protective tasks, *e.g.* monitoring effluents…representing their 'wards' at legislative and administrative hearings…" (Stone 2010, 9). In fact, we already have a model of guardianship for those humans who lack the first criteria of being a holder of legal rights, those who are unable to initiate legal action due to old age or disease, among other things (Stone 2010, 8). Their being so incapacitated does not negate their claims to rights, and, Stone believes, neither should this inability negate the standing of natural entities. Just as we can name appropriate guardians for humans, we can recognize guardians for various kinds of natural entities. The key advantage of the guardianship approach is that it gives our legal system a way to consider natural entities directly, it secures a "voice" for the ward where governmental agencies may (and often do) fall short, and it provides the natural entity continuous supervision that spans beyond any single piece of litigation (Stone 2010, 10-11).

Thus, taking Stone's proposal seriously, it is a matter of injustice that these rights do not now exist, and it is an injustice that the rights that these entities ought to have are being regularly and systematically violated. This means that our responsibilities for justice are not limited to humans but extend to natural entities and the natural world as a whole.

Whose Responsibility? Individual, Collective, Shared

Structural injustices like those endured by natural entities admit of no easy solutions, and it is unclear at what level solutions ought to be aimed. After all, who is ultimately charged with such a massive undertaking? Young points out that individuals ought to engage questions about their participation in unjust structures, but must each individual bear the burden of complete lifestyle changes that undermine the status quo? Perhaps responsibility is better understood at the institutional level, but what does this amount to and how does the individual fit into the picture? In this section, I explore these questions in relation to individuals and collectives, then suggest that the answer lies somewhere in between.

Individuals

In her account of structural injustice, Young points out that, while individuals may contribute in direct ways to the harm of others through prejudicial, discriminatory, or even violent actions, individuals are largely well-intentioned actors within a structurally problematic system. Taken in an environmental context, this system operates in three ways. First, it sets up "background conditions" or a status quo through which my environmentally destructive actions are seen by my social milieu as benign, expected, or even virtuous. I may excessively water my lawn, spray pesticides, and destroy native plants in the interest of having a nice yard. While these activities are environmentally damaging, I live up to the expectations of my community. Second, resisting this status quo can constitute an unrealistic burden on individual agents. I may be restricted by the amount of time and money I have, available local options for altering harmful practices, or, should I effectively resist such norms, I may be held criminally liable (as we have seen). Third, where damaging practices thrive on a structural level, personal lifestyle changes do very little to curb them.

In this structural context, individual behavior does not violate the law but, rather, destructive practices are often *in accordance with it*. Thus, the individual has no legal responsibility to act differently. However, where my individual acts cause genuine harm, I do have a moral responsibility to rectify and change those behaviors. But what can this amount to in a structural context?

First of all, I am usually unaware of many of the environmental harms of my actions. The effects are often distant, both temporally and spatially. Consequences of my actions accrue over long spans of time (for example, pollution) or the consequences materialize far away from where my action originates (trash in a landfill). Given that the judge of my moral misdeeds is usually myself, if I am largely unaware of my misdeeds, I am unlikely and unable to hold myself responsible.

Second, most large-scale environmental harms do not occur as a result of my actions alone. Environmental ills like climate change and factory farming require the participation of whole nations of people. If I am morally responsible, then my own degree of responsibility is but a small fraction. Moreover, any responsibility I do take on alone, any personal lifestyle changes I make (perhaps, riding a bike to work or becoming a vegetarian), will remedy just as small a fraction. Taking up responsibility on an individual level simply will not make much or any difference.

Third, should I become aware of the harms that I cause and decide to take up the responsibilities associated with my actions, the moral burden is often just too high. If I were to eliminate each of the environmentally damaging practices in which I participate, my life would have to undergo a complete overhaul. I would have to, quite literally, remove myself from modern society. And to even have that option, to be able to perform such a removal amounts to a level of privilege not many enjoy. Most individuals simply cannot eliminate their participation in

harmful practices. After all, individuals are pressured on a social level to conform to ecologically harmful practices, forced on a political level to do so, yet lack effective means to personally resist these pressures. The result is often a profound, though understandable, unwillingness to engage in environmental concerns. Holding individuals morally responsible for all their destructive practices thus constitutes an unrealistic moral burden. Ought implies can, and there is very little that one individual can do to repair the damage done by a system that thrives on destruction. A solution seems to require a turn to some type of collective responsibility.

Collectives

Hannah Arendt's (2003) political philosophy is deeply concerned with issues of collective responsibility. She argues that the notion of collective responsibility is essentially political. That is, collective responsibility ought to be understood as political responsibility because other types of groups rarely or never meet the appropriate conditions. The conditions to be met for a collective to be held responsible are 1) a member must be held responsible for something she has not done, and 2) her membership in the group is something that she cannot voluntarily dissolve (Arendt 2003a, 149). She argues that in other seemingly eligible groups, specifically those discussed in Joel Feinberg's (1968) essay "Collective Responsibility," we can always trace responsibility to *particular* members (even if that includes every member) who have performed actions that carry with them varying degrees of personal liability (Arendt, Amor Mundi 1987).[18] Collective responsibility must be responsibility that is attributed to the group with no varying degrees among its members. Arendt says:

[18] Feinberg's examples are a group of beach-goers who fail to save a drowning swimmer, a group of conspirators robbing a bank, and the group of postbellum Southerners alienating black citizens. Arendt says that the first case fails to exhibit a genuine collectivity, and in the second two cases, personal liability can be assigned in varying degrees (Feinberg 1968) (Arendt, Amor Mundi 1987).

> This kind of responsibility in my opinion is always political, whether it appears in the older form, when a whole community takes it upon itself to be responsible for whatever one of its members has done, or whether a community is being held responsibility for what has been done in its name. (Arendt 2003a, 149)

Here, the state and its citizenry are responsible as one body and, as one body, must remedy the harms done. Political responsibility is not discharged by holding a handful of government officials or individuals responsible for their particular misdeeds. In fact, it is often a strategy of collectives to identify a scapegoat—one left to take the fall for some trespass—while the larger group is absolved of all wrongdoing. The citizenry must share in the responsibility for events it *let* happen in its name. Receiving common benefits, it must share a common fate.

Young indicates that what we often take this form of political responsibility to require that we pressure our government to right some wrong or to be better. Where no one in particular is assigned the task to address problems, it seems appropriate to expect the state to act (Young 2003a, 167). One of the prime difficulties that individuals face when trying to address large-scale problems is organization, and this is where state institutions can excel. They create agencies, secure funding, pass regulations, and mete out incentives and punishments to those who do or do not participate. States can be effective mechanisms, especially because they can exercise coercive power, says Young (Young 2003a, 167). But while state actions can be positive forces toward furthering justice, and there are appropriate times to rely on the state to rectify injustices, expectations that the government will do the work most often serve as a massive excuse to do nothing oneself.

The problem here is that, while on one hand it might be easy and commonplace to conceptualize the state as a single entity when it comes to assigning liability, on the other, it is quite messy when it comes to *taking up* the responsibilities to remedy harms done. As Arendt

aptly puts it, “Where all are guilty, no one is” (Arendt 2003b, 21). This can be understood as a distribution problem and this difficulty plagues most proposals related to collective responsibility. If we are all politically responsible for the actions of our society, do we each hold that responsibility in equal measure? Must those who have tried to resist participation in injustices share the same fate as those who have enthusiastically embraced them? If not, how do we take on the task of meting out degrees of responsibility? If we are able to do so, then we have done little more than return to a form of individual responsibility.

These sorts of problems make Arendt suspicious of most discussions concerning collective responsibility. She points out that philosophers and lay persons often understand responsibility as entangled with notions of guilt and doing so is dangerously misguided for several reasons.

First, speaking in terms suggestive of collective guilt whitewashes the deeds of those individuals who have committed serious wrongs (Arendt 2003b, 28). “We are all guilty” erases and acquits those who are *genuinely* guilty and ought to be held personally responsible for what they have done. Relatedly, it grants permission for someone to use the excuse that she was but a cog in a giant system. Under this conception the excuse is true: “if I had not done it, somebody else could and would have” and to assign responsibility here would be to mark a scapegoat (Arendt 2003b, 29, 31). Systems and structures might provide mitigating circumstances for individuals but cannot be held liable in themselves (Arendt 2003b, 32).

Second, Arendt points out that acts of the state generally stand outside of legal frameworks; there is no court that has jurisdiction (Arendt 2003b, 38-40). The force of law holds within a state, and conflicts from without are ultimately decided by the victors (another state) of any such conflicts. This has a bizarre character, of course. The judgements of fault and guilt may be *de facto* just, in the sense that they can become legally instantiated in the form of reparations

or sanctions, but that does not make them inherently just. Liability of a state under these circumstances is little more than political maneuvering and various displays of power.

Third, and seemingly worst of all for Arendt, is any use of the concept of guilt in relation to collectives:

> Guilt, unlike responsibility, always singles out; it is strictly personal. It refers to an act, not to intentions or potentialities. It is only in a metaphorical sense that we can say we *feel* guilty for the sins of our fathers or our people or mankind, in short, for deeds we have not done, although the course of events may well make us pay for them. (Arendt 2003a, 147)

In collective contexts, guilt is entirely inappropriate, creating what Arendt calls an abyss between actuality and potentiality (Arendt 1963, 278). While guilt refers to a particular deed that one has actually done, political responsibility calls out to deeds left undone. It calls out to all citizens and refers to potential actions that anyone may take up. Guilt is not similarly generalizable. Used collectively, it is but an expressive sentiment and, as such, is politically idle. She says that those who dwell in feelings of guilt over things they have not done, "are trying to escape from the pressure of very present and actual problems into cheap sentimentality" (Arendt 1963, 251).

Politics is ideally performative, and Arendt uses this emphasis on action to make a robust case for political responsibility that is related not to guilt but solely to citizenship:

> In this sense, we are always held responsible for the sins of our fathers as we reap the rewards of their merits; but we are of course not guilty of their misdeeds, either morally or legally, nor can we ascribe their deeds to our own merits. (Arendt 2003a, 150)

We are held responsible in the sense of a historical and causal progression, where each citizen has no choice but to be in and make use of the world as she found it. We are responsible because we are here, right here and now. What this responsibility amounts to, for Arendt, is a requirement for participation in one's political system or complete nonparticipation as a form of resistance (Arendt 2003a, 154-155). This requirement falls to each and every citizen in equal measure as an abstract and universal duty.

Yet, it is just because of its universal and abstract character that it is difficult to make much practical use of Arendt's political responsibility. Once we get into the particulars—instantiating responsibilities such that this person ought to do that—then responsibility seems to have again lapsed back into personal responsibility, stripping it of its collective character. However, the lasting value of Arendt's view is that it hints at both a responsibility that might be shared in common and at one that aims toward the future. That is, each member of a community has a responsibility to *do something*, whether it is to participate or resist, and this responsibility is shared with every other member. Though Arendt herself seems to focus on one extreme or the other, the abstract and undefined duty of citizens or the particular, legal, and moral responsibility of the individual, perhaps we can make sense of something in between.

Shared

In his book, *The Question of German Guilt*, Karl Jaspers (2000) describes what he calls "metaphysical responsibility" that has this in-between character. Metaphysical responsibility is related to the actions performed by one's community but points to one's particular position within that community. Responsibility here stands in relation to deeds that one did or did not do in relation to the wrongs committed by their community. Identifying with my community through solidarity, I take on responsibility for every wrong I did not seek to stop. Even though I

may not be personally guilty of crimes or moral failings, having only the anonymous guilt of my membership, I nonetheless have a co-responsibility based on this solidarity (Jaspers 2000, 65). Larry May(1996) takes up Jaspers' metaphysical responsibility as a social existentialist stance on political life. He insists along with Jaspers that though one may not be morally guilty of any particular wrongs, the responsibilities entailed by this metaphysical solidarity are indeed moral responsibilities. May says that metaphysical responsibility is engendered by "moral taint," a form shame or taint that arises in virtue of who one has chosen to be rather than what one directly does (May 1996, 146-162). That is, if a group with whom I associate commits serious wrongs, even if I did not participate in those wrongs, I am morally tainted. May points out that the positive side of community membership is also similarly associative. When the community participates in some perceived good—highly performing schools, winning athletic teams, or a massive turnout for a charity initiative—an individual feels pride and moral esteem. May says that moral taint has two aspects then: a shared identity and my own response to community actions. If I do not much identify with my local community, I may not feel pride when the high school football team goes to the state championship or much shame when a revered city councilman is found to be involved in a sexual harassment scandal. But if my community constitutes a large part of my identity, and we all have such communities, the actions of others will affect my sense of self. If my response to my community participating in harms is to condone or ignore, then I am tainted by that participation. The only way to shake off the taint and responsibility associated with harms perpetuated by my community is to distance myself from those harms or end my relationship with the community (May 1996, 159).

May recognizes that it may not be possible to leave or even distance oneself from one's group. But given that moral taint is about who someone is rather than what someone did, distancing oneself can be attitudinal or dispositional. May argues that attitudes and dispositions

are chosen, even if only semi-consciously. Since they are chosen, they can, and many times ought to be, changed. If I do not change my harmful attitudes or dispositions, especially those that are harmful and shared by a community that is actively doing harm, then I share responsibility for those harms (May 1996, 47-54). Again, this should not be understood as moral guilt, says May, but I nonetheless have a moral responsibility to change the harmful attitudes which contribute to a climate wherein actively harmful acts occur. If I do not share in these harmful attitudes, in order to completely avoid taint I must still "take reasonable steps" to distance myself from harmful acts and attitudes. What these reasonable steps are is based on context (May 1996, 159).

Moral taint, then, has both collective and personal aspects. Any taint I suffer is caused by who I have chosen to be, personally, in relation to my group. Here, even though I did not directly contribute to harms perpetuated by the group, I am nonetheless co-responsible for those harms if I have shared in harmful attitudes, if I have witnessed attitudes or harms silently without disapproval, or if I have remained associated when ending my relationship to the group was possible. What May advocates, then, is a shared responsibility that lies somewhere between the collective and the individual.

May does subvert the criticisms leveled at most conceptions of collective responsibility, that they are too impersonal and involve notions of guilt, but he errs by being *too* personal. Though direct actions in and toward the world prompt a shared moral taint, the object of responsibility ends up being only the self; it is but my own attitude that must change. May is right to say that we should experience moral taint as a result of the harmful actions of others with whom we are closely associated and that a turn inward importantly addresses the goodness of the person within us. But on May's model the political agent—the community member—drops out

and worldly ills go unaddressed. Though political responsibility is thus shared, discharging that responsibility is deeply personal.

Young shares this concern, especially in relation to structural injustices. She insists that action, more than personal attitude, is the only way to remedy the normalized and ongoing processes of large-scale injustices. She also points out that May is primarily focused on singular, time-bound harms, rather than widespread structural injustices. Young says that the central value of May's work is showing that perpetrators do not always exhaust the whole of responsibility for some harm, that those who share in the attitudes and behaviors of perpetrators—even if they never cause direct harm—share in the responsibility to rectify harms (Young 2003a, 111). Yet, this sense of rectification constitutes yet another limitation to using May's model for structural ills.

May identifies blameworthy and unblameworthy persons based on how they construct themselves within a community. I am unblameworthy if I distance myself from the group or its harms; I am blameworthy if I participate, condone, or ignore. Young calls May's view a liability model. Liability models seek to identify and hold persons or groups accountable for some wrong, "wrongs that deviate from a baseline and have reached a terminus" (Young 2003a, 111). But that is not how structural injustices work. The existing structure *is* the baseline and it is ongoing. In many cases there is no way *not* to participate. It becomes impossible to distinguish the blameworthy from the unblameworthy, and using such notions becomes counter-productive. Young insists that politically, agents are responsible due to their structural connectedness, *not* because they are to blame.

Blame is backward-looking, says Young. It seeks to assign responsibility to some as it absolves all others. Yet, in a political and structural context, finding someone to blame for direct harms ought not absolve others. Where blame and liability models indicate and seek to repair a

deviation from the norm, political responsibility requires that we call these very norms into question. Andrew Schaap (2001) notices much the same issue lurking in Jaspers' concept of metaphysical responsibility, on which May's model is based. He calls Jaspers' metaphysical responsibility a philosophy of reconciliatory reconstruction, and I think it is fair to say the same of May. This means that it advocates a repair, a return to values and customs that are destroyed by catastrophic wrongs. But, as Schaap points out, there is there is no idyllic past to which to return, not in the context of the torn Germany that prompted Jaspers' writings nor in general. He says, "The restorative conception of reconciliation therefore makes a presumption of what in fact it must achieve" (Schaap 2001, 762).

The same is true here, in an environmental context. A narrative of reconciliatory reconstruction only serves to romanticize a time in which humans and nature lived in harmony. Though there are accounts of ancient and indigenous communities living in better balance with the natural world, any return to such a lifestyle for modern society is an absolute impossibility. American culture is largely founded upon principles that assert the dominion of man over nature, and as Stone indicates, any balance to be found must begin with a radically new conception of humans' relationship with the natural world.

In Young's view, political responsibility ought to be primarily forward-looking. For her, one ought to take up the responsibility to change the future and the problematic processes in which we participate (Young 2003b, 41). But, following May, she insists that responsibility must be shared. In fact, this is what politics is at heart. "Our responsibility is political in the sense that acting on it involves joining in a public discourse where we try to persuade one another about courses of collective action that will contribute to social change" (Young 2003b, 42). And this turn to a politics of shared responsibility for positive social change is a far better motivator than accusations, blame, and guilt.

The move from guilt and blame to a forward-looking politics is in part a rhetorical move for Young, but it is crucial, nonetheless. The invocation of blame narratives in political discussions often serves to shut down dialog rather than facilitate it (Young 2003a, 114). While she notes the importance of blame in legal and moral contexts, and even some political contexts, in relation to structural ills, these devices posit an oversimplified split between powerful wrongdoers and those who are innocent as victims or bystanders (Young 2003a, 116). Yet, the difficulty with structural harms is that they are not usually caused by a select group of powerful wrongdoers but an entire community of actors contributing in varying degrees in a multitude of ways. Focusing only on powerful actors ignores the part played by ordinary citizens and sometimes the victims themselves. Applying the rhetoric of blame to entire communities, regardless of their particular contribution to the problem, leads to anger and defensiveness, a natural and generally appropriate response in this context (Young 2003a, 116-117).

Young says that defensiveness in politics is dangerous and counter-productive. For one thing, it puts all emphasis on the past, failing to generate ideas addressing the present and future. Second, it is divisive. Pitting people and groups against each other breeds mistrust where cooperation is needed. Third, defensiveness often leads to a blame-game of back and forth accusations, which then delay or prohibit any forward-looking action. Young points out that this is particularly damning in the case of structural injustices, where most people do contribute to the problem. Finally, even where some may not get defensive and accept accusations, they tend to turn inward toward personal reform, rather than outward to definitive action (Young 2003a, 117-118).

Thus, Young advocates a politics of constitution, a forward-looking conception of political responsibility that seeks to build a just, shared world. Considering structural injustices that cause harm to natural entities and the environment as a whole, this type of forward-looking,

shared responsibility is important. In fact, shared responsibility is the best model for addressing environmental ills. We belong in a community that perpetuates great harm on the natural world, and these harms are, by and large, business as usual. We tend to see destructive practices as normal or, at least, inevitable. And whether we participate directly, indirectly, enthusiastically, or reluctantly, we all share in the responsibility for it. May's model sets us on the right path to recognizing this shared responsibility, but is limited by its focus on backward-looking, internalized attitudinal changes rather than outward actions that make positive differences on the ground. Young expands May's view beyond shared liability to a model that advocates a shared taking up of responsibility. It is to her model that I now turn, and it is from her model that my own is derived.

Beyond Guilt and Taint: Forward-looking Responsibility

In spite of her criticisms, Young applauds May's turn from collective to shared responsibility for its more nuanced approach to the distribution of responsibility. She uses May's insights to generate her own model of shared responsibility: the social connection model. The types of responsibility that corresponds to the social connection model are similar to responsibilities that one may have in virtue of one's social roles or positions (Young 2003a, 104). These responsibilities are not based on fault or liability, but they relate to the moral and social requirements to see that certain outcomes obtain in relation to those positions. For example, as a caregiver, one is responsible for the safety and well-being of those in one's care. As a citizen, it is one's responsibility to stay informed and, minimally, to vote. Young's model does share with liability models a reference to causes of wrongs, but only insofar as we all contribute together to these wrongs.

The social connection model of responsibility has four additional features. It is not isolating, it judges background conditions, it is more forward-looking than backward, and must be discharged through collective action. I will briefly explain each in turn.

What Young means by "not isolating" goes back to one of her main critiques of liability models. That is, where liability models seek to isolate and punish bad actors, absolving all others, the social connection model attempts to identify the ways that non-guilty actors also contribute to structural harms. While the social connection model recognizes that many of the ways that non-guilty parties participate in unjust practices are in accordance with accepted norms, this does not absolve them of responsibility for such actionable harms or contributions to unjust outcomes (Young 2003a, 106). Essentially, finding some actors guilty or liable for egregious harms does not let those who participate in subtle ways off the hook.

The second feature is to judge background conditions. Because harmful acts are embedded in the status quo, a primary aim of the social connections model is to question, call attention to, and judge these normalized background conditions (the rules, conventions, institutions, and accepted practices we all live by). "When we judge that structural injustice exists, we are saying precisely that at least some of the normal and accepted background conditions of action are not morally acceptable" (Young 2003a, 107).

The first two features help illuminate why the third feature, forward-looking, is so important. Because one cannot be absolved of responsibility even when worse actors are blamed along with being constrained or unable to do otherwise, a politics that generates positive, future-oriented responsibilities is necessary. "The injustices produced through structures have not reached a terminus, but rather are ongoing. The point is not to compensate for the past, but for all who contribute to processes producing unjust outcomes to work to transform those processes" (Young 2003a, 109). Where the social connection model does look backward, it is only in order to

highlight the relationships between certain actions, practices, and policies and the resulting structural outcomes.

Finally, and following from its inherently shared imperative, the social connection model advocates the discharge of responsibility through collective action. Young recognizes that structural change is not a burden of individuals. In fact, it is impossible to tackle these issues on one's own. When we try to act alone, we face the material and social constrains that have kept us where we are. Yet, acting in concert with others from diverse social positions and roles, we can produce better outcomes and raise more awareness. The point of this form of political responsibility is to join with others in order to alter background conditions and structures, creating new, and better, norms. "Most fundamentally, what I mean by 'politics' here is public communicative engagement with others for the sake of organizing our relationships and coordinating our actions most justly" (Young 2003a, 112). Young says that this may sometimes involve government action but cannot be reduced to it. Ultimately, the government action ought to be a tool of organized political actors, not an end in itself.

In regard to structural injustice in general, and environmental ills in particular, the social connection model provides the most promising framework yet. Environmentally destructive practices have become so commonplace that they are taken to be inevitable. Though obviously some (perhaps, more accurately, many) individuals cause direct harm to natural entities and non-human others, most people are well-intentioned actors within a structure that is profoundly unjust toward the natural environment. As we have seen, an individual can do very little to modify existing structures and a collective is too abstract, unable to take up concrete responsibilities, but the social connection model has the potential to bridge the gap. In the final section, I revise and build on Young's model in an effort to apply it more straightforwardly to structural injustices that harm natural entities and the environment more broadly.

Problems with Social Connection

Young's social connection model gives us a new way to understand forward-looking political responsibility in relation to structural harms. Where May's discussion of moral taint provided the tools for understanding how responsibility can be held in common by individuals connected by group or community membership, his version of discharging that responsibility relies too heavily on personal transformation and rectifying the past. Young points out that just as the responsibility for some harm can be shared, the responsibility to create a better future is also a shared endeavor, one that must be realized through action. She positions her social connection model opposite a liability model. Young advocates for a role-based, forward-looking model that seeks to address structural injustice.

Although I agree with Young that May's model is limited and that for cases of structural injustices we ought to move away from models that focus on liability and move toward ones that focus on roles, the model she offers only partially succeeds. I will discuss these two main reasons why, taking each in turn: the way responsibilities are distributed contains a potential efficacy problem and the social connection model relies too heavily on causal positionality. It is, therefore, not genuinely role-based.

Efficacy

Young argues that on her social connection model we must still distinguish between kinds and degrees of responsibility by thinking through three interconnected "parameters of reason": power/influence, privilege, and connection.[19] Those with the most power or influence to make substantive changes to processes of structural injustice ought to do so and thus have more

[19] In her longer work, *Responsibility for Justice*, she adds another parameter, collective action. Those who already have influential connections within organizations, institutions, and other groups have the responsibility to appeal to those groups to change unjust conditions (Young, Justice 2003, 147).

responsibility. Those individuals running company that is powerful and influential in the global consumer market like Amazon or Apple, for example, have a much higher degree of responsibility to consider more environmentally sustainable packaging and shipping options than the small business owners struggling to stay afloat. However, a small local business owner could have increased responsibility if she has a great deal of influence in a community. The same goes for privilege. Those in privileged social positions often benefit from unjust processes and are, therefore, better positioned to resist those processes. Young says, "Persons who benefit from structural inequalities have a special moral responsibility to join in correcting them—not because they are to blame, but because they are able to adapt to changed circumstances without suffering serious deprivation" (Young 2003b, 43). Young is careful to point out, however, that being a victim does not absolve one from taking up responsibilities. In fact, she thinks victims, too, have special responsibilities:

> Indeed, on some issues those who might be argued to be in less advantaged positions within structures perhaps should take the lead in organizing and proposing remedies acutely at stake. Their social positions, moreover, offer victims of injustice a unique understanding of the nature of the problems and the likely effects of policies and actions proposed by others situated in more powerful and privileged positions. (Young 2003a, 113)

She says that victims taking the lead is especially important because often those with power, influence, and privilege are the least likely to take up the responsibilities they have. The powerful have often gained their power *through* participation in unjust structural processes and the privileged are privileged often due to their relationships to those in power and their own participation in unjust systems. That is, these groups have a very strong incentive to continue benefiting from the structural processes that helped put them where they are.

While we might tend to agree that those owning and operating globally operating oil companies should have greater responsibilities to adjust their companies' practices toward better outcomes for the environment, it is rarely, if ever, the case that these individuals lead the way in such adjustments. On the other hand, while giving victims special responsibilities because of the knowledge they possess is also appealing, victims tend to be those with the least amount of power, influence, or privilege to stand against such strong forces. Young does recognize this, but her suggestion, nonetheless, is that those with responsibilities should 1) expose both the interests that powerful agents have in the status quo and the interest others have in change, 2) make arguments that much suffering is due to injustice, and 3) demand change from those who have the power to do so (Young 2003a, 148).

But, again, from whom should we expect these actions to come? This constitutes a real problem for Young's model. Here, having more or special responsibilities seems to amount to very little if those with the most tend to be motivated the least. If any political action is to be taken, it seems that the bulk of responsibility will ultimately fall on victims who have an incentive for change. It is they who must convince the powerful and privileged. Yet, it is too often that the victims of structural harms that have the least resources to be able to do so, whether in the environmental context or any other.

A recent and clear example is the Flint, Michigan water crisis. Though the majority black and poverty-stricken residents did indeed take up their responsibilities to demand clean and safe water, they were mocked and dismissed by those in positions of power and influence. It took over a year and a half after complaints and concerns began before city officials took action to protect citizens from the pollutants flowing through city pipes, and by then, thousands of children and adults had dangerously high levels of lead in their bodies. The special

responsibilities that Young says victims have to insist that injustices be remedied simply are not enough to make up for the responsibilities that those in power are incentivized not to take up.

Causal Positionality

However, Young does provide a third parameter on which we ought to assign degrees and kinds of responsibility: connection. Here the ground of responsibility is how each of our own actions connects us to structural injustices. Understanding which responsibilities are mine comes from analyzing the particular connections between my actions and certain unjust processes (Young 2003b, 43). Young's example is how a consumer might be connected to unjust conditions in sweatshops that produce clothing. If I buy clothing manufactured using exploitative and oppressive labor conditions, I have a responsibility to change those conditions. My responsibilities are related to my particular kinds and degrees of contribution to structural injustices, whether I intend these outcomes or not (Young 2003b, 42).

Here, even though the social connection model is more forward-looking, underlying it is a causal dimension that is very reminiscent of the causation that underlies traditional liability. On this parameter, I have responsibilities to change unjust conditions when I participate in the processes that create them, and the degree and kind of responsibility I have is based on the degree and kind of contribution I make to such injustices. For example, she says that if my contribution has been to purchase sweatshop produced clothing, discharging my responsibility could appropriately come in the form of organizing a boycott with others who have contributed similarly (Young 2003b, 43).

What we find in this discussion of connection is a type of causal positionality. That is, where I stand within the web of actions and harms is what demarcates which responsibilities I ought to take up and how to do so. I am not directly guilty or blameworthy; rather, my causal

position is what implicates me and sets the direction for my responsibilities. Although this analysis of one's causal position is not meant to make one blameworthy, it still takes a form similar to liability models: if I did or do *a*, then I am responsible to do *b*. It is forward-looking in the sense that *b* implies some change I make for future—more just outcomes—whereas *b* on the liability model implies rectification or righting the past. But, pointing back to deeds of individuals, even if the solution is forward-looking, can have the same effect as blame-based finger pointing. It causes denial of connection, reification—treating social processes as things or natural forces, prioritization of immediacy—pointing out that one's responsibilities to close others will always trump those to more distant others, and often resentment, especially when those deeds are in line with expected or respected cultural norms. Indeed, Young devotes an entire chapter to detailing precisely these ways that people attempt to avoid responsibility. Her response to these avoidance tactics is that they are by and large inevitable (Young 2003a, 157, 165, 170). She does think that exposing background conditions can disrupt reification (Young 2003a, 157) and that, to avoid the tension between immediacy and distance, we should make friends with those who share in projects that reduce structural injustice (Young 2003a, 165). I have no doubt that people will always come up with tactics to shirk their responsibilities, but as Young has previously argued, there is something inherent to blame and liability that compels individuals to pull away and shut down, and any model that relies on these features will be so plagued.

Beyond engendering excuses for the avoidance of responsibility, identifying responsibilities based on causal positionality can be overly burdensome. There is scarcely a structural injustice to which I am not, in some way, connected. Working my way through such a web is not only impossible but is bound to implicate me in every harm to some degree. I ought to choose to work on those harms to which I am most connected, but these connections to unjust

structures are incredibly difficult to identify given that the *modus operandi* of structural injustice is that its processes appear normal and good. Basing one's responsibility on untangling these connections puts the burden back, again, on those victims and others who already have an incentive for change to enlighten those who would refuse or simply cannot see these connections for themselves.

A better way of dealing with structural injustices would be to move away from these backward-looking causal arguments altogether. When introducing her model, Young gestured toward an emphasis on social roles rather than contribution or participation. However, as we have seen, when she unpacks her theory, it seems that the only roles that are under analysis are the roles one might play in perpetuating injustice. She is focused primarily on casual positionality, where one stands in relation to social processes, rather than the social roles one plays within a community. But this notion of roles is important. A set of roles that incorporate within their performance responsibilities for creating and maintaining just structures and practices can be used to establish a new status quo. Role-based responsibilities are positive responsibilities in the sense that they are not reconciliatory, making up for past wrongs, nor are they based on one's degree and kind of contribution to structural injustices. The roles we play and how we perform them in everyday interaction establish the values and the accepted standards on which structures take their form. They make up a great deal of the background conditions against which we may feel constrained or that we use to make our decisions.

As I have shown, each of the parameters of reason—power/influence, privilege, and connection—has thoroughgoing issues that call into question their efficacy and appropriateness. I do not think these parameters are useless, however. Rightly oriented entirely toward the future and rooted firmly in role-based responsibilities, they can perform the function that Young envisions. In my final section, I want to take up the shared connection model as Young first

introduced it, exploring further how a turn to roles can facilitate a better motivation for action, especially shared action, and contribute to altering the background conditions that maintain an environmentally destructive status quo.

Homemaking as Social Connection

Obviously, there are a multitude of roles that we can take up throughout our lifetimes in our various endeavors. For the purposes of the model I am proposing, I want to focus on the roles we tend to adopt in relation to home. I take the home as the primary site of responsible roles for several reasons. First, homes in the myriad forms that they take are universal. Even those said to be homeless have places that constitute familiar dwelling places that they consider to be homeplaces. Second, the home is an original site of responsibility. It is where responsibility itself develops and around which many of our responsibilities center. Third, the responsibilities one has toward home are ongoing and required. One *must* take up these responsibilities, again and again, if some place is to remain one's home at all. That is, the responsibilities of homemaking never cease without devastating consequences.[20] Finally, and most importantly for environmentally driven responsibilities, home is a site of care, creativity, maintenance, and meaning. The practices of homemaking in particular can provide a robust grounding for an environment ethic when we take home beyond its "walls" into a broader and more comprehensive territory.

[20] This is not limited to the consequence of losing home. Becoming or being rendered unable to have any role whatsoever in making one's home has profoundly disturbing and even debilitating effects. See Iris Marion Young's essay, "A Room of One's Own: Old Age, Extended Care, and Privacy" (Young 2005).

Natural Environment as Home

As I have argued elsewhere, one's home is not limited to a static and well-defined space (Rudow-Abouharb 2018). My home is not my house or even my house plus my yard. It is a place, something over and above (or perhaps not even including) a built structure. One's home is a fluid and shifting territory, a territory perhaps disconnected and not restricted to what I may legally own. My house and my things are my home, but so is my street and community. My home is the park five miles away, Lake Hartwell, and the beaches of Brunswick county. These are the places and living others that structure who I am and, thus, that for which I am responsible. Importantly, my home includes both the natural and built environments. These places and others constitute my home, not because I control or own them, but because I belong with them in particular and intimate ways. And just as I may not have chosen my family or friends, I may or may not have chosen the places, things, and others that constitute my home; I belong with them nonetheless.

Home ought to, and often does, indicate a location much more expanded and fluid and includes a community of others much more varied than a modern, western conception of home that ends at the "four walls." The expanded conception of home I advocate is superior to this conception both descriptively and normatively. Descriptively, it more accurately captures how we experience and express our relationships to home. Normatively, reconceiving home in this way contributes to a rootedness in one's community and the natural world, one that opens the door for a rich and robust environmental ethic grounded therein. Furthermore, it broadens the range and application of the responsibilities that each of us have as homemakers.

This expanded sense of home and what it means to be a homemaker ground a better shared connection model for dealing with structural barriers related to environmental action. But before going into detail I should note that when I am discussing the home and homemaking, I

mean something like the ideal of home. Obviously, there are many bad homes, unhealthy and dangerous homes. Here, I invoke the concepts and roles related to home that *ought* to hold, not the ones that sometimes (or perhaps often) do hold.[21]

Why Roles?

Roles provide a better way to understand our forward-looking, ongoing responsibilities, but the role of homemaker in particular is well-suited for our environmental responsibilities in the face of structural injustices. Encouraging such an understanding of one's roles does not necessarily require a focus on the misdeeds one has done in the past and where those deeds place one on the spectrum of responsibility but builds in a sense of purpose directed toward positive future outcomes. This is not to say that one's causal positionality will not affect the ways and effectiveness of how one might discharge the responsibilities they have based on their roles, but their responsibilities are not grounded in or derived from this positionality, especially when that position is defined by one's contributions to an unjust system.

Furthermore, when responsibility is based on roles rather than causal positionality, it is harder to avoid or deny responsibility. If I participate in an unjust system, a few "good" actions or practices might be enough to absolve my own conscience and resist those who would claim I ought to do more or something differently. However, if actively bringing about good and just outcomes is a requirement of the roles I play, it is not enough to have gone "part way." Instead I have an ongoing sense of duty toward producing again and again the desired outcomes. This model of responsibility has a timeless nature to it, in that it requires values that ought to hold regardless of the state of affairs.

[21] See Iris Marion Young's "House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme," Alison Weir's "Home and Identity: In Memory of Iris Marion Young," and my own, "On the Radical Possibility of Making Home on Earth" for some further discussions on the ideal of home (Young 2005) (Weir 2008) (Rudow-Abouharb 2018).

Homemaking as Sustainable Practice

The role of homemaker includes many activities like protection, maintenance, creative problem-solving, conflict resolution, and meaning-making, among many others. For example, as a homemaker I must be a chef and a landscaper, a disciplinarian and a counselor, an interior designer and a keeper of records. Combining the roles associated with homemaking with the expanded conception of home widens the possibilities for the roles one might take within one's community. These roles can then translate to similarly wide varieties of positive responsibilities to the human and non-human members of that community. My protective responsibilities as a homemaker now extend to the places and entities of my territory as well as those within and directly surrounding my house. Since homes are universal, the role of homemaker is taken up by all of us as we mature. That is, we all make demands on and play a part in making our homes what they are.[22] Even young children make their spaces as they wish them, arranging objects and making rules about how one should be in those spaces. In fact, Martin Heidegger (1971) calls us "dwellers," saying that our most primordial way of being in this world is to dwell in it, making it into a home.

This is significant because, where Young emphasized that we stand in different positions in relation to structural ills, giving us each a different type and range of responsibility, the role of homemaker begins from a position we all hold in common. Because we are all homemakers, we can more easily come together and share in the responsibilities for making a good home. Our common goals are shared rather than dispersed. On the expanded conception of home, the community of things and others for whom I am responsible grows. Not only must I care for my own house and yard, but I am responsible for the well-being of an expansive territory. This

[22] Again, some may not be allowed to or cannot control anything in their home places, but these individuals suffer a moral wrong against them (Young 2005). On the other end, some may refuse to participate in any homemaking activities, forcing the onus of responsibility entirely on someone else. In this case, they wrong the others in their household and would be considered failing in their role.

appears, at first glance, overburdensome. However, as my domain of responsibility grows, so does the number of human others with whom I share these responsibilities. In our small households, family members, friends, or roommates all work together to create and maintain the home. The activation of such responsibilities on a larger scale is but a difference in degree. Home places overlap and where they do, I can take up responsibilities with those others who also call these places home. Our shared responsibility is to care for, protect, and maintain our shared homes.

The character of homemaking activities themselves are well-suited for sustaining, respecting, and caring for the natural world. Homemaking activities are largely associated with preservation and repetition. I wash the dishes again and again, do the laundry once or twice every week, I clean the bathrooms and sweep the floors. I do these activities to preserve the objects around me. I am careful with them and save them for future enjoyment and use. The same is true of living others in my home. I feed and care for the dogs, I bathe and dress the children, the adults all share in meal preparation for all. Sustaining life and the preservation of things are at the center of homemaking activities. These practices are often cast as drudgery and feel that way many times, but repetitiveness and preservation, along with their connection to sustainability, makes them ideal practices for caring for natural entities and places.

Yet, Young points out in “House and Home” that repetition and preservation are not merely reproduction; they are creative activities. Through repetition we preserve and create meaning, we preserve and create relationships, and we preserve and create our own identities (Young 2005). Homemaking activities and our relationships to our homes are deeply significant, shaping and defining who we are and our ways of being in the world. Adopting an expanded conception of home shows us that our meaningful relationships ought to include those we have

(and can have) with the natural environment and the entities therein. Furthermore, it encourages us to consider the ways in which these relationships constitute our identities.

Home as a Special Relationship

Returning to Midgley, she points out that certain special relationships can engender responsibilities to others and things we would not normally have, and this is especially true of those, human and non-human, that inhabit our communities. Though Young also puts an emphasis on what we might call special relationships that engender responsibility, hers is on the degree and kind of relationship we each have to injustice. That is, the reference of the responsibility has us and our actions at its center. Responsibilities are based on what I have done or what I am doing. However, Midgley shows that the degrees and kinds of forward-looking responsibilities I have ought to be based, instead, on the degrees and kinds of needs that the *recipient* of care has. She makes this point by contrasting duties to sentient being with those to non-sentient beings:

> The…mistake is the idea that, if concern extends to the boundary of sentience, it must necessarily stop there, making it impossible to care for such things as trees and forests, grasses, rivers and mountains. Sentience is important because of the very dramatic difference it makes in the kinds of needs which creatures have, and the kinds of harm which can be done to them. The duty we can owe to a particular being capable of suffering and enjoyment must centre on those capacities. It therefore takes a different form from any duty we may have for example to a redwood, or to a species of redwoods. Our duties to swarms of very small or distant animals, or to whole species, seem to be partly of the ecological sort, resembling in many ways our duty to plants…. (Midgley 1998, 90)

That is, as a homemaker in a community of both human and non-human others, reasoning about which responsibilities I have will come through a consideration of the relationships that I have (or ought to have) and the particular features of those with whom I share those relationships. This shift in focus is important for a social connection model that seeks to be both forward-looking and shared. Because the emphasis falls on one's relationship to and the needs of recipients of care, one stands in a better position to call others who also share a relationship to such a recipient. For example, I and all others who frequent Lake Hartwell share in the responsibility to preserve and care for that place. What is shared between us is not a social position or degrees and kinds of harms committed, but *the responsibility itself*, which is based on being homemakers in a common, shared home. Furthermore, the needs of the lake, its flora, and other inhabitants delineate what we have a shared responsibility to bring about, not necessarily as a correction to some past unjust practices, but in an effort to ensure the continued thriving of that place.

This also highlights the fact that many of the ways that responsibilities are discharged cannot be known in advance. As such, an exhaustive list of the ways one must activate one's responsibilities to an expanded home cannot be given. This does not stand as a decisive problem, however, and is common to *most* duties and responsibilities. Thinking on a limited conception of home, I know that I have the responsibility to preserve and maintain the things and others found in it, but I do not always know ahead of time what that will mean one day to the next. Sometimes it means spending all day cleaning; other times it means spending all afternoon playing with the dogs. Still others, it means embarking on a variety of small tasks and activities. But even though the specific practices that are required cannot always be anticipated, these practices are nonetheless guided by certain values.

These values of home and homemaking underlie what forms our responsibilities take and how we perform them. Following the work of Young in "House and Home" and Alison Weir (2008) in "Home and Identity" these values include (but are not limited to) safety, privacy, respect for autonomy within relationships, conflict resolution that incorporates these first three, and reinterpretive preservation, the value of preserving histories in such a way that new meanings can be created in response to changing relationships. On an expanded conception of home, each of these values grounds the responsibilities we have as homemakers in relation to natural entities and the environment as a whole. That is, in activating my responsibilities in relation to Lake Hartwell, I must join with others to consider the safety and autonomy of its inhabitants. When conflicts arise between the wants and needs of the communities there, we must negotiate and navigate them with care and an eye toward the preservation of good relationships and the reinterpretation of, or sometimes termination of, relationships of harm.

Conclusion

Young started us off by describing the phenomenon of structural injustice. Structural injustices are driven by dynamic socio-structural features that come together to create a vast, yet difficult to identify, system of injustice. Though Young is concerned with injustices that affect human actors, I argued that our behaviors and institutions in relation to the natural environment constitute another example of structural injustice. A major difficulty in attempting to assign responsibility for such injustices is that everyone participates in them, whether willingly or unwittingly. I considered in turn the merits of assigning responsibility to individuals and collectives.

I argued that assigning responsibility to individuals was unworkable because 1) given the pervasiveness of the system of injustice and the distance of its consequences, individuals are

generally aware of their contributions, 2) the nature of structural injustice is such that an individual is never the sole contributor to harms—the harms are dispersed among multitudes of actors—and 3) even if one wanted to take responsibility for all these harms, the moral burden is just too high. Assigning responsibility to collectives faced other difficulties. Theories of collective responsibility either relied too heavily on forms of guilt, which belong in the realm of personal responsibility, or they were too abstract, leaving no tangible guide for collective action. I ultimately determined that a model of shared responsibility was far more promising.

I looked first to May's model of shared responsibility, which relies on a notion of moral taint. Here, one is "tainted" by the actions of one's community, even when one did not contribute directly to the harms perpetuated by members of that community. As a result of this taint, one has a responsibility to change who one is or how one reacts in relation to the harms and the community itself. This responsibility is shared across all members of the community. However, Young pointed out that May's model is limited by its focus on attitudinal changes and its focus on time-bound harms. That is, it is not robust enough for structural injustice.

Young's own social connection model for addressing structural injustice provided an excellent schema for shaping a model of political responsibility. She convincingly argues that political responsibility must be forward-looking and that it must be shared. Furthermore, she outlines several parameters—power, privilege, and connection—on which we can reason about which responsibilities each of us have in relation to unjust processes. But, as I have argued, the model is limited in certain ways that I have attempted to address by both reconceiving and adding to these parameters of reason. While power and privilege are important parameters on which to reason, they serve more to delineate *how much* I can and ought to do rather than defining *what* I ought to do and which responsibilities I have. On my view, everyone, regardless of causal position, is a homemaker. As such, they ought to commit to the critical values

associated with home and, in doing so, activate the responsibilities they have as homemakers in their shared communities. On this view, power and privilege are still crucial, but they are tools of efficacy rather than the ground of responsibility.

Young's third parameter, connection, referred to the connections each individual has to unjust processes. For her, someone builds an understanding of her responsibilities by analyzing the degrees and kinds of contribution she has made to structural injustices. On my model, connection has a very different character and refers to two things. First, my responsibilities are derived from the degrees and kinds of relationships I share with other natural entities. My responsibilities do not originate from my actions, but the ongoing needs of those for whom I am responsible. Second, how I discharge these responsibilities is based on the connection I share with other responsible humans. That is, the shared element of connection on which collective action can emerge is based on a common, shared home.

The two added elements of the homemaking model are its ongoing character and its grounding in critical values. First, political responsibilities should be understood as unending, and this is a primary advantage of thinking in terms of homemaking. The job is never done. As soon as one problem is fixed, or some need is fulfilled, I must keep up the good work to ensure the continued thriving of my home and its members. Furthermore, by embedding strong values into the homemaking role itself, activating responsibilities toward the natural world becomes part of the behavior, beliefs, and attitudes of actors. Being a good homemaker is an ongoing way of life, not merely a fix-it strategy. Second, my proposal offers a set of values on which to establish a new status quo that includes the well-being of both human and non-human entities. This is important because as Stone, among many other environmental philosophers, points out, truly changing the injustices faced by the natural world involves more than fixing large-scale

problems. It requires a complete overhaul in how we conceptualize our relationship to the natural world. Without such a change, any solutions or successes are bound to be temporary.

A sense of responsibility imbedded in the roles we play, the values that underlie them, and the lifestyles we take up, secures a just future beyond the problems we now face. Any reference to the past must be tempered by the construction of a new way of being and relating to the natural world. As such, this homemaking model of political responsibility takes the present as it is given, and responsibilities are activated in relation to where I stand here and now. Broadening those places, others, and things that we consider part of our homes, this model drives us forward, enjoining us to make this earth a healthy home for all its inhabitants.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In the forgoing essays I have argued that an ethic of home can stand as a foundation for a robust environmental ethic, one which includes theory, practice, and the feeling of responsibility that must lie in between. Furthermore, I have argued that when considering the epistemic, technological, and political barriers to taking up one's responsibilities to the natural world, an expanded conception of home and the practices associated with it provide a way of navigating through these barriers. But rather than repeating the conclusions reached in each chapter, I will briefly discuss some questions inspired by working through the various aspects of home.

Questions of Place

When establishing the home as a good in Chapter 2, I argued that homes are primal sites of ethical responsibility. Here I relied on Malpas' idea that places are formative of human subjectivity. I concluded that since homes are places, our first, most continuous, and most intimate places, that they are foundational for the development of subjectivity and, most importantly for my purposes, moral subjecthood. The activities that take place in the home shape who we become, and this results in an urgent ethical imperative to make good homes.

Yet, homes are but one of many human-place relationships. It seems to me that the connection between other human-place relationships and related human activities is rich ground for investigation. In particular, I wonder about the various meanings places can take on and how these meanings either encourage or dissuade certain relationships and activities. A quick

example is a cemetery. A cemetery is a place of respect, remembrance, and reflection. These meanings determine what types of activities are appropriate in this place.

Alternately, how do certain activities either encourage or dissuade particular meanings. For example, a place like Morro Bay, CA can be the site of play or of work, building sandcastles or commercial fishing. Though both activities make use of this place, I wonder how the types of activities contribute to the meaning of the place. I suspect that some activities are conducive to meanings of community, personal significance, and care, while others are conducive to meanings of commodification and exploitation. How, then, do these meanings/activities inform the type of responsibilities people will be willing to take up in relation to those places? I think investigating strategies that bring these various meanings into balance in such a way that maximizes both environmental engagement and protection would be a valuable exercise.

Crisis and Knowledge

Chapter 3 focuses on group-based ignorance in the environmental context. There, I argue that engaging one's home in particular ways can begin to overcome environmental ignorance, largely because it is an intimate territory with a mixed community of people, non-human others, places, and things about which I care and with which I am familiar. While working through these issues, it seemed to me that a threatened home makes knowing that home all the more pressing. As a result, ignorance in relation to it becomes difficult to maintain.

Considering this, I wonder about the relation of threat or crisis to dispelling ignorance more generally. For example, it would be helpful to look at the ways that even fairly commonplace "crises," such as a homophobic parent finding out that her child is gay, can forge the way to overcoming pernicious forms of ignorance. I suspect that overcoming ignorance

through crisis, because of its deeply personal character, can also motivate individuals to take responsibility for those wrongs perpetuated by such ignorance.

Ethical Aesthetics at Home

Considering the ways that technology often obstructs our relationships to the natural world, I argued in Chapter 4 that the home is a technological enclave, a focal place wherein one can learn to engage with technological items in ethically significant ways. One such engagement to which I gave only brief attention is aesthetic engagement. Aesthetics is an area of philosophy concerned with questions that relate to artifacts or material culture but, at least contemporarily, is not often linked specifically to philosophy of technology. Philosophy of technology is understood as a complement to aesthetics, focusing on 'practical' objects and leaving alone 'contemplative' objects. But as a place where functionality meets aesthetic sensibility, the home is an arena where inquiries into the relationship between art and function naturally arise and where the presumed dichotomy between technology and art is quite obviously disrupted.

One question of particular interest to me is, how does an aesthetic of home contribute to or detract from homes as focal places? In Chapter 2, I briefly discussed how an aesthetic preference for lawns contributes to dangerous environmental practices, and that the development of an aesthetic preference for "weeds" or for gardens might encourage better practices. I would like to investigate the connection between the technologies at home, their aesthetic appeal coupled with their practical use, and their relationship to the environmental ethic of home proposed here. In essence, I want to build a clear connection between aesthetics, focal practices, and focal places. I suspect that, like lawns, many of our aesthetic/technological preferences at home come at great costs to the natural environmental. Perhaps if we can develop new and better aesthetic sensibilities, we can more easily make our homes good ones.

Regret as a Motivating Emotion

In Chapter 5 I argued that we need positive, forward-looking forms of shared responsibility. I agreed with Young that too often, blame and shame lead to resentment, stagnation, rejection, and a refusal to engage. This is presently quite evident in relation to the rhetoric used in climate change discussions. Humans as a whole are blamed, then collectively and individually shamed for their contributions to climate change. Thinking through guilt and blame prompted me to consider how one might turn to a related but distinct psychological phenomenon, regret, as a better potential motivator for responsibility. Regret is a wish to have done differently. This wishing might easily transform into a resolve not to do the same in the future. I think this phenomenon could be explored in both individual and collective contexts, and one might argue that invoking regret rather than shame on both levels can lead to more successful environmental campaigns. Even more broadly, my guess is that the motivating force of regret is not limited to environmental issues, but it is plausible that regret is a crucial ethical emotion more generally.