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# Saving Nature: Rethinking the Human/Nature Relationship

Katharine Barry

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# Rethinking the Human/Nature Relationship

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Katharine Barry
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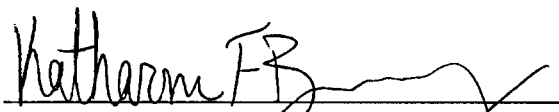

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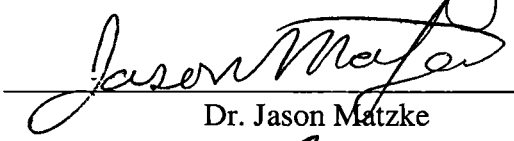

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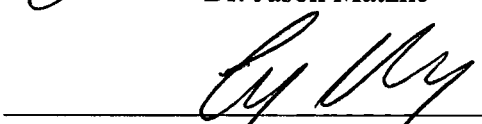

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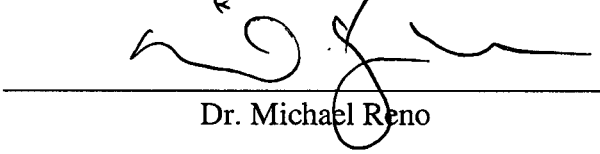

Dr. Michael Reno

Katharine Frances Barry
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Saving Nature: Rethinking the Human/Nature Relationship

To save the earth is to let it be earth in its inherent self-withholding, rather than demanding only its availability as a storehouse of energy. But letting the earth be earth does not entail our somehow ceasing to need it, for the earth is that which preeminently supports and sustains. It is, rather, learning to dwell upon it, cultivate and tend the earth instead of exploiting it, preserving its mutually conditioning qualities of sustaining and self-seclusion. - Mark Cowell[1]

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

In the year 2018, the race to "save" nature seems more urgent than ever, and yet the continuous foot-dragging on the implementation of sustainable policy and practices seems to continue. There is a quite a bit of time and energy invested in sustainable efforts with, in some cases, little show for it. With the amount of effort put into finding a solution to the earth's rapidly changing conditions, one must wonder, 1) what is holding us back from fighting against climate change? And 2) are our current attempts all worth it? The best way to move forward in our societal mission to "save" the world, is to get clear on what it is we are fighting for and what has been slowing our progress thus far. In this paper, I aim to clear up various competing definitions and their common misconceptions, explore the non-human value that exists in the environment, and delineate the various arguments for and against restoration. Each one of these philosophical dilemmas stems from humankind's misguided conceptions of (wo)man's relationship with the environment. To begin, I plan to define wilderness and nature, exploring their differences and determine which term is least problematic for use in arguments for restoration. I wrestle with the questions: is nature/wilderness the sheer lack of human traces? Or, are humans a part of nature/wilderness community, just in a different, albeit destructive, way? Then, I aim to discover what value the environment holds, if any, beyond the realm of the human world. Is nature

[1] Mark Cowell, "Ecological Restoration and Environmental Ethics," in *Environmental Ethics,* 15, no. 1 (1993), 29.

valuable intrinsically or only in its use to humankind? As will be fleshed out later, the term "intrinsic value," is plagued with problems itself, so the search for a word or phrase that captures the essence of what nature means and why it all matters, continues. Once we have reached a reasonable stopping point on our quest for nature's definition and value, we must ask ourselves, is restoration possible, is it ethical, and if so, why do we struggle to emphasize it in philosophical thought and our daily practices? At the heart of each of these conflicts (unclear definitions of nature/wilderness, debate on its value and the ethics of restoration) is the overbearing human/nature dualism that is prevalent in many aspects of philosophical thought. Dissolving the misconceptions that alienate humans from their environment will allow us to move in the right direction of sustainable practices and "saving" the world.

In 2003, William Cronon[2] wrote an article entitled "The Riddle of the Apostle Islands," regarding the Apostle Islands, a small set of islands located off the coast of Wisconsin in Lake Superior that have lived through their fair share of history, both natural and human.[3] At the time of the article, the islands were considered "National Lakeshore," but they had recently received a recommendation for "national wilderness" designation, an additional layer of policy protection. Since then, the islands have been approved for wilderness designation and are now further protected by the federal government under the Wilderness Act of 1964.[4] The story of the Apostle Islands and William Cronon's commentary on the wilderness designation and restoration process and its complicated layers illustrates the competing definitions of wilderness/natural, the

[2] "About William Cronon," William Cronon, accessed February 12, 2018, http://www.williamcronon.net/. William Cronon is a well-known environmental historian and philosopher who is currently teaching at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has produced numerous works in the field of environmental ethics relating to the debate on the definition of wilderness, as well as the broad spectrum of topics regarding human history's impact on the environment.

[3] William Cronon, "The Riddle of the Apostle Islands," *Orion Magazine*, May 2003, http://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Cronon_Riddle_Apostle_Islands.html, 34.

[4] Cronon, 35.

value of nature, the ethical aspects of restoring nature and how each issue leads back to an unclear relationship between humans and nature. Below, I will walk through the story of the Apostle Islands and how it clearly explicates the various problems humanity faces in the struggle for environmentalism.

According to Cronon, there is a serious lack of protected land in the middle regions of the United States. Many coastal, well populated regions have received the bulk of the attention when it comes to protecting wild areas and restoration efforts, with the west coast receiving the bulk of the attention. The middle of the country, as well as parts of the east coast, are often seen as only farmland, overly touched by man and beyond repair, a commentary on human's relationship with nature in and of itself.[5] The general lack of governmental support and recognition of wilderness in the middle of America makes these lush islands even more important an area to appreciate, restore, and understand. This is, in part, why Cronon took a special interest in the area.

As the islands stand today, they appear to the unknowing eye to be untouched by humans, a perfect example of "wilderness." However, those who know the history of the area know that this currently lush landscape is somewhat of a façade. In contrast to the natural appearance, Cronon explains that the land was once inhabited by the Ojibwe people, a native tribe that resided in the area for hundreds of years. Since then, the waters surrounding the islands have been commercially fished, and the islands have been logged, quarried, and farmed for centuries.[6] Not to mention, there are historical lighthouses that are tourist hotspots on the islands to this day with dirt footpaths to prove it.[7] Cronon explains that "The Apostles are thus a superb example of a wilderness in which natural and human histories are intimately intermingled."[8] And yet, the average human visitor would assume that the area had looked as it does now, forever. It is

[5] Cronon, "The Riddle," 36.
[6] Cronon, 36.
[7] Cronon, 38.
[8] Cronon, 38.

amazing how lush greenery and trails erased by weeds can make one forget that an area could have ever appeared "unnatural."

We commonly use the phrase "taken back by nature" when an old, dilapidated home starts to crumble and becomes enveloped with vines as the woods slowly eat away at the human traces. This concept implicates quite a bit about how humans interpret the concept of "natural" or "wilderness." In this sense, nature is the *opposite* of human. As if the earth exists naturally in its wild state, until humans disrupt, build upon, and develop it. Yet, everything always eventually ends up "taken back" by nature, whether it's a house absorbed into the surrounding woods, a body laid to rest in the ground, or, in this case, a set of islands restored to a more wild state by federal regulation. In this sense, nature is in equilibrium, only temporarily disturbed by humans. Once again, this alienates all human elements from a natural landscape, so, where does "nature" end and "human" begin? I would argue that this line is blurred beyond visibility with humans as members of the natural community even if some of our creations are more distinctly "human." The concept of "wilderness" draws a sharper line than the term "nature" between humans and the environment, as it is defined exclusively in a manner of opposite from humankind, with no middle ground. Traditionally, something is either wild or it is human and colloquially, a human is more likely to be defined as "natural" than as "wild," in the true sense of the word. From this, you can begin to see that natural is already more associated with humans than wilderness has been. This is problematic, which is why the term natural, which allows slightly more flexibility in interpretation and the introduction of a human/natural continuum as opposed to two poles works better for an argument for restoration.[9]

[9] William R. Jordon III, "Restoration, Community and Wilderness," in *Restoring Nature: Perspectives from the Social Sciences and Humanities,* edited by Paul Gobster and R. Bruce Hull, (Washington D.C., Island Press, 2000), 33.

Once one examines the Apostle Islands more closely, one will find remnants of the human life that once presided there. For example, the plants are mostly new growth with non-native apple trees mixed in. There are foundations left of houses that were once inhabited by pioneers and wagon trails that have since been overgrown.[10] "Nature alone cannot explain this landscape. You need [human] history too," claims Cronon.[11] These bits of past lives are just as "native" to the area as the flora and fauna. As a historian interested in man's relationship with the environment, Cronon fears that the wilderness designation will give people aiming for restoration an excuse to erase every aspect of "non-wild/nature," also known as human life.[12] This gets at the heart of the first issue that I will address, the unclear definitions of nature and wilderness rooted in the human/natural dichotomy that exists in society. If we instead start seeing humankind as an additional aspect to nature as opposed to the alienated opposite, then our conceptions and a path towards restoration would be much clearer.

Those who wished to restore the land to its natural state see value in wilderness/nature. While some may only want restoration for purely instrumental purposes, such as the tourist revenue generated from wilderness areas or the amount of lumber able to be harvested, most environmentalists value nature for the kind of hard-to-explain essence of a thing that makes one aware of its significance and importance. The best analogy for this is the non-instrumental value of a famous work of art or a blood relative, the kind of value based on the "origin and genesis" of a thing.[13] This is referred to as a value in and of itself, known most commonly as *intrinsic value*. Most people interested in restoration would agree that not all value, especially the value in nature, is anthropocentric (human-centered). It is relatively easy to recognize the value in an

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[10]Cronon, "The Riddle," 38.

[11] Cronon, 39.

[12] Cronon, 38.

[13] Robert Elliot, "Faking Nature," in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology,* edited by Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III, (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 382.

object even if that value does not pertain to human life. The real dilemma is deciding whether the value in nature is *only* anthropogenic (human-generated), as in, the value only exists because humans project it onto the space or illuminate it. This debate is an integral part of environmental ethics, but stretches further as a systematic issue revolving around the use of the word "intrinsic."

In the context of the Apostle Islands, people interested in restoring the land find intrinsic value in non-human-ness; therefore, to honor the value of this natural land, they must remove all traces of human life. This is the part that William Cronon takes issue with, because he believes that the leftover apple trees and small pioneer era graveyard are also intrinsically value and deserve to stay on the islands, despite being human-generated.[14] For Cronon, these pieces of diverse history do not take away value from the wild areas, instead, they add depth and context to the modern state of the islands. He states that the areas have a rich non-human and human history that deserves to be celebrated instead of covered up. To him, covering up all traces of past human lives is like lying to the people who will one day enjoy the area. The people exploring this newly restored "wilderness" will be deceived into believing that this is the way in which the islands have always existed.[15] This leads to the final point of contention: is restoration ethically sound? Once pristine land has been influenced by human activity, any steps to get the area "back to nature" so that no one may tell otherwise, is essentially a lie. Cronon, in an earlier paper entitled "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," says, "Wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural."[16] Though, assuming there is scarcely an inch of this earth that has not been

[14] Cronon, "The Riddle," 38.

[15] Cronon, 38.

[16]William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *The Great New Wilderness Debate,* ed., J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, (Athens, The University of Georgia Press, 1998), 471.

physically touched, if not climactically affected by human activity, why not restore the areas that we can, while preserving the value that is left (both human and not)? Cronon's solution to the ethical dilemma of restoration is to replace "restoring," with the concept of "re-wilding," in which every area on Earth falls on a continuum ranging from "human" to "wild." Re-wilding, simply pushes the slide rule back towards the more "wild" side of things, without completely erasing the human traces.[17] I will use this as a reconfigured definition of restoration later. Instead of everything being natural until humans touch it, we must allow humans to take part in the community exchange with nature.

The complete "riddle" of the Apostle Islands, as outlined by William Cronon, exemplifies the common conceptions of the definition of natural and wilderness as well as scraping the surface of intrinsic value in the environment and the ethics of restoration that I will to speak on later in this paper. These topics seem to progress naturally (no-pun intended) as an answer to the question of whether nature is worth saving, and why sustainable efforts have not been successful thus far. To determine whether something is worth one's time, one must know clearly what exactly is being discussed, i.e. what is the definition of natural/wilderness. From there, one must explicate the value in said object, to know if it is worth spending time on. And finally, assuming one finds something valuable, it must be established if the steps required to "save it" are ethical, or possible, even. This paper aims to delineate each of these topics to come up with a clearer answer to the pressing questions of modern environmentalism.

[17]Cronon, "The Riddle," 39.

## Chapter 2: Definitions of Nature and Wilderness

In the United States, there are 106 million acres of designated "wilderness" within the public land system. These regions of high-level conservation make up about 53% of all the United States National Parks System, per recommendations from Congress.[18] As for the National Parks System as a whole, it "covers more than 84 million acres and is comprised of 417 sites with at least 19 different designations."[19] These lands are vital to the American economy, providing jobs and tourism profits all year.[20] The creation of National Parks began in 1872 with Yellowstone National Park,[21] however the legal concept of wilderness and specific wilderness designations in the United States took form beginning with The Wilderness Act of 1964 (hereinafter the "Act"). The Act gave the first true explication of what "wilderness" means and why it is important to humans and worth protecting. To get a full understanding of the concept of wilderness, we must look to its conception, in the governmental realm, at least. The Act broke ground on the concept with the following definition,

> A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an

[18] "Frequently Asked Questions," Gateway to National Park Service Wilderness, National Park Service, accessed February 15, 2018, https://wilderness.nps.gov/faqnew.cfm.

[19] "National Park Service Overview," National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, accessed February 15, 2018, pdf, https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/news/upload/NPS-Overview-12-05-17.pdf.

[20] "National Park Service Overview."

[21] "National Park Service Overview."

> area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation…[22]

In this definition wilderness areas are first characterized by their relationships to humans, being "untrammeled by man." While the idea of an area without permanent improvements in today's day and age is fundamentally impossible, the basic concept is the lack of humans in an area for it to flourish in its natural state. The Act goes further to include a number of conditions including that "(2) [wilderness] has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation" and "(4) [it] may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value."[23] Both of these conditions revolve around wild area's *instrumental* value to humans. The Act defines chunks of untouched land in terms of how they can provide educational opportunities, or even the therapeutic benefits of getting fresh air in an unindustrialized area. The benefits that can be accrued from designating and responsibly managing pieces of land in their most natural state are innumerable. The Act makes this point clear, listing special provisions and conditions that account for the different allowed uses of designated wilderness areas.

Prior to the governmental birth of the wilderness concept, people had been discussing the idea for quite a while. William Cronon explores the past definitions of the wilderness concept in his essay "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." Originally, wilderness was not seen as a desirable place to "escape from the real world" it was seen as desolate, savage, "a waste, [being] the word's nearest synonym."[24] It also held strong biblical connotations because of its secluded nature. People went to nature to be close to God and feel

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[22] "The Wilderness Act of 1964" in *The Great New Wilderness Debate,* J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, 1998, 121.

[23] "The Wilderness Act," 122.

[24] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 473.

His frighteningly powerful presence in a world where they clearly had no control over the environment. This old concept of "sublime," was defined as "those rare places on Earth where one had more chance than elsewhere to glimpse the face of God."[25] What had started out as a waste, slowly transitioned into a frighteningly immense place, then later to be seen as sacred in a world full of sins.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the sublime idea turned into the "frontier" concept. Cronon describes it as an overly masculine idea that started shifting the "striking the fear of God" use of the word to using wilderness as an escape with recreational purposes.[26] In the eyes of Theodore Roosevelt and for many Americans, wilderness was a place that turned boys into men. Its rugged conditions were a proving ground for hunting, camping, and simply surviving. This idea was a harsh alternative to the hustle and bustle that was happening as the country rapidly industrialized. [27] Cronon describes wilderness at this time as "the one place we can turn for escape from our own too-muchness."[28] Each iteration of wilderness's meaning in society, from a waste, to a place of power, to an unknown frontier, painted wilderness as something outside of the human experience, different from humankind.

Today, wilderness is a place untouched by man, where humans can go for a multitude of beneficial reasons. This transition in meaning from one definition to nearly its polar opposite, gives way to the idea that wilderness, as we currently see it, exists in our eyes anthropocentrically. Its definition revolves around our immediate use of it, as opposed to its meaning not relating to humans instrumentally. While I will not make the same mistake as Eric Katz by assuming all anthropogenic ideas are also anthropocentric, in this case, wilderness is

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[25] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 475.
[26] Cronon, 474.
[27] Cronon, 471.
[28] Cronon, 471.

both anthropogenic and anthropocentric.[29] Herein lies the major issue with the unclear concept of wilderness, it is generated and defined via its relationship to humans, yet we aim to find its non-instrumental value. A place defined primarily based on how it differs from humans and how it can be useful to them but that is also valuable without reference to human usefulness is blatantly oxymoronic.

The terms "nature" and "wilderness" are often used synonymously, even by myself so far in this piece, however, it would be beneficial to separate "nature" from the more problematic concept of "wilderness." Wilderness implies that the area is untouched or "wild," which has several above-mentioned implications, while nature is a softer defined word that still implies the opposite of humans, but does not completely alienate humans from their environment. As I stated before, humans are more likely to be defined as "natural" than "wild." Below I discuss various objections to the use of the word "nature," and how, even with objections, it is the best choice of word in the context of value and restoration.

Nature is typically used to "denote the nonhuman part of the biosphere,"[30] and its use in this sense is usually met with two major criticisms. As Simon James puts it: the "everything is natural" objection and the "everything is human" objection. The "everything is natural" argument against the concept of nature is based on the metaphysical dualism that plagues many a philosophical concept.[31] James explains that for the sake of this argument, humans believe that their bodies are natural, but their minds are what depart from nature (supernatural) and it is the human mind that typically end up thinking up inventions that destroy nature. Therefore, things our bodies produce to survive: breath or saliva are considered natural, while those products that

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[29] Eric Katz "The Big Lie: Human Restoration of Nature," in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology,* ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 390-397.

[30] Simon P. James, *Environmental Philosophy: An Introduction* (Polity Press, 2015), 113.

[31] James, 113.

our minds create: a piece of machinery, a camera, are unnatural. This position is problematic because it perpetuates a sense of entitlement towards the abuse of natural resources.[32] Our "unnatural" minds have access to all "natural" things to do with what we wish. Therefore, to remediate this dualism, it is better to think of *everything* as natural, and therefore human bodies *and* their minds are members of the natural community and do not have full reign over everything "merely natural," however, this argument is not entirely without flaw.[33] James explains that if we *are* only natural material, then this would deny the clear existence of a supernatural essence that every human mind contains. We are not simply material things, because if we are then we would have quite literally zero incentive to care about the environment, which would undermine the very root of this discussion in the first place. So, not everything is natural, some things done by humans should be considered less-than-natural, but the human body and mind are members of the natural community.

James goes on to explicate the other argument in opposition to the concept of nature: the "everything is human" argument. The concept of reality is one that has been toyed with by many thinkers, many of whom have questioned if anything is really *real.* The "everything is human" argument follows along similar lines with the assertion that it is impossible for humans to experience what we believe is "nature" outside of our own experiences and therefore, nature itself is a social/ human construct.[34] The idea was constructed for use by humans as an "other," through which we can alienate ourselves from and therefore use nature as we please. To combat this constructionist view, James claims a slippery slope argument: that this conception of nature can lead to complete nihilistic denial of everything experienced by humans.[35] In addition, this

[32] James, *Environmental Philosophy*, 113.
[33] James, 114.
[34] James, 114.
[35] James, 115.

functions on a naively anthropocentric view that is inherently wrong. Of course, humans can only experience the outside world through our own bodies and minds, though that does not deny the existence of any and everything outside of the human realm.[36] As C. Mark Cowell claims in his piece "Ecological Restoration and Environmental Ethics," it is beneficial to view the human/nature dichotomy as a continuum, with everything falling somewhere between the natural and the more human side of things with more human objects being those that are more artificially engineered, as opposed to sorting each idea, event, or location into one of the two messy categories.[37]

From this point forward, I will refer to that which humans should save as "nature," which implies the existence of less-natural (human) things without alienating humanity from the natural community. The conception of nature that I wish to use is that which lays on a continuum with human-engineered, artificial objects at one end and untouched nature at the other, with everything falling somewhere in between the two. With terms identified and definitions cleared up, if we wish to further our quest towards preservation and restoration of nature, we must next define the value within nature.

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**Chapter 3: Value in Nature**

The most effective way to get someone to care about a cause is by showing them the value in it. The same is true for making an argument for the restoration of nature in the face of climate change. For years, environmental activists have worked to determine the best argument for preservation and restoration by trying out different value arguments. For example, Michael P. Nelson moves through the need for arguments revolving around nature's value by explicating 30

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[36] James, *Environmental Philosophy*, 115.
[37] Cowell, "Ecological Restoration," 32.

different arguments for the preservation of wilderness in his work *An Amalgamation of Wilderness Preservation Arguments.*[38] Thousands of points can be made regarding the environment's usefulness to mankind, from lumber, to mental health, to national pride and so on; but clearly, a purely economic view has not worked thus far. The instrumental value arguments for the preservation of nature (wilderness) are deeply rooted in the distorted view humans have of the earth, dating back to before the common era. A restoration call-to-action will mean nothing until humankind sees nature as something with a good of its own. Within the above-mentioned text, Nelson sums up the need for an intrinsic value argument as opposed to many instrumental value arguments with the following:

> If we can justify the intrinsic value of designated wilderness areas, and if we can locate their level of moral consideration, then wilderness preservation immediately becomes a moral issue. Designated wilderness areas would gain considerable ethical clout. And this changes the argument about wilderness quite a bit; the burden of proof would apparently be shifted.[39]

He goes on to say that the burden of proof would then be on the destroyers of wilderness (nature), for hurting something intrinsically valuable. Making wilderness (nature) preservation/restoration a moral issue puts a face to the name. Similar to how many popular preservation campaigns put the face of a cute polar bear, or a sad looking dog on ads, attempting to pull on the heartstrings of the few organisms on earth with the power to make a difference in the situations that we ourselves have created.

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[38] Michael P. Nelson "An Amalgamation of Wilderness Preservation Arguments," in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology,* ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 413-436.

[39] Nelson, "An Amalgamation," 433.

As we delve into our search for the intrinsic value of nature, we must first unpack the concept of intrinsic value itself, which is not without faults. There have been multiple differing definitions of intrinsic value, though the most widely held view is that intrinsic value is value that something has within itself, without instrumental reference and not requiring a subject.[40] In this paper, I shall refer to the conscious or unconscious subject of value, the one doing the valuing as a "valuer." It is important to note here that being a valuer does not presuppose consciousness. It is certainly possible to have an unconscious valuer such as a plant inherently valuing its own life, causing it to instrumentally value the tools it uses to stay alive.[41] Some may argue that part of valuing something is knowing or acknowledging what it is you are valuing. However, there are many aspects of human life that are valuable that often go unrecognized. The oxygen in the air we breathe, the growth and death of each cell in our bodies, etc. are all vital to our existence and therefore extremely valuable, but virtually unnoticed.[42]

The first major dilemma with the concept is whether it is possible for something to hold value "in itself." This is similar, though not the same as the question regarding the need for a valuer or subject to have value at all. Is value similar to essence or soul in traditional dualism: just an invisible, intangible part that exists within an object? To the best of my knowledge, instrumental value exists *outside* the object, in that it is used to create other items of value but not reflective on the object without instrumental reference.[43] This places the value "outside" of the item. On the flip side of this, there is a "sin qua non" that many objects hold, within the essence of their being and with no reference to their usefulness to others. The concept of intrinsic value is trying to get at that inexplicable characteristic. Take, for instance, a golden retriever

[40] This is an amalgamation of several different definitions created by various philosophers that I have attempted to simply into one statement.

[41] Rolston, "The Value in Nature," 145.

[42] Rolston, 144.

[43] James, *Environmental Philosophy*, 70.

puppy. That being is valuable beyond the warm and fuzzy feeling it gives you when you look into its eyes. In my opinion, that being deserves to continue living regardless of what benefits are accrued in its presence. This proves the ability for a being to have value *within* itself, as well as it further defines "value" as a being's right and moral "considerability."

As for the related issue, regarding a need for a subject to value the object, or a "valuer," an idea most notably attributed to Holmes Rolston III. In his work "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value," Rolston walks through an explanation for why each aspect of nature is valuable without a valuer, claiming that, for example, animals value various aspects of their lives instrumentally, *because* they value their own lives intrinsically.[44] The life force within an organism or plant is what gives it intrinsic value. He claims "The physical state of that the organism defends is a valued state"[45] Rolston goes on to say that "A life is defended for what it is in itself, without necessary further contributory reference."[46] These arguments are rebutted by multiple contemporaries of Rolston, including Peter Singer, who believes that plants, for instance, have a good of their own, but not value within themselves.[47] Another critic, J. Baird Callicott rebuts Rolston with the following concept, that there cannot be value without a conscious valuer, instead suggesting a "truncated intrinsic value" which is "the value we ascribe to something *for* itself even if it has—since nothing does, in my opinion—no value *in* itself."[48] This negates two aspects of the original definition of intrinsic value, in that not only does the object have to have a valuer, doing the valuing, but also the value does not exist within the object, but is given to it by the valuer. This definition, while slightly easier to conceive, is

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[44] Holmes Rolston III, "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value," in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology,* ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 145.

[45]Rolston, 145.

[46] Rolston, 145.

[47] Rolston, 145. Rolston summarizing Peter Singer's criticisms.

[48] J. Baird Callicott, "Rolston on Intrinsic Value: A Deconstruction," in *Beyond the Land Ethic,* (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1999), 223.

problematic as well. With the need for a valuer as well as denying the existence of the value within the object itself, it is hard to call this "intrinsic" at all. It appears to me that the heart of intrinsic value and how it differs from instrumental value, which is the main value dichotomy, is that it exists *within* the object itself, not necessarily that it has to exist objectively. The dichotomy and important distinction is explicated well by Simon James:

> If x is of value because it provides a service, then it is of instrumental value: it is of value as a means to some end. If x is of [intrinsic] value, then it must be possible, at least in principle, to specify the relevant end without referring to x.[49]

Perhaps a better definition would be a modified one, in which value exists inherently within objects, but is only able to be detected when a valuer shines a light on it. This is often referred to as "inherent value," or the: "Light-in-the-Refrigerator Theory of value," dubbed by Holmes Rolston.[50] This does the neatest job of getting at the heart of the intrinsic value concept, capturing the "sin qua non" value that objects hold beyond their usefulness to others. In this case, it is fair to say that this value requires a valuer to "shine a light" on it, but the value exists within the thing whether or not it is recognized by a valuer. With all these issues weighted and compared, I have chosen the concept of *inherent value* as the true meaning of non-instrumental value in nature. Inherent value most accurately captures all that I am attempting to encompass with my argument for the restoration of nature, though I will use it interchangeably with the term "intrinsic" for consistency's sake with other authors used throughout.

Having now decided upon what sort of value we are searching for, we must next decide what, within nature would be considered valuable, assuming value can be found at all. What exactly makes an object inherently valuable? For Rolston, living things are easily proven

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[49] James, *Environmental Philosophy*, 70.
[50] James, 73. James summarizes Rolston "Light-in-the-Refrigerator" concept.

intrinsically valuable because of their distinct telos or goal. Each living thing wishes to continue living and avoid death. "A life is defended for what it is in itself, without necessary further contributory reference," claims Rolston.[51] As the main (but not only) valuers in the world, humans recognize a sameness in the existence of some living entities, but not all. This recognition is mostly synonymous with respect, which is a concept, often intermingled, but in fact separate, from value. For example, an argument denying the inherent value of a plant could very easily be made based on the assumption that plants are consumed, cut, and destroyed constantly in the world, so how could they hold real value? The answer here is based on the hierarchy of inherent value.[52] While it is true that plants, as living things, are inherently valuable, that does not place them on the same level of value as a human. Humans are valuable valuers (those with inherent value *and* the ability to illuminate the inherent value in others), which trump those in which value is only found within (insentient beings). Holmes Rolston writes "A valuer is an entity able to defend value. Insentient organisms are the holders of value, although not the beholders of value."[53]

Beyond plants, some animals follow the same "holder not beholder of value" classification, while others, with greater sentience, are clearly inherently valuable for the same reason humans are valuable. This, therefore is an argument for the value that each individual within a natural community holds. Though, one must wonder: does value stop at the individual level? If so, it would be difficult to use inherent value as an argument for the restoration of the environment, which includes many non-living things mixed up with living things on different levels of the hierarchy of value.[54] To answer this, Rolston walks through a series of rationales

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[51] Rolston, "The Value in Nature," 145.

[52] Callicott, "Rolston on Intrinsic Value," 225. This is part of Callicott's summary of Rolston's views.

[53] Rolston, 146.

[54] Callicott, 225.

that better explain the intrinsic value in nature. To begin, Rolston introduces the question of at which biological level natural selection occurs within, which has been asked since the inception of the concept itself. Many scientists, myself included, believe that it occurs in purest form at the species level, though it may show up throughout the various biological classifications.[55]

Natural selection works well as an argument for value because we have already established rationale for why entities with telos can be considered valuable, with a good of their own. Reproductive success, while an individual trait, is a direct effect of the *species* well-being and telos.[56] For example, three mother birds may lay 5 eggs respectively, totaling 15 new mouths to be fed in a small community of birds. There is only enough food to feed 12 of the baby birds, therefore, the strongest two mothers, who have passed on the strongest traits to their offspring will be able to retrieve enough food for all of their babies while the last, weakest mother will only be able retrieve food for three of her five offspring, or perhaps feed all 5 of them less than they need. This situation is not good for each individual within the third mother's family, though it is good for the development of the species as a whole. During the next round of reproduction, the 12 or so surviving birds will pass on their stronger traits and the species will continue to become stronger and more resilient. The telos of a species is to evolve and adapt to changing conditions, with individuals acting only as "receptacles of the form" which can be broken "while the form survives."[57] Rolston specifically says "natural selection is rather careless with individuals."[58]

In his text "Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems," Harley Cahen opposes this view with an argument stating that natural selection occurs at the individual level. For

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[55] Rolston, "The Value in Nature," 146.
[56] Rolston, 147.
[57] Rolston, 147.
[58] Rolston, 148.

Cahen, natural selection selects *bodies* not species which is why it is an individualistic theory, occurring at the individual level, therefore disproving the telos/value of a species.[59] Cahen cites and rebuts a common argument for natural selection at the species level, one that Rolston may believe in: bird clutch size. A clutch is the number of eggs laid at one time by a mother bird, which, in some species, may vary "according to the needs of the current community."[60] Perhaps, the species is over-populating its environment, so the mother bird has fewer eggs that season to minimize competition among other birds within the same species, or perhaps a natural disaster has recently wiped out a large portion of the species is one area, so the mother birds have larger clutch sizes that season. There is also a chance that clutch size varies more randomly, with no explanation available for the slight variations from year to year. This argument is claiming that clutch size variation is based on the needs of the community because the alternative is that clutch size varies through utter randomness, which simply cannot be the case.[61] Cahen claims that the argument that the clutch size varies for the good of the species is a negative, and therefore weak argument. By this, he means the reasoning must be true because without it, there would be no true explanation for the randomness of nature, even though this theory may not be the best choice.[62]

I would argue that it is a trend in scientific history that events and daily observations/occurrences often appear to be random, until the truth behind them is discovered. Events such as natural disasters were once thought of random, until scientific thought progressed enough to explain the once unexplainable, the "random." Ignorance leads to the concept of blatant randomness in nature, therefore just because we do not fully understand the reasoning

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[59] Harley Cahen, "Against the Moral Considerability of Ecosystems," in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology,* ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 121.

[60] Cahen, "Against the Moral Considerability," 121.

[61] Cahen, 121.

[62] Cahen, 122.

behind bird clutch size as a function of species well-being, does not mean that the two are not correlated in some way. As Lars Samuelsson explains in his piece "On the Possibility of Evidence for Intrinsic Value in Nature" there is a difference between a theory being false and being not completely justified. We typically believe something when the evidence for it outweighs the evidence against it, and that must be enough.[63] The same reason that one cannot prove that clutch size is random is the same reason why one cannot say for certain that clutch size is not random, and for that, we will choose to go with the more scientific/explanatory answer until proven otherwise.

Holmes Rolston III, as well as Kenneth Goodpaster, both take the argument a step further by claiming that ecosystems and therefore the biosphere (the next biological levels after species) are inherently valuable and morally considerable on their own. "Moral considerability" here is defined as "the moral status x has if, and only if (a) x has interests (a good of its own), (b) it would be prima facie wrong to frustrate x's interests (to harm x) and (c) the wrongness of frustrating x's interest is direct…"[64] Goodpaster's reasoning for the moral considerability of ecosystems and the entire biosphere is that ecosystems/the biosphere can be made analogous to an individual organism, with different living parts making up the living aggregate (for organisms, the various organs, for ecosystems/the biosphere, different individuals working for and against each other to create a living whole.[65] If we define an "organism," as Goodpaster does, as "an integrating, self-sustaining unity which puts solar energy to work in the service of growth and maintenance,"[66] then, aggregates of individuals (ecosystems and the biosphere) have the same moral considerability and value as any other "living" entity.

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[63] Lars Samuelsson, "On the Possibility of Evidence for Intrinsic Value in Nature," *Ethics & the Environment,* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2013), 108.

[64] Cahen, "Against the Moral Considerability," 115.

[65] Cahen, 116. Goodpaster's ideas, explicated in Cahen's piece.

[66] Cahen, 116. A quote from Goodpaster within Cahen's piece.

The life force of a being is often identified via its goal-directedness, as both Kenneth Goodpaster and Holmes Rolston III would agree, but what if the "goal-directedness" of an ecosystem or the biosphere is not what it appears to be. This is Harley Cahen's biggest issue with the argument for value via life (via goal-directedness). He claims that there is a large difference between having a telos and "behavioral byproducts," caused by living a normal life.[67] Cahen argues that ecosystem resilience combined with the stability that is a result of the resilience can appear to be a goal, but is just a byproduct of the various parts of the whole system "bouncing back" from disturbances for the good of themselves, not the good of the whole.

Take, for instance, the following example, provided by Cahen: A Martian observes a movie theater full of people watching a film. All of sudden, the fire alarms begins to ring and the crowd panics as they all race for the few, small exits of the theater. At the doors, there is a large jam of people trying to push and shove their way out and as a result, no one is able to get out efficiently. In this example, the Martian may believe that the goal of the people in the movie theater was to create a jam at the doors so that no one could get out safely, however this was a byproduct of their panicked behavior and not the true goal.[68] This argument follows similar reasoning as the argument against the inherent value of species in that we cannot know that things, whether that be an ecosystem being resilient in the face of change or a species manipulating reproduction for its current needs, is happening for a specific reason: goal-directedness or simply a random byproduct. Therefore, it could be said again that natural events tend to have explanation and are rarely random once fully understood in the scientific community. Rolston even says "Evolutionary ecosystems over geological time have increased the number of species on Earth from zero to five million or more."[69] That does not happen by

[67] Cahen, "Against the Moral Considerability," 117.
[68] Cahen, 119.
[69] Rolston, "The Value in Nature," 149.

chance, that is goal-directed, intentional growth, proving at least the plausibility of a telos for ecosystems and the biosphere as whole. If ecosystems and the biosphere that they make up are inherently valuable, then they are worth time and effort to restore and protect moving forward.

If one can agree that humans are inherently valuable because of the life force that they contain, then it is most certainly possible to reach the conclusion that the natural world (a.k.a. the biosphere) is inherently valuable. This conclusion comes with a variety of far-reaching implications that further an argument for the restoration of nature. As Holmes Rolston III puts it, "Nothing matters to Earth, perhaps, but everything matters on Earth, for Earth."[70] The question then remains: if nature is inherently valuable and therefore "worth saving," is restoration possible and/or ethical?

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**Chapter 4: Restoration**

Ecological restoration is a polarizing topic in the field of environmental ethics. The subject digs deep into how humans value nature as well as how we see ourselves in the greater picture of the world. Until recently, the last century or so, the idea of environmental restoration had been overlooked, in part because of a lack of knowledge regarding the environmental degradation occurring and in part because of the unclear distinctions between "human" and "natural" and the definition of "restoration" itself. In this chapter, I aim to flesh out the possibility of and the ethics behind restoration, through an explication of the various definitions of restoration and their criticisms, the important role that history plays in the concept, as well as finding a clearer explanation as to why restoration has not been made a priority in environmental philosophy or general practice sooner. These topics all lead to the various connections between

[70] Rolston, "The Value in Nature," 151.

nature's value and the human/nature dichotomy as it plays a role in our current misconceptions regarding restoration.

To begin, we shall explore the various misconceptions regarding the topic of environmental restoration and their philosophical implications. Many believe that the aim of restoration is to get a damaged outdoor area "back to its natural state," whatever that may be. This seems benign enough, as most humans can agree that our society has left a large impact on the earth, for better or for worse, so restoration exists around the concept of returning nature to its past state of being, pre-human, ideally. The initial problems arise when defining what exactly that natural state we are getting back to looks like. Sally Eden et. al. claims, "Ideally, restoration seeks a return to the original (pre-disturbance) conditions and functioning of the natural ecosystem. The 'acid test' of a restoration scheme is whether the reconstituted environment would self-perpetuate without further intervention."[71] However, what exactly does this pre-disturbance state look like? Perhaps restoration seeks to bring nature back to what it looked like prior to the existence of human beings on the planet, or perhaps just to conditions prior to industrialization. No matter which conditions are decided upon as the true original state of nature, it quickly becomes difficult to determine which point in time we wish to return to, and why that one, as opposed to any other.

Similar to Sally Eden et. al., C. Mark Cowell explains, "Ecological restoration, ideally, involves 'returning a site to some previous state', with the species richness and diversity and physical, biological and aesthetic characteristics of that site before human settlement and the accompanying disturbances."[72] Once again, I ask, which "previous state" are we talking about here? This concept paints humans as the alienated opposite of all things natural, which we know

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[71] Sally Eden, Sylvia M. Tunstall, and Susan M. Tapsell, "Environmental Restoration: Environmental Management or Environmental Threat?" *Area* 31, no. 2 (1999), 158.

[72] Cowell, "Ecological Restoration," 19.

from previous discussion, is a problematic point of view. Not every single change that humans have made advertently or inadvertently to nature is automatically bad and/or needing to be reverted. This concept also assumes that nature, prior to humans, was a static entity, staying exactly the same until humans arrived and messed with the system.[73] Modern science indicates that with or without human beings, the environment shifts and changes over time: that is the basis of the theory of evolution. Nature is a dynamic entity, with, as explicated in previous chapters, its own life force and telos, which has allowed it to morph over time into the complex aggregate of life it is today. These idealized goals of restoration make it impossible to obtain and maintain the restoration results that we want. With that being said, if we tweak our definition of restoration, then the concept itself fits more neatly into our new-found understanding of humans in nature.

Instead of restoration's goal being returning nature to its pre-human state, we may instead set some ideals, such as a state of nature prior to industrial revolution or the rampant start to climate change, with the idea in mind that this is not a static previous state, rather a set of ideals we are working towards. Similar to C. Mark Cowell's definition, restoration can look like: setting some biodiversity and aesthetic goals and making steps towards them without ever truly being done in our process of restoring.[74] This looser definition ensures a greater chance of success for the restorers and less conflict as to what natural state we are working towards. This stems for our newfound definition of the human/environment relationship.[75] As William R. Jordon III explains, it is more beneficial to think of restoration as our gift back to nature as a fellow community members, he claims, "community depends on exchange—purely economic exchange of goods and services that characterize any ecological community."[76] We, as a species

[73] Cowell, "Ecological Restoration," 29-30.
[74] Cowell, 19.
[75] Cowell, 20.
[76] Jordon, "Restoration, Community," 25.

take a lot from nature, and restoration is simply our way of giving something back. However, the conversation of which state we are "getting back to" doesn't stop here.

In some cases, the biodiversity and species richness standards that we are working towards in our restoration process are not found in the previous states of the area of interest. In a paper written by various conservation biologists on the basics of restoration, they explained that in some restoration projects, the decided-upon conditions are actually completely different than what previously existed in the area due to greater knowledge regarding what species will stand up to the intensification of climate change.[77] There are multiple reasons why a restoration could differ from previous conditions. An example of this is explicated by Sally Eden, et. al., who compare two different modern day restoration examples in the United Kingdom and their various philosophical implications.

One of the projects highlighted is the restoration of St. Catherine's Hill, in Hampshire, UK.[78] At the time of the project, the area had been covered by a major highway for the better part of the twentieth century, but the addition of a new and better road had left this one obsolete. Prior to the construction of the old road, the area had been wooded, however the proposed restoration plans involved making the site into a chalk grassland, which would better suit the aesthetics of the region, its use as a recreation area for the people of the nearby town and its longevity as a successful ecosystem.[79] The restoration project ended up happening successfully,[80] but one must wonder, was this project ethical, and was it even restoration?[81] This example, along with any other project that "restores" an area to an environment different than what it once was,

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[77]K.J. Vaughn, et. al., "Restoration Ecology," *Nature Education Knowledge*, 3(10): 66 https://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/restoration-ecology-13339059.

[78] Eden, et. al., "Environmental Restoration," 155.

[79] Eden, et. al., 156.

[80] Such success is determined by whether the area needed further management after the project was completed.

[81] Eden, et. al., 156.

for whatever reasoning, toes the line of ethical manipulation, however, I would still consider this restoration. In her paper, Sally Eden claims,

> We [restorationists] would argue that the political and ethical legitimacy of each restoration is less to do with its success in re-establishing a natural state (because such a state is neither identifiable nor practically achievable in such urban and peri-urban environments), and much more to do with the particular circumstances of environmental management and policy on each case.[82]

If we define restoration, as Jordan, Cowell and Eden have done, as getting an area back to an agreed upon state of biodiversity, species richness and aesthetic standards, decided upon with the concern of longevity of the project (preventing the need for further tampering) as our gift back to nature, then even tweaking the environment to something new can still be considered restoring it.[83] Mark Cowell further defines and defends restoration by claiming that restoration is:

> a form of agriculture that borrows its objectives directly from nature, it seems to me that restoration combines the preservationist and utilitarian traditions onto an idea that is bigger, more comprehensive, and sounder that either of the traditions by itself. Restoration is utilitarian in means but preservationist in intention. It borrows its techniques from agriculture, but its inspiration and objectives directly from the ideal of wilderness preservation. It implies manipulation, but always with respect.[84]

With this definition and defense of the concept, arises the next criticism: that restoration is nothing more than further domestication/agricultural practice.

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[82] Eden, et. al., "Environmental Restoration," 158.
[83]This is an amalgamation of various definitions from Eden, Jordon and Cowell.
[84] Cowell, "Ecological Restoration," 21.

While we have previously accepted that humans are a part of the natural community, we have still maintained the idea that some of what humans do and produce can be seen on the lower end of the natural scale. Manipulating nature, whether it be for its own good, could easily be identified as domestication. However, William R. Jordon III sees our meddling as the "deliberate opposite of domestication—it is a letting go, or at least an attempt to let it go."[85] As is true with many other aspects of life, sometimes it requires additional upfront effort or manipulation to ensure long-term success of the independence of something. Take for example, raising a child as analogous for restoring nature. The goal of raising a child is creating an independent, healthy, and fully functioning member of society, but this is not accomplished without quite a bit of front-end work and meddling (despite what your mother may say). If we continue to see ourselves as community members along with nature, then this meddling could be seen as inherent as parenthood. Further, if we truly are members of nature, then changes that we make will be, for the most part, natural.

The above mentioned "domestication" argument against restoration has further implications, regarding the value of nature. Robert Elliot and Eric Katz are two of the most outspoken philosophical writers against the concept of restoration.[86] Both regard restoration as "faking nature," with Elliot himself having a book of essays and an essay itself entailed "Faking Nature," in which he lays out a two-fold argument against restoration. First, Elliot believes that meddling with nature and replacing it with essentially "new nature," diminishes the inherent value found in the area.[87] He explains his reasoning with the following example; replacing the "original" natural features with new, human-derived ones is like selling a recreated painting as

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[85] Jordon, "Restoration, Community," 29.
[86] Eden, et. al., "Environmental Restoration," 152.
[87] Elliot, "Faking Nature," 382.

the original. The "sin que non" of the original artwork is that it is, in fact, original.[88] Elliot claims the same for nature, stating "restoration policies do not always fully restore value because part of the reason that we value bits of the environment is because they are natural [untouched by man] to a high degree."[89] While I agree that there is a certain irreplaceable value that is lost when an environment is degraded to the point at which it needs restoration, I do not see this as an argument against restoration all together. First, as discussed previously in this chapter, restoration is not about getting back to the "original" state because that state is undefinable for multiple reasons.[90] Second, this criticism assumes that any human elements are the opposite of natural, which is not always the case in the fluid continuum of "naturalness." And finally, if an area is at the point in which it is needing restoration, then most of the genuine value that Elliot is referring to is long gone, and restoration allows us to save what is left instead of letting it continue to degrade.[91] This is what I refer to as the "why not?" or "lesser of two evils" argument, which is less of a "therapeutically nihilistic" in the words of Cowell, but instead accepts the current state of the earth as it is, and chooses to move forward doing what we, as a human race can do, instead of watching our actions degrade the planet to a point of no return.[92]

The second part of the two-fold argument outlined by Elliot against restoration is one made by nearly every author I have read on the subject so far. Many believe that restoration can be used as an excuse to destroy an environment, with the promise of restoring it to its past conditions after, with no loss of value.[93] For example, a mining company could propose a large

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[88] Elliot, "Faking Nature," 383.

[89] Elliot, 383.

[90] We cannot pinpoint the exact time and conditions we wish to go back to and it assumes that nature is static, which we know is not the case.

[91] Cowell, "Ecological Restoration," 25. The idea that the earth is too far gone to fix so we might as well just do nothing.

[92] Cowell, 22.

[93] Elliot, 382. This a concept found in multiple texts I have read; however, it is most notably attributed to Robert Elliot.

project that would essentially blow up an entire area,[94] with a written contract claiming that once the mining is complete, they will restore the area to its past conditions, with no harm done. Assuming the mining company, or the human-race, for that matter, is technologically advanced enough to restore the area to its full glory down to every ladybug and blade of grass, there is no denying that some value would be lost in this situation. The value that is lost here stems from the "origin and genesis"[95] of the area, and restoration cannot replace that.[96] To combat this, perhaps with this hypothetical mining situation in mind we might further edit our definition of restoration, to exclude any future destructive activity, and have restoration only focus on areas that are, as of today, in need of repair. Second, it can be said that for just about every good thing in life, there will always be a "ruiner" who cheats the system. I would argue that this has not stopped us from continuing to do good things even though we know that the rules will not always be followed. If we agree to condemn the "restoration thesis" proposed by Elliot (as an argument against restoration) that claims that all value of an area can be maintained even if it is destroyed and then put back together, [97] then we will not allow the few cheaters to ruin an otherwise valid concept. With each of the above criticisms, the significance of nature's origin was emphasized, which is a topic I would like to explore further.

For Elliot, the value held by a natural area is determined by its degree of naturalness, which is discovered by exploring the origin of the area in question. Simon James claims, "For Elliot, then, uncovering the history [and therefore, value] of an environment is a matter of revealing the sequence of causes which lead to its present state."[98] James continues to explain, for Elliot, once the causes have been identified, they must be sorted into either "human" or

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[94] There are many real-world examples of this, such as mountain top removal.
[95] Elliot, "Faking Nature," 384.
[96] Elliot, 382.
[97] Elliot, 383.
[98] James, *Environmental Philosophy*, 130.

"natural" categories and then the value calculated from there, depending on how many human-causes have occurred in the area. This concept is problematic on multiple levels, starting first with an example laid out by James as a counterargument. Take, for instance, a piece of wooded land that a woman values beyond instrumentally, in a way that if it was destroyed and then replaced fully, or put in another location, would not hold the same kind of value. She values this piece of woods because it is where her parents got engaged, where her now-husband and her had their first date, and where their children play now.[99] All of the events listed here are human causes, yet they add to the value of this location, despite their origin in this manner. History, here, is still a main factor in the value that an area holds, but not history in a sense of a series of causes, categorized into human or not, but rather, events that effect the life of those who partake in the history. The argument pokes holes in Elliot's system of value nicely, though this definition of inherent value does not align with the concept that I have previous outlined in Chapter Two. The value that the wooded area holds for the women is anthropogenic and anthropocentric, dissimilar to the value without the need for humans discussed earlier, though this example is still useful.

Second, it is impossible to sort every single cause within an environment's history into either the "human" or "natural" category because 1) humanness and naturalness exist on a continuum and 2) how does one decide where human ends and natural begins, as this line is too far blurred to differentiate. Elliot's argument against restoration, as well as most other criticisms that I have explored are based in the inaccurate human/nature dualism that plagues our society.[100] History can still be a main factor in the story of restoration, just in a more fluid format. What has

[99] James, *Environmental Philosophy,* 130-31.
[100] Jordon, "Restoration, Community," 24.

happened to an area in its past is the main source of information used to determine the best way to restore it, but the value of an area cannot be based primarily on its history.

The concept of restoration has been around since biblical times, though it has never truly received the attention that it deserves in philosophy, or real-world practice.[101] William R. Jordon III explains "…the various schools of environmental thought have to a considerable extent been united in their neglect of restoration, their skepticism about its value, and their wariness of its political implications."[102] There are a number of factors that have led to this oversight. For one, environmental elitism has successful pushed out a large portion of the population, with popular cultural norms making nature a place only able to be enjoyed by those who can afford it and are educated/skilled enough to participate in the few typical "nature" activities.[103] Those who don't enjoy fishing or hiking are systematically told that the little bits of nature that they enjoy: the tree outside their city apartment or the plants they are growing on their balcony, aren't "natural enough," by the "nature" standards set up by society. Only remote, preserved areas, such as national parks are truly "natural," even though we have already established that defining them as this may not be so simple.

This elitism is centered around preservation, as opposed to restoration of natural areas and has not promoted care for the environment in a positive and inclusive light. Jordon believes that this can be solved by emphasizing restoration instead of preservation, claiming, "…with restoration rather than preservation, as a model, millions of people will spend more time creating intimate wild places in their own neighborhoods and less time visiting—and consuming—nature in remote wilderness areas."[104] Restoration encourages every human to believe that things that are currently more human than natural aren't completely devoid of the natural value, and we as a

[101] Jordon, "Restoration, Community," 24.
[102] Jordon, 24.
[103] Jordon, 31.
[104] Jordon, 33.

society, have the chance to restore these areas instead of only enjoying the "real" nature that exists in remote areas of the world. By stopping the notion that paying to drive to a national park is the only way to experience nature, humans will become active participants in the natural world, working towards "re-wilding" their own little corner of the earth.[105] This optimistic view will promote the average person's environmentalism and effectively eliminates the systematic elitism that exists in our current society.

In addition, restoration has been overlooked because (as stated above), restoration violates the human/nature dichotomy that humanity has lived by for all of history.[106] Restoration will continue to fall flat if we do not change our views on the world around us. Jordon further explicates this problem by explaining the two contradictory views that environmentalists use when discussing where humans fall within the natural community. One side of environmentalism claims that everything is connected, and that we are all one big community with nature included. While the other side believes that the difference between nature and humans is an argument for why nature is intrinsic valuable and worth saving.[107] Both are aiming towards a common goal of environmentalism, but going at it opposite directions, which has led to little progress in the field. Robert Elliot claims that we value nature *because* it is outside of our "domain," as the human race is outside the natural realm.[108] Conversely, allowing humans to be included in the natural community is less problematic and more along the lines of a restoration-ist ideals. Mark Cowell says "The restoration-ist perspective is a rejection of the modern estrangement of humans from nature."[109] This rejection allows room for humans to make up for the things that we have taken from the environment and begin to give back to the community. It is from this shift in viewpoint,

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[105] Jordon, "Restoration, Community," 32-33.
[106] Jordon, 24.
[107] Jordon, 25-26.
[108] Elliot, "Faking Nature," 383.
[109] Cowell, "Ecological Restoration," 27.

which has been the common threat throughout this piece, that I am confident in claiming that restoration is both possible and ethical.

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**Chapter 5: A Common Thread**

In the words of Mark Cowell, "To save the earth is to let it be earth in its inherent self-withholding, rather than demanding only its availability as a storehouse of energy."[110] This is accomplished through the shift in our viewpoint, from the alienated "other," to community members of the natural world. If humans allow themselves to partake in the exchange of goods and services that exist within every functioning community,[111] through mutual respect, valuation and restoration, then we can see the changes we want to happen and slow the effects of climate change.

This shift in viewpoint does not happen without a great deal of thought and consideration; to begin, how can we aim to "save" the environment if we are not even sure where "human" ends and "nature" begins. It is for this reason that I spent time determining the least problematic conception of nature and wilderness. As seen through William Cronon's article "The Riddle of the Apostle Islands," the human/nature dichotomy is blaringly apparent in the context of wilderness distinction and preservation of the Apostle Islands. William Cronon's fears are realized when those working in the name of restoration aim to demolish any and all human artifacts from the area.[112] While these ideas may be carried out with noble intentions, the wiping out of all human history to "re-wild" it is inadvertently a commentary on the way in which humans see our own presence in the world.[113] We believe that the natural world is in equilibrium, until outsiders come to disrupt and dismantle the system, though eventually, nature will return to

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[110] Cowell, "Ecological Restoration," 29.
[111] Jordon, "Restoration, Community," 25.
[112] Cronon, "The Riddle," 38.
[113] Cronon, 39.

its once full state, once humans have left. The term "wilderness" itself is bogged down by rhetorical connotations that make it too harsh of a distinction to use moving forward.

Wilderness is primarily defined as "anti-human," with the Wilderness Act of 1964 defining it as "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."[114] This harsh dichotomization does not allow room for humans to partake in the natural community and offer anything of value to the environment. However, the term "nature" allows for a more fluid and therefore accurate relationship between humans and their environment.

"Nature" does have various criticisms, such as the "everything is human" and the "everything is natural" arguments, though it still ends up being the least problematic concept.[115] The "everything is natural" criticism revolves around the idea that if *everything* was truly natural, then humans would be denying the existence of our blatant higher ability, our "supernatural" powers that exist because of our higher brain function. Also, if everything is natural, then the human race would have no "buy-in," or no reason to help better the environment. It is the combination of humans seeing themselves as part of the natural community but still recognizing their greater moral responsibility because of higher intelligence that will allow us to improve environmental conditions.[116] Conversely, the "everything is human" argument revolves around the idea that nature is simply a social construct, and there is no way for nature to truly exist because we can only experience it through our own eyes.[117] This argument can quickly turn into a slippery slope "nothing is real" concept because there are many

[114] "The Wilderness Act," 121.
[115] James, *Environmental Philosophy*, 113.
[116] James, 114.
[117] James, 114.

entities that humans identify and categorize that can clearly only ever be experienced through our own eyes, this does not mean that no distinctions that we make can be true, just because we are confined by our experience of them.[118] With two of the largest criticisms debunked, the term "nature" is the one that I chose to settle on for the furthering of my argument for value and restoration.

Once the definition of nature was clear, my next goal was to pinpoint the intrinsic/inherent value that exists within the natural world, as an argument for its moral consideration. To begin, I walked through the various problems that arise when using the term "intrinsic," which implies value that exists within an object, with no reference to its usefulness and with no need for a valuer. This concept was problematic because, it is fair to say that something can have value in and of itself without reference to its usefulness, for example: the value attributed to a blood relative or an original work of art. It is, however, more difficult to define the value of an object without someone/something there to acknowledge the value. It is from this that we discussed the "Light-in-the-Refrigerator" concept,[119] which explained that value can exist within the object itself, with no reference to its usefulness to others, but this value does require a "valuer" to shine a light on it.[120] This concept is then referred to as "inherent value," which still accomplishes that which I am trying to portray when discussing the value in nature.

After explicating the kind of value that can exist in nature, I then spent time exploring and confirming that this value does, in fact, exist. As a method of proving this value, I followed the step-wise biological level argument originally laid out by Holmes Rolston III. To begin, Rolston explained the existence of value within each individual due to its unique life-force and

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[118] James, *Environmental Philosophy*, 115.
[119] James, 73. This is an idea attributed to Holmes Rolston, quoted in James' work.
[120] James, 73.

telos (goals).[121] From this, we can also confirm that there is value in species, having proven the existence of a telos in species. This is explained by natural selection which happens in its purest form at the species level, to perpetuate the survival of said species.[122] For example, there are many times where natural selection is "unkind" to the individual, whether that be a shortage of food or a natural disaster causing only the strongest individuals to survive.[123] It is through this process that the species continues to prosper at the expense of the individual. Further, from our reasoning regarding the value in species, we can claim that ecosystems and the biosphere (which are all aggregates of living things), have their own telos and are therefore inherently valuable.[124] To prove this, we must again look towards evolution as the major process perpetuating life on Earth. As Rolston explains "Evolutionary ecosystems over geological time have increased the number of species on Earth from zero to five million or more."[125] This did not happen by chance, rather by the goal-directedness of ecosystems and the biosphere that result in moral consideration and inherent value. It is hard to claim, then, that Earth has evolved as it has just by chance, or due to "behavioral byproducts," as Harley Cahen suggests.[126] As I explicated before, phenomena in nature are only thought of as "random" through ignorance. Further scientific understanding always results in a reasoning for occurrences and this is enough to prove the goal-directedness of the biosphere as whole, which results in inherent value.

Finally, after reaching the conclusion that nature is inherently valuable, and therefore "worth" saving, we are left with the question of restoration. To prove the viability and ethics behind restoration, I spent time debunking multiple criticisms of the concept. One of the largest

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[121] Rolston, "The Value in Nature," 145.
[122] Rolston, 146.
[123] Rolston, 146.
[124] Rolston, 148.
[125] Rolston, 149.
[126] Cahen, "Against the Moral Considerability," 117.

issues with the concept of restoration is what exactly we mean when we define it as "getting back to a previous natural state."[127] To begin, which natural state are we referring to here? This could mean pre-human conditions, which would be extremely difficult to define, or perhaps just pre-industrialization, which is still hard to pinpoint. "Getting back" to a prior state assumes that nature is static, and that an exact previous state can be identified, which is not the case.[128] Nature is dynamic and the standards of restoration should be defined by a variety of ideals such as levels of biodiversity or aesthetic qualities. Further, it is even acceptable to set restoration standards that do not match up with the previous states of the area at all.[129] With the true goal of restoration being the improvement of a natural landscape to certain biodiversity/aesthetic standards so that it can sustain on its own, without future meddling, then those standards might not look like what the area has been in the past.[130] Restoration allows humans to work dynamically with nature and ensure longevity in the face of a changing climate.

Other criticisms of restoration include the idea that it is "faking nature" or further domesticating natural areas. Robert Elliot is one of the most well-known opponents of restoration, citing the "restoration thesis" as reason enough to not allow restoration. His "restoration thesis" is the idea that it is possible to wipe out an entire natural area, and as long as you rebuild it to its original form, no value is lost.[131] He cites the example of a mining company who agrees to "restore" an area after they strip away all of the products that they wish to mine.[132] Clearly, some value is lost here, the value that comes from the "origin and genesis" of an object, that makes its irreplaceable.[133] In my opinion, it is fair to say that some value is lost when a

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[127] Eden, et. al., "Environmental Restoration," 158.
[128] Cowell, "Ecological Restoration," 29-30.
[129] Vaughn, et. al., "Restoration Ecology."
[130] Cowell, 19.
[131] Elliot, "Faking Nature," 383.
[132] Elliot, 382.
[133] Elliot, 384.

natural area is destroyed, even if it is restored. However, restoration does not aim to restore irreplaceable value, it aims to preserve the value that is left and create new kinds of value. Further, if we continue to shift our viewpoint to see humans as part of the natural community (with additional moral duties as the most advanced species) then restoring nature is just the next chapter in the history of said area. We should use restoration as a tool to preserve the little bits of "origin" value that still exist in degraded areas, because if left to their own devices, eventually all value will be lost through the effects of a rapidly changing climate. It is from the various arguments stated above that I am confident in my conclusion that restoration is both possible and ethical. The concept itself promotes the shifting viewpoint that we wish to see in our world.

As the effects of climate change and environmental degradation continue to intensify, the value that exists within nature and the methods we can use to help it become more pressing issues. There are a number of different reasons why progress has been slow in the fight for helping the environment. These reasons include: unclear definitions of nature vs. wilderness, muddy explanations for what value the natural holds in and of itself, and ethical questions linked to restoration as a method for fixing the environment. Throughout this paper, I have walked through each of these issues and highlighted the common thread that connects them all together: the misguided concept of the human/nature relationship in modern society. It is vital to the future of our planet for humankind to take moral responsibility for the environment and see ourselves as community members of perhaps the luckiest planet in the galaxy.

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