4-29-2016

The Sustainable Anthropocentrism

Sebastian L. Brana
University of Mary Washington

THE SUSTAINABLE ANTHROPOCENTRISM

An honors paper submitted to the Department of Classics, Philosophy, and Religion
of the University of Mary Washington
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors

Sebastian L. Brana
April 2016

By signing your name below, you affirm that this work is the complete and final version of your paper submitted in partial fulfillment of a degree from the University of Mary Washington. You affirm the University of Mary Washington honor pledge: "I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work."

Sebastian Brana
(digital signature)

04/29/16

The Sustainable Anthropocentrism

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Honors in Philosophy

Sebastian Brana

Philosophy 485: Research in Philosophy

April 28, 2016

Dr. Craig Vasey

Dr. David Ambuel

Dr. Nina Mikhalevsky

Dr. Jason Matzke

The Sustainable Anthropocentrism

Sebastian Brana
Philosophy 485: Research in Philosophy
April 11, 2016

I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work. - Sebastian Brana

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

There is an inherent importance of self-preservation to the conservation of the world's ecosystem. Aldo Leopold spoke of the world as a global community where humans were to live sustainably with the world system around them.[1] However, conserving the environment in our global culture has always been viewed as subordinate to other more pressing matters. The United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international treaty designed with the intention of addressing human-made detrimental climate change, was created with a provision specifically designating political and economic stability, and poverty eradication as a superior concern to climate change. However, there comes a time, when as a species we can no longer push the issue of harmful climate change to the backseat. Never has there been a time in history more informed than today on the effects of climate change. Global warming is a worsening phenomenon that has been indisputably proven in the scientific world as a detriment to a sustained life on Earth.[2] This paper is being written from a predominantly Western/American point of view. Different countries will undoubtedly have different environmental problems. This paper will examine sustainability, a possible solution to a pressing world issue. We must live more conservatively with nature.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), sustainability is the idea that, "everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. To pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future

[1] Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," in Environmental Ethics, ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, III (Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 40.
[2] "Climate Change: How Do We Know?," NASA, accessed February 26, 2016, http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/.

generations."[3] Naturally, unsustainability is a state in which resources are used at a rate too fast to reasonably support the users for the foreseeable future.

The solution to unsustainable practices is enlightened anthropocentrism. Anthropocentrism, broadly stated is "a perspective that human beings are the most significant species on the planet, and nature is 'valuable only insofar as it is valuable to human beings.'"[4] The position known as *enlightened* anthropocentrism signifies a slightly weaker view than the traditional idea of anthropocentrism: to imply a continued existence with nature rather than a solely selfish use of nature from a domineering position. My interpretation regarding this form of anthropocentrism leads to a sense of obligation towards education about the environment. Once one has educated oneself about the interconnectedness of the environment and other political or economic decisions, one can make a truly informed decision about what is in one's best interest. Rather than just self-interest, one should have an *educated* self-interest that will inevitably lead to the conclusion that environmental conservation is the most appropriate course of action to combat the man-made phenomenon of climate change.

[3] "Learn About Sustainability," United States Environmental Protection Agency, What is Sustainability?, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.epa.gov/sustainability/learn-about-sustainability#what.
[4] S. Cocks and S. Simpson, "Anthropocentric and Ecocentric: An Application of Environmental Philosophy to Outdoor Recreation and Environmental Education," *Journal of Experiential Education* 38, no. 3 (2015): 217, doi:10.1177/1053825915571750.

II. Importance of Environmental Conservation

Before explaining the anthropocentric argument, it is essential to understand the importance of conservation. Without a sense of obligation to the environment, and thus ourselves, the anthropocentric argument has little foundation. If the importance of conservation is unclear then an argument for it is substantially weakened. I plan to prove that the ecosystem of the Earth must be conserved for two primary and overlapping reasons: 1) preserving the Earth for future generations, 2) and to prevent harmful climate change.

A. Preserving the Earth for Future Generations

The human species has evolved and is primordially motivated to prolong our existence on Earth. When a threat becomes clearly apparent to us, we find little recourse other than to attempt to counteract that threat. In this case, the threat to future generations' livelihoods is at stake. Our children and our children's children will be unconsentingly given the world which we leave them, and it is up to us to make sure that their future is predicated on a sustainable and healthy Earth. We have begun to make strides towards this goal already. The United Nations for the first time in 1992 established the UNFCCC, a long-awaited step towards environmental sustainability.[5] Since the UNFCCC, there have been numerous succeeding treaties which have incrementally increased the burden of environmental stability on countries around the world. The Kyoto Protocol, an extension of the UNFCCC, established the first legally binding UN initiative, in this case towards the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in 1997.[6] However, the United States, one of the leading polluters, chose not to ratify the Protocol despite the U.S. Secretary of State for Global Affairs, Paula J. Dobriansky saying, "Our position is that climate

[5] *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,* proceedings, New York (1992), accessed February 8, 2016.
[6] *Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, proceedings, Kyoto (1997)

change is an important issue… we're seriously committed to addressing."[7] The United States is not the only country that has presented this hesitant attitude towards climate change and the Kyoto Protocol. Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine have stated that they may withdraw from the Protocol, while Japan, New Zealand, and Russia have not created guidelines for the second commitment period, of 2012-2020. Climate change has not been taken seriously enough by political leaders in the way scientific and ethical communities believe it should be. It is our obligation to keep the world at a status which allows for a furtherance of the human species. If we continue unsustainable practices we will continuously leave the Earth in worse and worse shape. We will potentially get to the point where the Earth starts becoming uninhabitable for future generations. We are at a turning point in the history of our species. We must decide in favor of the future survival of our species, and that decision rests in sustainability.

B. The Effects of Harmful Climate Change

I am not going to argue whether climate change exists, there is an insurmountable amount of scientific evidence proving the phenomena. However, the true effects of global warming are catastrophic, and thus essential to a complete understanding towards our collective aim of sustainability.

Climate change has brought about increased numbers of abnormal weather events. In August of 2005, the fifth hottest year on record,[8] Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans and the surrounding area. The death toll of Hurricane Katrina was finalized at 1,836 people[9] and

[7] Andrew C. Revkin, "U.S. Is Taking a Back Seat In Latest Talks on Climate," New York Times, October 29, 2001, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/29/world/us-is-taking-a-back-seat-in-latest-talks-on-climate.html.
[8] "Global Analysis - Annual 2015," NOAA National Center for Environment Information, January 2016, accessed February 26, 2016, https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov.ezproxy.umw.edu/sotc/global/201513.
[9] "11 Facts About Hurricane Katrina," DoSomething.org, accessed February 26, 2016, https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-hurricane-katrina.

economic costs were estimated to be roughly $125 billion.[10] Hurricanes as powerful as Katrina are not a rarity anymore. According to a NASA report on climate change effects, the intensity, frequency, and duration of North Atlantic hurricanes, as well as the frequency of the strongest (category 4 and 5) hurricanes, have all increased since the early 1980s.[11] The report also notes that these patterns are expected to continue increasing in intensity as the climate continues to warm.[12]

Abnormal weather patterns have not only been recorded as hurricanes. In 2006 there were a record number of 100,000 reported wildfires, burning ten million acres of woodlands in the United States alone.[13] A study found that even in the United States more than 127 million Americans live in counties that do not meet the national air standard.[14] Also, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that the frequency of torrential rainfall, which can often lead to flooding, has increased over the past 50 years, and that human-induced global warming has most likely contributed to the trend.[15] Water expands as it warms and in conjunction with the melting of "land-based ice," the global sea level has risen 8 inches in the past century, an accelerated pace.[16] Of the top fifteen warmest years ever recorded since 1880, not a single one dates back further than 1998. In fact the top five warmest years in order are: 2015, 2014, 2010, 2013, and 2005.[17] Diseases tend to thrive in warm environments. The spread of many infectious diseases is often linked to climate change, especially drought, which is more

[10] "The Consequences of Global Warming On Weather Patterns," Natural Resource Defense Council, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/fcons/fcons1.asp.
[11] "Climate Change Evidence: How Do We Know?," Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet, accessed April 01, 2016, http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/.
[12] Ibid.
[13] "The Consequences of Global Warming On Weather Patterns."
[14] United States, Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, *Epa.gov*, February 2010, pg. 3, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www3.epa.gov/airtrends/2010/report/fullreport.pdf.
[15] "The Consequences of Global Warming On Weather Patterns."
[16] "Overview," Globalchange.gov, accessed February 26, 2016, http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/highlights/overview/overview.
[17] "Global Analysis - Annual 2015."

likely with global warming.[18] The extreme weather conditions, heat, or disease may be very harmful to some groups of people.[19] The World Health Organization estimates that warming and precipitation trends due to human-made climate change over the past 30 years now claims 150,000 lives annually.[20]

A rising sea level in conjunction with new, stronger weather patterns has forced some people to migrate.[21] Coastal settlements are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts, such as sea level rise and storms. The Netherlands, Guyana, and Bangladesh are all low-lying countries that are particularly at risk of flooding from rising sea levels.[22] However, a forced migration often proves more harmful to indigenous groups like ones in Latin and South America, Europe, and Africa who are experiencing threats to their livelihood. Rising sea levels and other extreme weather events threaten native groups that inhabit low-lying island nations who have lived in one area their entire life; it leaves them with few options, and a low likelihood of migrating successfully.[23]

Climate change has had a massive impact on agriculture. Heat stress, droughts, and flooding, all results of climate change, may lead to reductions in crop yields and livestock productivity.[24] The crops may tend to grow faster in warmer conditions; however, faster growth means that seeds have less time to mature, often leading to a reduced overall yield.[25] Relatively arid areas like Australia and the Sahel in Africa will experience even more reduction in available

---

[18] "Climate Impacts on Global Issues."
[19] "Climate Impacts on Human Health," Environmental Protection Agency, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/impacts/health.html.
[20] Jonathan A. Patz et al., "Impact of Regional Climate Change on Human Health," Nature, November 17, 2005, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.nature.com.ezproxy.umw.edu/nature/journal/v438/n7066/abs/nature04188.html.
[21] "Climate Impacts on Global Issues," Environmental Protection Agency, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/impacts/international.html.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] "Climate Impacts on Agriculture and Food Supply," Environmental Protection Agency, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/impacts/agriculture.html.

water for irrigation.[26] In some African countries yields from "rain-fed" agriculture in drought years could decline by as much as 50% by 2020.[27] Impacts on water supply and quality in semi-arid and arid areas are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, especially the Mediterranean, southern Africa, and northeastern Brazil.[28]

Frequent heatwaves due to climate change have affected livestock production as well. Some states in the U.S. have reported more than 5,000 animals dying from a single heat wave. Also, evidence shows that if the heat does not kill the animal directly, it still increases its vulnerability to disease, reduces its fertility, and reduces milk production.[29] It has also already begun to affect fisheries around the world. Increasing ocean temperatures have caused some species to move to cooler waters outside of their normal habitat, and thus outside of easy reach. Fisheries are of paramount importance as a food supply and economic stimulus of many countries. For example, 40 million people in the Lower Mekong delta in Asia rely on fisheries. Climate change negatively affects water quality and fish species in these regions, hamstringing the food supply and offering no alternatives.[30] Some biologists have argued that, "Earth is on the verge of another major extinction event."[31] Animals cannot evolve quickly enough to account for all the climatic changes in such a relatively short period of time. [32]

[26] "Climate Impacts on Global Issues."
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] "Climate Impacts on Agriculture and Food Supply."
[30] "Climate Impacts on Global Issues."
[31] Helen Thompson, "Ten Species That Are Evolving Due to the Changing Climate," *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 24, 2014, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/ten-species-are-evolving-due-changing-climate-180953133/?no-ist.
[32] Ibid.

III. Introduction to Anthropocentric Sustainability

Some people are steadfast in their decision to not act in defense of the environment. Unfortunately, climate change is a result of many like-minded people consequentially choosing to value their own wants and needs over the wants and needs of all members, both human and non-human, of the environment. People with this mindset must therefore be convinced away from an unsustainable lifestyle in a way that they specifically will find impossible to dispute. The answer is enlightened, or sustainable, anthropocentrism.

To begin explaining the concept of enlightened anthropocentrism, it is first necessary to define the root word. Anthropocentrism is "a perspective that human beings are the most significant species on the planet, and nature is 'valuable only insofar as it is valuable to human beings.'"[33] This means that to take an issue anthropocentrically, is to assess the consequences that the issue presents to humans, and only view the impacts on nature insofar as they consequently impact humans. This idea has received a lot of criticism in nearly every field of environmental philosophy, as being inconsistent with the rights of the environment and the nonhuman organisms it consists of. For this reason it is necessary to create a distinction between strong and weak anthropocentrism.[34] In Bryan Norton's paper *Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism*, he explains a common misnomer regarding the term "anthropocentrism" as meaning that humans are the only loci of intrinsic value, rather than having only a relatively higher status.[35] Strong anthropocentrism is the idea that the intentions and desires of human beings are the unquestioned basis for determining value.[36] Weak anthropocentrism recognizes that these intentions of human beings can either be rational or not (i.e. their degree of

[33] S. Cocks and S. Simpson, "Anthropocentric and Ecocentric: An Application of Environmental Philosophy to Outdoor Recreation and Environmental Education," 217.
[34] Bryan G. Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," *Environmental Ethics* 6 (Summer 1984).
[35] Ibid., pg. 133.
[36] Ibid., pg. 134-135.

correspondence with a rational world view).[37] This distinction is hugely important. The idea of weak anthropocentrism, assuming irrationality has been found, allows for criticism of human action in regards to the environment.[38] This allowance of criticism is important because it allows experiential human interaction with the environment to be examined as either positive or negative to human goals.[39] Humans can begin to see nature as that which has found an uncanny ability to subsist, even for eons, before humans first began to populate the Earth.[40] Nature takes on a "teaching" role to the human species of how to best survive.[41]

Nonanthropocentrism has also been a prevalent view which, as the name suggests, argues against the idea of humans having the highest intrinsic value. The view also generally argues against most types of human involvement in the environment. Some of the more extreme advocates for nonanthropocentrism will argue that humans are not natural like nonhuman organisms, or nature is. For this reason humans should adopt a preservationist standpoint and remove themselves from any involvement in nature. Most nonanthropocentrists would generally advocate for the halt of human practices that negatively impact nature and its nonhuman inhabitants.

The view of nonanthropocentrism fails for two reasons. First, the idea that humans are not natural or less natural than all other nonhuman organisms is untenable. Humans have relatively similar nervous systems to many other species on Earth. We give birth in the same way that mammals do. We have a heart, a brain, a set of lungs. In fact, much of philosophy has been concerned with notions of "human nature," and "the state of nature" which humans were in. The reason these claims of humans being unnatural are untenable is because they come from a purely

[37] Ibid., pg. 135.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

aesthetic view of human construction. To walk through a forest for several hours, then to return to the city gives one an initial sense of "returning" from nature to human society, which implies to them an unnatural quality to human creation. Humans' most useful resource as a species is their intelligence. Intellect has allowed humans to build skyscrapers, bridges, space shuttles, and much more which no other animal could bring about. However, to say that human invention is not natural is analogous to calling a beaver's dam unnatural. No one claims that since the beaver has constructed a dam, which impedes the flow of the river and movement of some fish, the beaver has created something unnatural. The sheer degree to which human construction exists is a result of our intelligence; it does not change that which is natural to a quality of unnatural. It should be said that this idea does not entail that humans are justified to extend themselves to the full reaches of the globe, paving over all nonhuman environments. This idea will be more fully expressed later in Section IV.

The second reason nonanthropocentrism fails is its general insistence, as a result of seeing humans as unnatural or less natural, on preservation. Environmental preservation and environmental conservation are often used interchangeably; however, they mean very different things. Conservation is the idea that "the environment and its resources should be used by humans and managed in a responsible manner."[42] Preservation is a much stricter guideline. Preservation means "lands and their natural resources should not be consumed by humans and should instead be maintained in their pristine form."[43] Both definitions are fairly rudimentary, yet it is enough to display the difference in approaches towards the environment. Conservation allows for sustainability, while preservation calls for a separation between human and

[42] Cunningham, Mararet. "Environmental Conservation and Preservation: Definition, Differences & Advocates." Study.com. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://study.com/academy/lesson/conservationists-vs-preservationists-definition-differences.html.
[43] Ibid.

environment, arguing that nature should only be admired from afar, not used. The idea of preservation is clearly not the best idea for the situation the world is in now. There are roughly 7.4 billion people on Earth.[44] The sheer multitude of human beings does not reasonably allow for an idealistic preservationist course of action. To think that 7.4 billion humans could all live "separate from nature" as an idea is completely unrealistic.

A preservationist ideology also does not take into account indigenous people whose civilization has lived with the environment in a conservationist manner for generations. The Ik, an indigenous people living in the remote Kidepo valley of Uganda, were forcibly removed from the area to make Kidepo a national park.[45] The Ik were hunter-gatherers who were living sustainably with the environment. Yet, the Wilderness Act of 1964, a preservationist act, stated that a wilderness area could only be a place "where man would be a visitor who does not remain."[46] Therefore, the Ik were forced to settle in crowded villages outside the park and eventually their entire culture and people slowly degenerated.[47] To maintain a preservationist point of view is to see humans as being so unnatural that they are not allowed to live, even sustainably, with other organisms and the Earth around them. This example demonstrates why a present day policy seeking to protect the environment must be conservative, not preservative, if it is to be wide-reaching and effective.

With the preceding background information, the idea of enlightened anthropocentrism can begin to take shape. Enlightened anthropocentrism is a relatively newer view that utilizes aspects of weak anthropocentrism and conservationist policy to create an argument for

---

[44] "All People on 1 Page," Worldometers, accessed April 01, 2016, http://www.worldometers.info/watch/world-population/.
[45] J. Baird Callicott "A Critique of and an Alternative to the Wilderness Idea" in *Environmental Ethics* edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III (Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 438.
[46] ""The Wilderness Act of 1964," in *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998).
[47] Callicott, "A Critique of and an Alternative to the Wilderness Idea," 438.

environmental protection and sustainability. Enlightened anthropocentrism is an approach that respects mastery of the environment rather than self-restraint.[48] The intent of the enlightened anthropocentric argument is to provide a systematic approach to sustainability through conservation, with the byproduct effect of protecting the environment.

[48] Jozef Keulartz, *The Emergence of Enlightened Anthropocentrism in Ecological Restoration*, 48.

IV. Argument for Enlightened Anthropocentrism

My argument for enlightened anthropocentrism must first make the undeniable assertion that as humans, we want to persist on Earth for as long as we can. I would find it hard for someone to argue contrary to this. Some individuals may for an array of reasons want humanity to end; however, as a general collective, most laws we create in society and most actions we take on a daily basis, are for the purpose of subsisting, or subsisting more comfortably than before.

We do not know the complete ecological ramifications of destroying parts of the ecosystem. Humans have come a long way evolutionarily. We have gained more knowledge in scientific fields than anyone would have believed possible. However, the mistake that we cannot make is to believe that vastly increased knowledge equates to perfect knowledge. No scientist will tell you that they completely understand all the aspects of their field regardless of whatever that field may be. This is the reality of the world we live in; knowledge can never be attained completely.

The concept of imperfect knowledge is pivotal to one of the central ideas of the argument for sustainable anthropocentrism. We have been mistaken in the past regarding ecological functions and inadvertently caused harm to ourselves as a result. In *The Land Ethic*, Aldo Leopold mentions early settlers in the Southwest. These pioneers grazed the land over and over until the land became nothing more than "a series of more and more worthless grasses, shrubs, and weeds."[49] Erosion and plant recession went hand and hand deteriorating not only the land, but the habitability of the animal communities therein. Leopold notes that the settlers had no idea that this outcome would occur.[50] As Leopold shows, the settlers' lack of knowledge of their environment led to an instance in which they not only devastated life for the preexisting

[49] Leopold, "The Land Ethic," 40.
[50] Ibid., 39-40.

organisms, but they harmed themselves as well, as they could no longer utilize that area for their own purpose.

The Dust Bowl of the 1930s marked the culmination of the unsustainable practices of these very same settlers. After several generations of early settlers and farmers continuing to dig up the dirt in what once was a fertile land in the Midwest, the dug-up dirt eventually dried up by the sun in a process of topsoil erosion called desertification.[51] Because the soil became light and dry, it started to be more easily carried by the wind.[52] Static electricity gathered between the Earth and the dust in the wind above creating a phenomenon that continued to pull up more and more dust into the air until the dust reached heights of 10,000 feet.[53] An enormous 65 mile an hour storm of dust carried itself all the way from the Midwest to New York growing bigger the entire way.[54] People in the path of the storm were forced to tie a rope to themselves and their home before going outside, so that they would not get lost in the clouds of dust. Millions of farmers lost their livelihood and roughly 250,000 people fled the Midwest in an attempt to get away from the Dust Bowl.[55] This is an iconic example of how the ignorance of humans about the environment ended up harming our own ends. An enlightened anthropocentric approach would have dictated that the settlers engage in sustainable efforts to maintain the land's purpose of being useful to them. The only way in which the land would remain useful to the settlers would have been to engage in these sustainable practices, thus, in turn, conserving the environment.

Human knowledge and forethought throughout history has been consistently lacking. In 1859 English settlers brought 24 rabbits to Australia for hunting purposes.[56] These 24 rabbits

[51] "Dust Bowl Strikes America." History.com, 2015. Accessed February 26, 2016.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] "Why are Rabbits a Problem?" rabbitfreeaustralia.org.au. Accessed February 26, 2016.

grew to an astonishing 10 billion rabbits by the 1920s.[57] Since the introduction of the rabbit to the Australian ecosystem, twenty-two other mammalian species have gone extinct because the rabbits compete with other animals for shelter and food.[58] According to the Foundation for Rabbit Free Australia, "in 2007, 17 bird species, 13 mammal species, 4 reptile species, 1 fish species, and 1 insect species that are considered to be vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered native species were threatened by rabbits."[59] Rabbits are also responsible for great losses in plant biodiversity in Australia, because they tend to eat the plants faster than the plants are able to grow back.[60] In fact, 121 native plant species in Australia that are vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered are threatened by the rabbit.[61] A note should be made that these statistics only incorporate animal and plant species at risk; the overall effects of rabbits on the ecosystem are likely much greater. Other than spending $113 million dollars a year to curtail rabbit populations, in 1901 a "Rabbit Proof Fence" was constructed which "stretched 1,834 kilometers from the south coast to the northwest coast" to protect Australian crops.[62] However, a single year later, the rabbits had already found their way around the fence. A second Rabbit Proof Fence was constructed in 1905 which added an additional 1,166 kilometers to the first fence.[63] These rabbits are an invasive species who would not have been introduced to Australia had it not been for human action.[64] Similarly to the Dust Bowl, a lack of knowledge caused devastating effects, in this case, to the crop fields and biodiversity of Australia. An enlightened viewpoint would seek to teach people to act more carefully in regards to specific environments.

---

[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] "The Rabbit Proof Fence." Swla.wa.gov.au. Accessed February 26, 2016.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

The argument may be made that both of these examples were a long time ago and that since then we have advanced enough to know all repercussions. This idea is false; even in more recent scientific fields mistakes can happen. For instance, in 1995, ecologist Truman Young fenced elephants and other large herbivores out of a 10-acre plot in a central Kenyan savannah, because the elephants were over-eating the Acacia trees.[65] What ecologists did not realize is that for thousands of years there was a natural relationship between ants and the Acacia trees. When an elephant would go to try to eat an Acacia tree, the ants would swarm onto the head and trunk of the elephant, dissuading elephants from approaching. In return the Acacia tree would provide food and living areas for the protector ants. Naturally, when the fences were put up the elephants could not eat the Acacia trees anymore so the tree stopped providing for the ants. The ants moved away and tree-eating bugs moved in. Eventually the trees behind the fences were in worse shape than they were before humans interfered by building the fences. Young said, "that species as different as elephants, ants and trees are so intimately interconnected shows, once again, that when we mess with nature, we should expect dire consequences that we cannot anticipate."[66] Humans have made the mistake in the past of enacting policy to the eventual detriment of the very same environment, or species, they were trying to protect.

These mistakes created by humans are but a few of the innumerable instances in which humans are able to, and have, erred in regards to the full functions and intricacies of an ecosystem. It is from this premise that we have encountered the primary issue, which is that of failing to understand the environment we manipulate.

The world at this point is clearly habitable. Although humans may not all individually thrive, we do tend to thrive as a species. We can live in almost any climate with the use of certain

[65] Truman Young, "Trees, Ants, and Elephants: Balance Gone Bad." Published January 17, 2008, ucdavis.edu. Accessed February 26, 2016.
[66] Ibid.

technologies. We can build planes to soar 30,000 feet above the air, or submergible vehicles to swim roughly the same distance below water. There are places such as Antarctica or deserts which are relatively adverse to human existence; however, for the most part the land on earth is habitable. This is not a fact we can take for granted though. As more and more people are born onto the earth there will be more people to feed and fewer resources to allocate, a problem that will be more thoroughly addressed in Section V. Also, as was shown earlier in speaking of climate change, with the increased global heat, some areas are being flooded and destroying livelihoods, while others are getting too hot which leads to another array of problems. Therefore it should be clear that although the world is currently habitable, there is a distinct possibility that it will become less and less habitable for a growing population, years into the future.

Humans have a higher intellect than any other species we know of on Earth. This is an important point to make because with this heightened intellect we are able to realize mistakes and lapses of judgment such as the ones I have previously pointed out. Humans may be able to claim a sense of ignorance as to the intimate workings of ecological systems; however, we cannot claim complete ignorance of the consequences of the unsustainable and harmful practices we employ. There are mounds of scientific data showing the effect of human pollutants, such as greenhouse gases, on climate change. We cannot deny that we have not only created the problem, but we have perpetuated it as well. There have been worldwide initiatives that have sought to counteract unsustainability, but they have yet to reach close to the goals they intended.[67] The reality is that enough of the world does not care about the very real problem that is unsustainability. This lack of initiative is what gives rise to this argument from anthropocentrism.

---

[67] David G. Victor, "Preface," preface to *The Collapse of the Kyoto Protocol and the Struggle to Slow Global Warming: With a New Afterword by the Author* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 8, accessed April 11, 2016.

The enlightened argument would essentially tell humans that they could do whatever it is that they wanted to do in regards to the environment. However, there is one caveat to this rule, if the action that they are doing would, or could, inevitably hurt themselves or other humans it is not permissible. This is a wide-reaching rule, yet a just one. For example, if we came up with a policy to cut down 150 acres of trees to build a large industrial factory to make cars, we would have to consider whether this is really in the best interest of humans. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, a U.N. designated greenhouse gas,[68] during photosynthesis, and release oxygen,[69] making trees combatants of the climate change that threatens our global system. Humans then have to assess whether 150 acres of trees deforested in order to make room for an industrial factory really is in their overall best interest. Perhaps this factory will be a key to saving a struggling economy and employ hundreds of unemployed workers. The idea is not that we always decide to choose the option that describes protecting the environment. The idea is that we must justify all of our decisions when they are in regard to human practices which perpetuate unsustainability and climate change. We must prove to the world and to future generations that we are not simply ignoring science and that we attempted to act in our true best interest, sustainability.

This leads us to our need to educate ourselves in regard to the environment. As was stated earlier, we will never have perfect knowledge about the environment. However, a lack of perfect knowledge is not a proper justification for inaction. There is a clear enough pattern of the actions which humans take that are unsustainable and inevitably harmful to the furtherance of our species. In speaking of the topic of environmental awareness, Andrew Brennan said:

---

[68] Ibid., 19.
[69] "Trees Help Fight Climate Change," Arbor Day Foundation, 2015, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.arborday.org/trees/climatechange/.

> It is a matter of becoming aware that there is an environmental dimension in all our dealings. If growing environmental awareness means that production and consumption within a society are seen as not purely economic phenomena, then it may also reinforce the perception that education is not just a matter of books, concepts and theories.[70]

Brennan perfectly represents the idea of awareness in this environmental discourse. Studies on climate change show irrefutably that the way our current day society is run intermingles itself with the environment. There are no purely economic decisions; there is a strong, yet often ignored, connection with the environment that must not be disregarded.

The best way for humans to avoid any type of harm to them in relation to their involvement with the ecosystem is to learn as much about it as possible. Humans must educate themselves so as to prevent doing something that may inevitably harm them or other humans. If we educate ourselves about how the environment works we are less likely to make harmful mistakes and more likely to see that sustenance through environmental conservation is the answer. Obviously, regardless of how much we educate ourselves, mistakes are unavoidable. Still, we should learn from our mistakes, and as a society, we have. You have not heard of the "Second Dust Bowl" because of an understanding of the actions that went into the creation of the first Dust Bowl, a partially human-made phenomenon. Not being able to avoid every single error does not mean we should not to try. Brian Barry, in speaking about sustainability, said:

> Virtually everybody who has made a serious study of the situation and whose objectivity is not compromised by either religious beliefs or being in the pay of some multinational corporation has reached the conclusion that the most elementary concern for people in the future demands big changes in the way we do things… moreover, whatever is actually going to get done in, say, the next decade, to move towards a sustainable balance of population and resources is going to be so pathetically inadequate that it really does not matter how far it falls

[70] Andrew Brennan and Holmes Rolston, III, "Environmental Awareness and Liberal Education," in *Environmental Ethics*, ed. Andrew Light (Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 524.

> short. We know the direction in which change is required, and we know that there is absolutely no risk that we shall find ourselves doing more than required.[71]

Barry explains in a pessimistic, yet honest fashion, that the information required to justify taking action is clearly there and that we definitely know action should be taken. There is no more time for arguments or quotas; countries should just try to do whatever they can to circumvent the climate crisis. The question is not 'when should we enact change;' or 'how much change do we enact?' The question is 'what do we change?' What exactly should we do, knowing whatever that decision is; it should be done as soon as possible and in full force.

In conclusion, we must collectively aim to educate ourselves as much as we can on the topic of sustainability. Humans are smart enough to realize that we are perpetuating climate change. We can no longer turn a blind eye to the problem. As a species we must acknowledge that we are capable of erring and that in this case, we are erring. Humans should act anthropocentrically; however, we dare not influence the environment in a way that we may harm ourselves. We want to persist as a species for as long as we can, and right now we are cutting away at the opportunity to reverse the damage of climate change for future generations. Anthropocentricity, the idea that places humans as having intrinsic value more than any other species, still logically entails more effort be put into conservation and a long-term sustenance effort, than what we are currently doing.

---

[71] Brian Barry, "Sustainable and Intergenerational Justice," in *Environmental Ethics*, ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, III (Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 498.

V. Additional Concerns/Objections

I will use this last section to raise and respond to likely objections to an anthropocentrically charged argument.

A. Future Ecological Concerns Following Enlightened Anthropocentrism

Any argument aiming to enact widespread change is bound to invoke future concerns. One could argue that given the innate human focus of enlightened anthropocentrism, we may end up with less than sought after consequences. The argument would follow that even enlightened anthropocentrism could imply that, in the future, if we gain substantially increased knowledge we would begin to wipe out entire species, if we felt absolutely positive of their detrimental effect on humans (even if the effect on humans is marginal) with seemingly complete disregard for that species as a living, goal-centered, being. If one of the key arguments to the enlightened anthropocentric view is that we are doing things in the best interest of humans, it only follows that we could eradicate an entire species if our scientific knowledge progresses enough to realize that they do not benefit us as a species. Humans would essentially be the judge, jury, and executioner of entire species. Although I see the logic behind this critique, I am not sure we could ever get to the point in which we could be absolutely certain of the ensuing results of wiping out an entire species. We saw what happened when ecologists interfered in an attempt to save the Acacia trees.[72] The cost would simply be too great to make a mistake such as wiping out an entire species, for what may only be a marginal benefit to humans. Once a species goes extinct, unless we have preserved DNA, it is irreversible and it could potentially harm humans to a degree that then could not be remedied.

Another argument concerned with the future could be that with advances in science, there could come a point where we are able to live sustainably with dramatically decreased wildlife

[72] Truman Young, "Trees, Ants, and Elephants: Balance Gone Bad."

than exists presently. The way of the future could be consuming one pill, three times a day, which provides you all the vitamins and nutrients a human body needs, thus negating the human necessity for most of nature, outside of the ingredients of these pills. Once again, this is a valid argument to make; however, it errs in several ways. First, "the way of the future" could imply eating three pills a day; however, this argument supposes that this future, with this wonderful pill, will arrive before we have completely destroyed our natural resources through unsustainable practices. We should not base the continuance of our species on hopefully creating a panacea. Additionally, the same argument from above may apply; we may not need every type of crop, given the creation of this pill, but that still does not justify eliminating entire species of organisms. Once again, if we eliminate a species, there is no going back and we cannot possibly predict the potential ramifications of eliminating that much of the environment, given our experience, no matter how far science advances.

Lastly, some might argue that, through generations of enlightened anthropocentricity, there may be an increasingly intensified view of nature being subservient to humans. Although this point is arguable, I do not think this is a likely outcome. This argument falls into the idea of the enlightened argument itself. We saw earlier in a quote from Andrew Brennan that the environment must be realized to be a part of all our dealings. Through learning more about nature one would likely come to a greater appreciation and respect for nature. The enlightened anthropocentric argument would elevate the status of nature, not degrade it.

B. Overpopulation

Likely the most serious problem presented to a long-term successful conservation effort is overpopulation. Overpopulation is defined as, "where an organism's numbers exceed the current carrying capacity of its habitat."[73] A carrying capacity refers to "the maximum population size of the species that the environment can sustain indefinitely, given food, habitat, water and other necessities available in the environment."[74] Currently the population of the world is roughly 7.4 billion people; however, the world population is estimated to reach 10.5 billion people by the year 2050, which will put an even greater pressure on already strained global resources.[75] To sustain a population of 10.5 billion people, the world will need to produce 50 percent more food, 45 percent more energy, and 30 percent more water.[76] As was shown earlier, climate change has tended to degrade food production through events such as flooding and heat waves. Also, more people require more space for food production and housing, room which we are steadily running out of. The Earth is simply not capable of housing the estimated increases in population which is why action must be taken to curtail the effects of overpopulation as well.

Additionally, resources can be categorized in two different ways: non-renewable and renewable energy sources.[77] Energy sources are classified as nonrenewable if they cannot be replenished in a short period of time and renewable if they are naturally replenished in a short period of time.[78] Non-renewable resources include: crude oil, natural gas, coal, and uranium. These types of resources are found in the earth and develop over millions of years of immense

---

[73] Tara Parambi, *Combating the Social and Economic Effects of Overpopulation*, Economic and Social Council, accessed April 1, 2016, http://www.daimun.org/pdf/ecosoc3_taraparambi.pdf.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] "Nonrenewable Energy Explained," U.S. Energy Information Administration, Nonrenewable and renewable energy sources, accessed April 01, 2016, http://www.eia.gov/EnergyExplained/?page=nonrenewable_home.
[78] Ibid.

pressure and heat[79] to reach the state they are currently in.[80] Many of the resources we use today can be characterized as non-renewable resources. These non-renewable resources are used every day for things like: electricity, gas, cement, and plastic among thousands of other things.[81] Thus the issue becomes clear; our population is rapidly increasing while our resource production capabilities are steadily decreasing and we are currently vastly dependent on non-renewable resources.

The issue of overpopulation is important to address in the discourse of enlightened anthropocentrism because population growth directly impacts climate change. The human population continues to grow because families tend to have more than two children (over the natural replacement rate). Most of the reasons for having multiple children fall into several categories including, but not limited to: a general desire to, lack of contraception, lack of proper education, desire for more income through child labor, desire for male children, the female role in some societies as being only a means to create children, and so on. Additionally, poorer areas are usually the core of the overpopulation problem, since they do not have as much access to contraceptives and often give birth for social purposes for the reasons mentioned above. More children increases the need for more resources, and a resultant increase in the housing is required to shelter them. More resource production and housing creation is likely to cause destruction of environments to make way for agriculture and construction, thus perpetuating climate change and harming human interest. Our Earth is expansive, but it cannot sustain this growing population. Most of the areas not currently heavily inhabited by humans are very harsh and unlivable areas, such as the Sahara Desert, the poles, or mountains. This does not even include

[79] "Non-renewable Energy," National Geographic Education, February 21, 2013, accessed April 01, 2016, http://education.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/non-renewable-energy/.
[80] "Nonrenewable Energy Explained"
[81] "Non-renewable Energy"

the two-thirds of the Earth that is covered in water, making the majority of the planet uninhabitable. There is not much more room for humans to spread out on Earth.

The reason why overpopulation can be found to conflict with an enlightened anthropocentric view is that it becomes very difficult to find zero in on a solution for the problem. It is undeniable that the rate at which the population is increasing is degrading, and will continue to degrade, our possibility to live sustainably. However, it seems to run contrary to a core concept of human nature to advise, or otherwise force, people to not have children. Having children is seen as an engrained part of what it is to be human. In reality to combat overpopulation effectively we would likely require a stricter policy than the one proposed by enlightened anthropocentrism.

This brings us to the question of how we confront the very real and very serious problem of overpopulation. I see there being four separate options which can be taken to tackle this global issue. In order of least to most severe: 1) advising abstinence, 2) better education and more access to birth control, 3) one-child, or similar policy, and finally 4) forced sterilization.

Abstinence is simply telling people to stop having sex if they are not trying to conceive, or if they do not have access to contraceptives. This is likely the least effective method for numerous reasons. First, as was mentioned earlier, sex and reproduction is part of human nature. Telling someone that they are not allowed to have sex is just unlikely to work, to put it lightly. Also, the human race needs reproduction for obvious reasons; we want to continue our species. Therefore, it is unrealistic that abstinence would ever be legally enforceable. This however, brings up the question, “who is allowed to have sex and procreate?” There is likely no chance we ever come up with a globally accepted policy which would determine some people as being able to reproduce and others as not.

The next option is better education and contraceptive distribution. This is the option most widely accepted today to counteract overpopulation. This is due to statistical evidence linking population fluctuations to availability of contraceptives.[82] To "better educate" implies that people, especially those in poor regions, will be taught about safe-sex through the use of contraceptives and to preferably limit having children to only one or two. Education and contraceptives surely do help combat overpopulation but nowhere near the degree necessary to counteract the current growth. Currently the most efficient way to diffuse an educational message about safe sex would likely be in pamphlet form. Outside of this less than ideal method, it would be nearly impossible to assume however many thousands of teachers could station themselves to teach safe sex in these poor, often despotic, areas. It is even more unlikely that they would be listened to. Handing out contraceptives by the tens of thousands is not a miracle cure either. Several world religions will deny using contraceptives in accordance to their faith including Catholicism and Judaism.[83] While other religions such as Hinduism encourage having children in marriage, making them unlikely to use contraceptives as well.[84] Also there is no way to assure that contraceptives will be accessible even to those who desire to use it, especially in remote and resource poor areas.

The third option is a one-child, or restrictive, policy with the intent to ratify into law certain prohibitions on giving birth. In addition to the consistent theme of the inherent moral consequences of telling people that they are not allowed to reproduce by choice, restrictive

[82] http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/11/08-062562/en/
[83] "Religion, Contraception and Abortion Factsheet," FPA, accessed April 01, 2016, http://www.fpa.org.uk/factsheets/religion-contraception-abortion.
[84] Dawn Stacy, "What Are Religious Views on Birth Control?," About Health, accessed April 01, 2016, http://contraception.about.com/od/additionalresources/ss/religion.htm#showall.

policies have also been notoriously unsuccessful.[85] The one-child policy was a law established in China restricting most urban families to only one child.[86] The intent was clear enough, if every married couple only has one child, the population is sure to decrease. However, the problem that arose was that most people would end up choosing a son if restricted to only one child, and aborting the baby if it turned out to be a daughter.[87] China now has 30 million more men than women.[88] Additionally, the one-child policy in China created a problem in which the ratio of working adults able to support older retirees became much smaller.[89] Whereas now China has a ratio of five working adults to every retiree, in 20 years that number will shift to only 1.6 working adults for every retiree.[90] China has confronted a terrifying prospect for addressing overpopulation in that it cannot be done quickly, or the entire structure of a society will change. The example of China shows that if restrictive action to combat overpopulation is to be taken, it must be proactive and gradual in nature.

The fourth and final option is forced sterilization. The argument from most people, would not need to go further than the first sentence to receive a vehement 'no.' Nonetheless, sterilization is the most extreme population control method outside of just killing people, a prospect so unrealistic I chose not to address it as a legitimate option. Additionally, there are obvious moral qualms to forced sterilization. Who would we choose to be sterilized? Which women and which men would be allowed to procreate? How would we even accomplish a globalized system to sterilize people? It is unrealistic and will come off to most as nothing more than morally offensive. Systematic forced sterilization would likely create a hierarchical system

[85] "How China's One-Child Policy Led To Forced Abortions, 30 Million Bachelors," NPR, accessed April 01, 2016, http://www.npr.org/2016/02/01/465124337/how-chinas-one-child-policy-led-to-forced-abortions-30-million-bachelors.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

of racism, and/or discrimination in general. Those in positions of power would feel personally justified in giving birth but disallow the right to smaller minority groups with less political power. Sterilization is obviously too extreme a method of population control, as it would likely serve to degrade many other values we hold as necessary human rights.

The option of better education and contraceptives appears to be the best course of action, but only by process of elimination. Telling people to abstain from sex is much too soft a method, while sterilization seems much too harsh a method. The only other option that could be argued to function as a solution, with some tweaks, would be option 3, a restrictive policy. There is no perfect solution to overpopulation and we do not know what the status of humanity or society may be in 50 or 100 years. However, introducing a gradual policy into law that slowly aims to decrease population numbers, in conjunction with education and contraceptive use, may prove to be the best solution to overpopulation.

C. Argument for the Moral Worth of Non-Human Organisms

I presume the brunt of objections to an enlightened anthropocentric view would come from environmentalists and animal rights advocates. They would likely argue that although the end of an enlightened anthropocentric argument may entail the same consequential result, the premise of human moral superiority should not be used to arrive at that result. They would prefer that we arrive at the result of conservation through a system of valued respect rather than having the entire focus being on the well-being of humans.

Although most likely not at the forefront of every person on Earth's mind, the right of an ecosystem and its non-human inhabitants to have ends in their own, should not be denied. Unsustainable practices are continuously destroying ecosystems and in turn habitats for animals.

Non-human organisms have every right to live and to deny them this right is immoral and commits injustice to the living beings which we share the Earth with.

Earth and the environment existed before human beings and will very likely persist after the last human being has died. Aldo Leopold explains, "the land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land."[91] This short writing by Leopold succinctly exemplifies the interdependency of all matter on Earth; whether alive or not, the land, in itself, intrinsically matters.

In reality, what we perceive as the environment is a collective of many individual organisms. These individual organisms work in conjunction like cogs in the grand machine that is the environment. This distinction is not intended to lower a sense of obligation we as humans have to the environment; if anything it should increase the sense of obligation. As much as humans have industrially and geographically separated themselves from the idealistic view of nature, we are still a species. We share being a species with every other living organism on Earth. Humans may be the largest cogs in the machine, but cogs nonetheless. Leopold similarly explains, "the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts."[92]

The fact that nature is a collection of individual organisms allows discourse of the environment to flow through discourse of those individual organisms, in this case, animals. Animals have moral worth and with that moral worth deserve a basic allotment of rights. Animals have been historically used instrumentally for humans. We would use horses as transportation, agricultural aids, or even at times, in combat. As time has progressed and we have come to a general state of global society where much of the world is better off in terms of food, shelter, and safety, we have reduced our dependence on animals. The hunter-gatherer era is over.

---

[91] Leopold, "The Land Ethic," 39.
[92] Ibid.

With this societal change towards urbanization, and with most of our basic needs met, we can more easily focus on questions of morality, ethics, discrimination, stigmatization, racism, and sexism. Within this cognitive shift come questions of ethics towards non-human organisms and the environments housing them.

Many criticisms frequently utilized to deny an allotment of animal rights are predicated on faulty premises. In my opinion, there are four lines of thought that most people will employ in their rationale for denying rights to animals.

The first mode of thought to justify humans as deserving rights more than animals is usually the idea of human superiority. If most people were prompted to answer a question about whether they considered humans superior to animals their gut reaction would be to agree. However, to approach this question in such a black and white fashion has already fundamentally damaged the answer. The answer to the question is 'not completely.' Humans may be superior in some ways to animals, such as intelligence and rationality. Paul Taylor explains that we tend to judge our superiority to other animals on the basis of characteristics that they lack. He asks why these characteristics objectively matter in a quantitative sense of judging superiority. In fact, many non-human animals are better than humans at almost every characterizing trait we can attribute to ourselves.[93] To help put this in perspective, we idolize Usain Bolt in our society because he can run a short distance faster than anyone else can. However, could Bolt run the 100 meters, which has brought him so much fame, faster than a cheetah? The answer is no, it was actually tested; the cheetah finished the 10 second event 40% faster than Bolt.[94] It is likely that our intellectual capacities are the only trait we have that is superior to other animals.

---

[93] Paul W. Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," in *Environmental Ethics*, ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, III (Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pg. 79.

[94] Sam Adams, "Move over Usain: Cincinnati Cheetah Hits 61mph to Run 100m in 5.95 Seconds to Smash Record World's Fastest Land Mammal," Daily Mail, August 3, 2012, accessed February 26, 2016,

The likely response would be to assert that although humans may not be superior in *every* way, we are more intelligent, and that is what really matters. However, one has to consider whether we simply value intellect as a greater trait just because it is the one we are coincidently the best at. Although, on average, humans are likely the most intelligent species on Earth, this does not hold true for all individual cases. Peter Singer, a commanding voice in the argument for animal rights, said, "if the demand for equality were based on the actual equality of all human beings, we would have to stop demanding equality."[95] Singer explains that there are very large differences in the characteristics within humans indicating that not even all humans are equal. Therefore, it makes little sense to assign rights on the basis of equality.[96] There is no absolute guarantee that if we averaged out all characteristics, that the different sexes and races would be quantitatively equal. If we find one race or sex to be above or below their counterparts, we would not feel justified treating that group of people worse for that reason. Therefore, equality is clearly not the basis by which we justify treating all humans the same.[97]

Singer uses the marginal cases argument to support his ideas. This argument maintains:

1. Normally, the criterion which we use to elevate ourselves above other sentient beings is our intelligence.
2. However, if we use intelligence as a strict criterion, then we must not be speaking about humans as a whole because some humans are more intelligent than others.

---

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2183092/Cheetah-smashes-speed-record-running-100m-5-95-seconds--40-faster-Usain-Bolt.html.

[95] Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," in Applied Ethics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

3. In fact, some animals are more intelligent than some humans. Jeremy Bentham argued a similar position, by noting that some dogs and horses are actually more conversable than a baby.[98]
4. Therefore, if we use intelligence as the criterion by which we derive our supposed higher worth over animals, that would also justify the maltreatment of babies, the mentally retarded, and people with severe degenerative mental illnesses, like dementia or Alzheimer's, because of their impaired higher cognitive functions.
5. In conclusion, to continue to argue human superiority at this point is to argue that humans are superior just because you are human, or speciesism.

The third thought process would likely accept that there is not a good argument on the basis of objective human superiority. However, the world was meant for humans not animals, so it is only rational that animals should not have equal rights to man. This is true in some respects; however, the argument is easily misconstrued. I, along with most other animal rights' advocates, believe that an animal should have fewer rights than a human does; however, that does not mean that animals deserve no rights at all. Obviously it makes no sense to give a pig the right to vote, or allow a dog First Amendment rights to freedom of press. We should however give rights to animals as it corresponds to their capabilities. We as humans in a society have laws protecting us against murder, torture, and battery. There are laws in place to feed babies and children when we have adopted that responsibility, because they are unable to feed themselves. An animal's sensation of pain is no fundamentally different than that of a human being, thus it makes sense to protect animals from being murdered, tortured, or physically abused. In fact, our society currently has laws which follow this logical reasoning and do not allow for the mistreatment or intentional injury of an animal. Therefore, it makes sense that if one has a dog then the person

[98] Ibid.

who accepted taking care of that animal has adopted the responsibility to feed and care for it because that animal would not be able to itself. This responsibility is not only a moral responsibility but it is legally supported as well.

The fourth and last argument a person might make would probably be, ‘even if we do acknowledge and accept all the prior responses to the arguments above, who cares? We do not owe animals anything. There is no objective sense of morality that obligates us to care about them.’ This fourth argument is one in which the person perhaps even realizes their role as a detriment to the environment and its species, yet simply does not care. Regardless of how much information is brought forth claiming ill-effects to animal or plant species, the environment as a whole, or even future human generations, this person will look the other way and continue to act in their own short-sighted interest.

The truth of the matter is that the last sentiment expressed in the fourth argument is much too common. Most people will not go through this entire process of questioning, and instead view themselves as superior without any intent to analyze the rationality of such a claim. This is the very reason for my primary argument. People who are unwilling to analyze their effect on other beings must therefore be coaxed in a way that will open their eyes to the threat of self-inflicted harm.

VI. Conclusion

The anthropocentric argument functions as a net that is narrow enough to be logically sound, yet wide enough to capture those who do not care about their ecological footprint and force them to think about their own well-being, a practice they will more likely respect. Where an environmental argument fails, the threat must be demonstrated in a different way. Veiling the argument for environmental conservation behind a person's inherent desire to live may not be the ideal way to present the argument; however, we are at a stage, as Brain Barry said, that we know the direction of research, we just need to act.[99] I see enlightened anthropocentrism, taken in this way, and taken seriously, to be the most effective method to reaching the understanding and need for environmental conservation.

There is no disputing the existence and severity of climate change. An argument is no longer needed to prove the necessity of change. Rather, what is needed is an argument of what to do about it. The theory of an enlightened, or sustainable, anthropocentrism allows for an ideology broad enough to capture our attention and promote the most swift and efficient change that will lead to sustaining our planet and our very existence.

[99] Brian Barry, "Sustainable and Intergenerational Justice."

Bibliography

"11 Facts About Hurricane Katrina." DoSomething.org. Accessed February 26, 2016. https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-hurricane-katrina.

"2015 World Hunger and Poverty Facts and Statistics." Hunger Notes. November 25, 2015. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm#Does_the_world_produce_enough_food_to_feed_everyone.

Adams, Sam. "Move over Usain: Cincinnati Cheetah Hits 61mph to Run 100m in 5.95 Seconds to Smash Record World's Fastest Land Mammal." Daily Mail. August 3, 2012. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2183092/Cheetah-smashes-speed-record-running-100m-5-95-seconds--40-faster-Usain-Bolt.html.

"All People on 1 Page." Worldometers. Accessed April 01, 2016. http://www.worldometers.info/watch/world-population/.

Barry, Brian. "Sustainable and Intergenerational Justice." In *Environmental Ethics*, edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, III, 487-98. Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Brennan, Andrew, and Holmes Rolston, III. "Environmental Awareness and Liberal Education." In *Environmental Ethics*, edited by Andrew Light, 516-26. Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Callicott, J. Baird. "A Critique of and an Alternative to the Wilderness Idea." In *Environmental Ethics*, edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, III, 437-43. Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

"Climate Change: How Do We Know?" Nasa.gov. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/.

"Climate Impacts on Agriculture and Food Supply." Environmental Protection Agency. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/impacts/agriculture.html.

"Climate Impacts on Global Issues." Environmental Protection Agency. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/impacts/international.html.

"Climate Impacts on Human Health." Environmental Protection Agency. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/impacts/health.html.

Cocks, S., and S. Simpson. "Anthropocentric and Ecocentric: An Application of Environmental Philosophy to Outdoor Recreation and Environmental Education." *Journal of Experiential Education* 38, no. 3 (2015): 216-27. Accessed February 26, 2016. doi:10.1177/1053825915571750.

"The Consequences of Global Warming On Weather Patterns." Natural Resource Defense Council. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/fcons/fcons1.asp.

Cunningham, Mararet. "Environmental Conservation and Preservation: Definition, Differences & Advocates." Study.com. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://study.com/academy/lesson/conservationists-vs-preservationists-definition-differences.html.

"Dust Bowl Strikes America." History.com. 2015. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www.history.com/topics/dust-bowl.

"Global Analysis - Annual 2015." NOAA National Center for Environment Information. January 2016. Accessed February 26, 2016. https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/201513.

"How China's One-Child Policy Led To Forced Abortions, 30 Million Bachelors." NPR. Accessed April 01, 2016. http://www.npr.org/2016/02/01/465124337/how-chinas-one-child-policy-led-to-forced-abortions-30-million-bachelors.

"How Much Has the Global Temperature Risen Since 1880?" University Corporation for Atmospheric Research. Accessed February 26, 2016. https://www2.ucar.edu/climate/faq/how-much-has-global-temperature-risen-last-100-years.

Keulartz, Jozef. "The Emergence of Enlightened Anthropocentrism in Ecological Restoration." 48-71. Accessed February 26, 2016.

Kyoto Protocol To The United Nations Framework Convention On Climate Change. Proceedings, Kyoto. 1997. Accessed February 26, 2016.

Leopold, Aldo. "The Land Ethic." In *Environmental Ethics*, edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, III, 38-46. Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

"Non-renewable Energy." National Geographic Education. February 21, 2013. Accessed April 01, 2016. http://education.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/non-renewable-energy/.

"Nonrenewable Energy Explained." U.S. Energy Information Administration. Accessed April 01, 2016. http://www.eia.gov/EnergyExplained/?page=nonrenewable_home.

Norton, Bryan G. "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism." *Environmental Ethics* 6 (Summer 1984): 131-48.

"Overpopulation: Causes, Effects and Solutions - Conserve Energy Future." ConserveEnergyFuture. June 03, 2013. Accessed April 01, 2016. http://www.conserve-energy-future.com/causes-effects-solutions-of-overpopulation.php.

"Overview." Globalchange.gov. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/highlights/overview/overview.

Parambi, Tara. *Combating the Social and Economic Effects of Overpopulation*. Economic and Social Council. Web. 1 Apr. 2016. <http://www.daimun.org/pdf/ecosoc3_taraparambi.pdf>.

Patz, Jonathan A., Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, Tracey Holloway, and Jonathan A. Foley. "Impact of Regional Climate Change on Human Health." Nature. November 17, 2005. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v438/n7066/abs/nature04188.html.

"The Rabbit Proof Fence." Slwa.wa.gov.au. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://slwa.wa.gov.au/wepon/land/html/rabbits.html.

"Religion, Contraception and Abortion Factsheet." FPA. Accessed April 01, 2016. http://www.fpa.org.uk/factsheets/religion-contraception-abortion.

Revkin, Andrew C. "U.S. Is Taking a Back Seat In Latest Talks on Climate." New York Times. October 29, 2001. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/29/world/us-is-taking-a-back-seat-in-latest-talks-on-climate.html.

Singer, Peter. "All Animals Are Equal." In Applied Ethics, 215-28. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Stacy, Dawn. "What Are Religious Views on Birth Control?" About Health. Accessed April 01, 2016. http://contraception.about.com/od/additionalresources/ss/religion.htm#showall.

"Status of Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol." United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Accessed April 01, 2016. http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/status_of_ratification/items/2613.php.

Taylor, Paul W. "The Ethics of Respect for Nature." In *Environmental Ethics*, edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston, III, 74-84. Berlin: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Thompson, Helen. "Ten Species That Are Evolving Due to the Changing Climate." *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 24, 2014. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/ten-species-are-evolving-due-changing-climate-180953133/?no-ist.

"Trees Help Fight Climate Change." Arbor Day Foundation. 2015. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www.arborday.org/trees/climatechange/.

United States. Environmental Protection Agency. Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards. *Epa.gov.* February 2010. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://www3.epa.gov/airtrends/2010/report/fullreport.pdf.

Victor, David G. "Preface." Preface to *The Collapse of the Kyoto Protocol and the Struggle to Slow Global Warming: With a New Afterword by the Author*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. Accessed April 11, 2016.

"Why Are Rabbits a Problem?" Rabbitfreeaustralia.org.au. February 26, 2016. http://www.rabbitfreeaustralia.org.au/rabbit_problem.html.

"The Wilderness Act of 1964." In *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, edited by J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, 120-29. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998.

Young, Tuman. "Trees, Ants, and Elephants: Balance Gone Bad." Ucdavis.edu. January 17, 2008. Accessed February 26, 2016. http://news.ucdavis.edu/search/news_detail.lasso?id=8476.