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A Search for Community

By

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Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and English, The College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio, 2018

Thesis

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A Search for Community

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I attempt to understand what is meant by community by grounding the analysis in Raymond Williams' historical definition. From this, I work the criteria of community as described by Williams so to determine their precise meaning and primacy. I attempt to show why community must be small in size while arguing that humans are in a community with nonhumans. Building upon this move, I take up an argument for the role of place in community formation. This preceding inquiry is meant to prime an analysis of both virtue ethics and literature, specifically an application of Martha Nussbaum's Central Capabilities to Terry Tempest Williams' *Refuge* and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. In this, I make the case that human flourishing is possible when one is in an ecosystemic community with nonhumans present. This is to say that nonhumans impact other imperative goods in a serious way. Following from this, I provide a moral constructivist account of intrinsic value.

And suddenly,
the Earth grew tall,
a smokey sky below me.

I fought that rise,
those westward rivers,
and out of luck,

I lost.

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Acknowledgements

It is necessary to begin with a land acknowledgment, that this thesis was researched, written, and defended on the traditional lands of the Bitterroot Salish.

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Forward

*“The world is a beautiful place / to be born into / if you don’t mind happiness /
not always being / so very much fun / if you don’t mind a touch of hell /
now and then / just when everything is fine / because even in heaven /
they don’t sing / all the time”*

-Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “Pictures of the Gone World, 11”

In the summer of 2018, I packed up my car and started West. It was on I-90 going 80 when I first crossed into Montana.

After staying a night in Billings, I set out for my final destination, Missoula, home of the university that’s the home of the “Griz.” I remember those rolling hills, their oatmeal color, the golden streaks of sun that snuck between the cattle. My bike rack rattled. The sky was periwinkle. And it would be here, in Montana, that I would call home for a while.

A bit before Livingston and Bozeman, I recall a moment unfolding far before my windshield which was, to this point, splattered like Pollock with insects. In the distance was the infinity of sky, a blue which you can chase but never catch. Like an ocean, the land ended into the horizon. But as I drew closer, this was undone. The sky darkened into angles, pushing the colorful atmosphere upward; heaven rose, mountains appeared.

The American West has long been a myth in the American Easterner’s mind. The Pacific, the desert, and the mountains are divinity to those folks, the daydreams beneath deciduous trees. And this divinity is not the doing of a transcendent God or a Jewish carpenter who claimed to be one. Instead, it has been the work of the American writer, figures like Edward Abbey and John Muir who have so elegantly coaxed millions into those spaces “where the handclasp’s a little stronger / [...] [and] smile dwells a little longer” (Chapman 1). It has been the individualism, the opportunity,

and landscape which have drawn folks, especially young white men, to travel to this patch of Earth. I am one, for better or for worse. And so, I found myself in Montana. The canon beckoned me well.

Yet the time I have spent here has been odd. What these writers wrote about I have yet to see. The dazzling landscape, those stars that they slept beneath, have yet to move me. In truth, I can count the enchanted moments of this landscape on one hand, most of them from the passenger seat of a car. I expected to continue my love of hiking and birdwatching, though I hardly leave Missoula. I am more excited by a brown squirrel than I am with an elk. I'd rather walk around the block than up into a canyon. My boots are collecting dust in my bedroom.

So, what is most peculiar, I think, is that I have fallen out of love with the environment—at least it seems. Bird watching and hiking, those activities which shaped my time in the East, are ones I no longer enjoy. But I dreamed of this, being here, in the West, for so many years, yearning to make a life here. To be sure, I am grateful, but I feel a frustrating loss. And this is a philosopher's conundrum, broadly, why does one hate what they have once they have it? Why do dreams sour once they become real? The solution to this has yet to appear in my required reading.

But I have been gathering clues the entire time; each trek into the woods getting me further towards the answer. Because when I am immersed in the spaces outside of Missoula, I am filled with dread. While I admit that this might be my Catholicism flaring up—that enchanted affliction which never leaves—I have the hunch that it is the landscape, Montana itself, which troubles me so. It is the feeling of its soil on my boots. It is the smell of its rivers. And it is, most of all, the sound of its wind, that whistle through pine needles, which frightens me most.

What this thesis is born from is indeed this hunch. For a hunch has always been the commencer for philosophy; it is all the philosopher needs to begin. For it was Thales who once had

a hunch that the main “stuff” of the cosmos was water, and how beautifully this discipline has unfolded from there.

As for my hunch, I revise it. This is not my landscape, not in the sense of property, but in the sense of making me, *me*. Instead, my landscape is a river valley; south of Lake Erie, it is the one I stretch my arms for over these hills but cannot reach. It is the sycamores, the sandstone, the sassafras. It is those kingbirds perched atop powerlines. It is snapping turtles climbing over railroads. It is wingstem and ironweed blooming together. So, too, is it the humans who live in between. This is to say that it might be a *community* that I have lacked here, a web of beings of which I am a part.

I do not embark on this thesis primarily for immortality in the libraries of world, but to look at myself more deeply. Because philosophy, most broadly, is not the act of being a genius. It is taking the time to think about one’s actions and, above all, having the courage to admit when one is wrong. So, this, after two years of trouble, is what I leave the world, if it is anything at all. It is born out of a hunch, that I have lost my community.

My argument, to prepare the reader, is to investigate what community is. I am grounding this in Raymond Williams’ definition of the term found in his influential book, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. From that foundation, I will unpack what community means in a philosophical sense—the logical order and implications of its components—and use this framework to suggest that humans and the more-than-human world qualify as a community.

From there, I shall suggest reasons for protecting this newly conceived community. I argue for its essential role in human flourishing. I will be using Martha Nussbaum’s Central Capabilities as a guide and show that these areas necessary for the good life are enhanced by the more-than-human. This will be applied to two books, Terry Tempest Williams’ *Refuge* and Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, which, I think, show quite well the impact nonhumans have on an excellent human life.

1. Ecosystemic Community

*“the problem has always been, for most people,
how to go on living where they are.”*

-Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*

My initial question seeks to answer what community is. I will explore the implications of the definition and argue that nonhumans and humans comprise an ecosystemic community. I shall also show how community is something small in scale such that it is tied to place. This section will be a primer for the more substantial normative account I provide in section two.

To begin, I turn to literary critic Raymond Williams’ *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* which serves as the foundation for my account. Before beginning, I want to explain why I am using Williams. It is important to resist dismissing *Keywords* as a mere dictionary. Truthfully, Williams’ methodology is more complex than this. He is skeptical of dictionaries, suggesting that they “are produced and, with a show of authority no less confident because it is usually so limited in place and time, what is called a proper meaning is attached” (Williams 16-17). What’s more, he chides sources like the Oxford Dictionary whose “communicat[ion] is not so impersonal, so purely scholarly, or so free of active social and political values as might be supposed” (Williams 18). Instead, understanding language must recognize that it exists both within and is shaped by society and culture. While Williams nonetheless exhibits some traditional dictionary features—even noting that his own values leak into the book—it is his rigorous sensitivity to history which makes him useful. For Williams, inquiry into language necessitates a look at “social and historical processes occur[ing] *within* language, in ways which indicate how integral the problems of meanings and of relationships really are” (Williams 22).

He goes on to explain that this is:

historical semantics: a tendency that can be more precisely defined when it is added that the emphasis is not only on historical origins and developments but also on the present—present meanings, implications and relationships—as history. This recognizes, as any study of language must, that there is indeed community between past and present, but also that *community*—that difficult word—is not the only possible description of these relations between past and present (Williams 23).

This calls for the inclusion of dated definitions so to provide a more robust account of a word.

Through history, one is given a sense of how meaning has arisen from the past. Williams' account also recognizes that present definitions will come to affect history, society, and culture in their own ways, just like their archaic predecessors. To this, he correctly identifies language as protean and alive. So then, I take Williams' bearing on my purposes to be that he offers a biography of the word *community* which can assist in making sense of it as a living concept. This is the job of philosophy, to pick apart something and see “what is going on.”

Moving from this, what does Williams say about the term *community*? For starters, “[c]ommunity has been in the language since C14,” and has meant and continues to mean:

(i) the commons or common people, as distinguished from those of rank (C14-C17); (ii) a state or organized society, in its later uses relatively small (C14-); (iii) the people of a district (C18-); (iv) the quality of holding something in common, as in community of interests, community of goods (C16-); (v) a sense of common identity and characteristics (C16-) (Williams 75).

Clearly, the word can be tricky because it can convey five different things when uttered, though with one being archaic. Even so, Williams attempts to alleviate this plurality by distilling the word's historical meanings into something more manageable. He explains that:

[t]he complexity of community thus relates to the difficult interaction between the tendencies originally distinguished in the historical development: on the one hand the sense of direct common concern; on the other hand the materialization of various forms of common organization (Williams 76).

Under this, *community* embodies two key features: common concern and common organization.

Although offering much, Williams' usefulness tapers off insofar as his distillation does little to

outline what is meant by “common concern” and “common organization.” It is here that philosophy can explain these vague ideas: common concern and common organization.

First, common concern is the easier of these two. To have a concern for something involves having a preferred desire, interest, or goal which one works towards. Additionally, these *teloi* are informed by something negative. For example, I may have health concerns because my blood pressure is too high. Similarly, I may be concerned for the success of the Cleveland Cavaliers basketball team because their star player, LeBron James, has left for another team. In these cases, concern is utilitarian at its root; it is a preference for something positive because of the threat of something negative. In the examples, I prefer health or a successful team over illness or a losing team because the latter scenarios are unpleasant.

Common organization is a bit trickier. Organization entails the association of individuals with a larger whole. For example, individual doctors, nurses, and technicians are grouped in hospitals. Similarly, individual coaches, players, and trainers are grouped in teams. Certainly, these groupings of hospitals and teams can be further conglomerated. This might be regional hospital systems or basketball leagues like the NBA. But Williams’ historical work imposes a scaler constraint. He notes that “[f]rom C19 the sense of immediacy or locality was strongly developed in the context of larger and more complex industrial societies. Community was the word normally chosen for experiments in an alternative kind of group-living” (Williams 75). So, while common organization is a grouping of people or objects, *community*’s historical development came to dictate that this grouping be small. Applying Williams to human life, my city, metropolitan area, or region (e.g. the Great Lakes, the Four Corners, the Bible Belt) seem to fit with this demand. However, under the scaler constraint, it seems harder to make the case that larger considerations like my planet, continent, or country, are commonly organized. Despite this, it does not follow that I cannot

or do not have moral or ethical obligations to these large scales. If ethics indeed discovers universal truths about how one ought to be in the world, then these would apply regardless of distant organizations. Instead, the matter is a descriptive claim about whether agents are in or out of the same community based on certain geographies.

It is worth asking, why must organization be smaller in scale? The answer is an inverse relationship between knowability and size: the larger the community, the less knowable it is. To this epistemic point, Benedict Anderson suggests that larger organizations are nothing but “imagined communities.” Anderson understands this through the context of nationalism, suggesting that such an organization “is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 6). Unified by common languages (e.g. Spanish, English, German, etc.), Anderson explains that print capital, “the novel and the newspaper [...] provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation” (Anderson 25). So, print capital awarded readers a false omniscience. Despite being situated in a particular place, readers were able to “know,” albeit falsely, the happenings and lives of others through consumed media despite this bond being attenuated and impersonal. Thus, larger communities are nothing but fictions of the mind.

As an example, I am from the state of Ohio, and I might be swayed to think of Alaskans as part of my community because we fall within the same nation. It is undeniable that we have things in common: legal protections, taxation, consumable media, etc. which are claimed by citizenship. But I only imagine Alaska as part of my community because I have encountered it through media like Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* and Alaskan Cruise montages on Wheel of Fortune. Upon critical reflection, I realize that I know very few people from Alaska, nor have I been there. My thought is intellectual

fog, a dream of “a deep, horizontal comradeship” which suggests that I scale back the extent of my associations to a more manageable range (Anderson 7). Thus, a more modest association with Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin seems safer.

Now, I contend that one reason for a smaller geography of organization—the size/range—is that larger organizations will show a plurality of disparate concerns. Certainly, organizations must occur in a place, those locations we immediately find ourselves in. But what is interesting about place is that it serves as the *primary influencer or wellspring for concerns*. For one, the nonhuman features of place often generate idiosyncratic concerns. Living by the ocean in a place like Alaska would cause concern with rising sea levels or the safety of seafood, whereas living in Arizona would spark concern for water availability. Secondly, place also contains people by whom my concerns are shaped. It could be concern for my neighbors because they live within my vicinity, or place might limit my interaction with others due to, say, physical or economic barriers such that common concern cannot be determined or expressed among parties.

From this, within *community*, I hold that concerns must be taken as secondary to organization because they are motivated or flow from the place in which one is organized. In other words, concerns are not determined by atomized individuals; the self is not the radical decider of its destiny as a thoroughgoing existentialist might argue. Instead, the self's concerns cannot be divorced from a larger influence of *humans* and, as I shall show later, *nonhumans*. This is an important point which I want to explain further, beginning with human communities.

The implications of Williams' definition have a rather communitarian flavor. For example, organization as a source of one's concerns echoes philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre's qualms with modern moral discourse. For MacIntyre, humans are not “democratized sel[ves] which [have] no necessary social content and no necessary social identity” (MacIntyre 32). This improperly

conceptualizes the self as “utterly distinct on the one hand from its social embodiments and lacking on the other any rational history of its own,” and this tension gives human life “a certain abstract and ghostly character” (MacIntyre 33). Instead, looking at pre-modernity, MacIntyre contends:

it is through his or her membership in a variety of social groups that the individual identifies himself or herself and is identified by others. I am brother, cousin and grandson, member of this household, that village, this tribe. These are not characteristics that belong to human beings accidentally, to be stripped away in order to discover ‘the real me’. They are part of my substance, defining partially at least and sometimes wholly my obligations and my duties. Individuals inherit a particular space within an interlocking set of social relationships; lacking that space, they are nobody, or at best a stranger or an outcast. To know oneself as such a social person is however not to occupy a static and fixed position. It is to find oneself placed at a certain point on a journey with set goals; to move through life is to make progress—or to fail to make progress—toward a given end (MacIntyre 33-34).

From this, MacIntyre supports the fallout of Williams’ definition. It is indeed the case that the organization of our lives—being a sibling, friend, village member, etc.—influences the concerns of our lives, the “set goals” to which one strives. And this content is place-based, occurring in “a particular space.” But MacIntyre’s understanding of organization is thicker than Williams’. He explains that the concerns flowing from organization have a normative dimension; we derive both obligations and duties from such a structure, with the alternative state being an outcast.

By looking to antiquity, MacIntyre’s argument channels Aristotle. For Aristotle, there is a need for the integration of individuals within community. In *Politics*, he rightfully asserts that “the whole is necessarily prior to the part,” that the community is prior to the individual (Aristotle 1253a). For Aristotle, human life, when detached from a community, is a “homonymous thing,” like a hand severed from an animal, “and anyone who is incapable of membership in a community, or who has no need of it because he is self-sufficient, is not part of a city, and so is either a beast or a god” (Aristotle 1253a). In this case, both thinkers recognize that there must be some kind of organization with others to determine life’s content.

This position is humbling. Under it, the concerns I have, the ends I strive for, these are not the expression of my own, enlightened reflection. I might very well have free will, but far from an absolute one. Instead, the wiser position is to realize that the meaning of my life is greatly determined by the immediate, external place in which I am organized in communion with others. My life, as much as I may wish to deny it, springs forth from my community, from the impressions stemming from my relationships and interactions with others, whether these are consciously or unconsciously noted. As Judith Butler explains, it is realizing that “I am not fully known to myself, because part of what I am is the enigmatic traces of others [...] the fact that I am impressionable, given over to the Other in ways that I cannot fully predict or control” (Butler 46).

What might be one way of acknowledging this feature of human life in the day to day? This is a question of making the above discussion practical. I believe the answer lies in gratitude or the giving of thanks. This is an embodied act. On the one hand, it can be cognitive, such that others are brought into the mind by being thought. On the other hand, it can be more external, where others are thanked through words or action. And this is a thing of beauty, for when I express my gratitude, I am brought into an ephemeral union with those who have helped make me who I am. The privacy of my mind is voluntarily relinquished, and I am joined by the thought of my community members. The breath that I mold from my lungs is strung into thanks, and thus my community becomes the air which surrounds me. In this, time and space, those vast eternities which have so tormented human life, are shattered, if only for a moment, by thanks.

But this is only half of the matter. What is missing in this discussion of *community* is an intensive look at nonhumans, something for which the above thinkers, to no serious fault of their own, fail to account. Three questions, which I shall attempt to answer, follow: can nonhumans and humans be thought of as commonly organized? If so, what influence does this have on concerns?

How should humans behave in the world with this knowledge? The first two questions pertain to Williams' definition and the organization and concern components which make it up.

To answer the first part, I must begin with organization. Human organization with nonhumans—both biotic and abiotic nonhumans—is typically said to be within an *ecosystem* or *environment*. Alternatively, though less frequently, this might be referred to as a *landscape*. This encompasses many considerations: macroscopic matters like species, soils, water, and the atmosphere, microscopic matters like nitrogen cycles and respiratory processes, and mathematical matters like carrying capacity or predator/prey relationships.

Arguing for this all-encompassing grouping, or what I shall call *ecosystemic organization*, simultaneously implies that there is no radical, ontological difference between humans and nonhumans. By this, I am arguing that human life is not somehow distinct or outside/apart from nonhuman life by virtue of qualities like rationality or artifact production. This contrasts against a Christian worldview which conceptualizes humans as special because of their closeness to God. Such qualities, in my view, do not award a transcendent metaphysical status; asserting so seems, to me, to be a logical leap. The position I advance would support the idea that humans *are* a part of ecosystems or what might more commonly be referred to as “nature,” the word Raymond Williams calls “perhaps the most complex word in the [English] language” (Williams 219).

Following this, the scalar component of Williams' definition reemerges. How far can I extend my ecosystemic organization? It has already been said that solely human communities must be smaller in size. Reiterating, while I can associate with the Great Lakes region, it is less possible to extend this to a national scale so to encompass Alaska. Under this, it is appropriate to say that I am organized within deciduous forests, freshwater lakes, prairies, and marshlands *rather* than coniferous forests, mountains, and the ocean which I am told are to be found in Alaska. This properly affirms

the first question, that humans and nonhumans have a common organization under Williams' account.

Now, I turn to the second question regarding concerns. Previously, I drew attention to MacIntyre's account of human communities, and he rightfully explains that the concerns of human life, including its normative content, are derived from organization with others. Given ecosystemic organization, environmental philosophy has attempted to identify the concerns that follow for humans from their organization with nonhumans. Specifically, this has been done by investigating normativity. A famous example is conservationist and philosopher Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic found in his book *A Sand County Almanac*. For Leopold, the scope of human ethics is ever-expanding, and "ethical criteria have been extended to many fields of conduct," with his own task being a further extension of ethics into "man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it" (Leopold 237-238). This can be read as the ecosystem within which humans are organized, and like MacIntyre, Leopold recognizes the intertwining character of this organization, explaining that "the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts" (Leopold 239). With this, Leopold is averse to economic valuation of ecosystems—he discusses this in terms of "land"—for the basis of ethics because "most members of the land community have no economic value," which in turn makes ethical coverage too thin (Leopold 246). All of this culminates in the famous maxim "[a] thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to otherwise" (Leopold 262).

To this, Leopold explains that:

[p]erhaps the most serious obstacle impeding the evolution of a land ethic is the fact that our educational and economic system is headed away from, rather than toward, an intense consciousness of land. Your true modern is separated from the land by many middlemen, and by innumerable physical gadgets. He has no vital relation to it; to him it is the space between cities on which crops grow (Leopold 261).

Leopold's account is obliterative to cities which contain vibrant and valuable ecosystems, and while this turns a blind eye to urban environments, it is not the point I wish to stress. What is important in this quote is that Leopold calls for "intense consciousness of land." For Leopold, ecosystems cannot be quickly understood by someone but rather demand that an agent be immersed within the landscape so that knowledge may be gained. Under this, the normative concerns that follow from ecosystemic organization demand intimacy and depth for their proper identification.

Barry Lopez builds upon Leopold's point. He urges folks to "[look] upon the land not as its possessor but as a companion. To achieve this, one must I think cultivate intimacy, as one would with a human being. And that would mean being *in* a place, taking up residence in a place" (Lopez 32). Lopez continues, saying that for those wishing to establish companionship with the land:

we are obligated, I think, to pay attention rather than constantly to pose questions. To approach the land as we would a person, by opening an intelligent conversation. And to stay in one place, to make of that one, long observation a fully dilated experience. We will always be rewarded if we give the land credit for more than we imagine, and if we imagine it as being more complex even than language (Lopez 36-37).

For Lopez, care for the Earth is akin to care for a person. To accomplish this, one must give their attention as a *listener* in addition to *speaker*, because conversation is never one-sided. Like with a person, it is hard to understand what one ought to do, what is demanded of them, if the subject to care for is consistently spoken over. What Lopez suggests is that this holds with land; one must be attentive and notice the minutia, the happenings of the landscape which might signal harm. As said before, concerns are the yearning for something positive because of the threat or imposition of something negative. Corruption of a landscape constitutes this negativity, and, in turn, identifies concern. For Lopez, this behavior means "[t]o be intimate with the land [...] [and] enclose it in the same moral universe we occupy, to include it in the meaning of the word community" (Lopez 34). And thus, the scope of morality expands, and the concerns of community flow from ecosystemic organization when one is attentive to the place in which they reside.

Now, these points about place, intimacy, and concerns can be further developed by considering the more literary approach taken by some environmental thinkers to express ecosystemic concerns. Through novels, poetry, and nonfiction, writers have attempted to show the splendor, beauty, and value of specific ecosystems—those in which they are organized—which then lays the foundation for normative concern. There are many such writers fitting this blueprint: Henry David Thoreau, Terry Tempest Williams, Annie Dillard, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Edward Abbey, to name a few.

A helpful feature of literature is that it is rooted in a specific place, place being key to concerns. This follows from the Leopold discussion and the intimacy with nonhumans which his Land Ethic demands, though I want to turn to Thoreau to make this point as a primer for the following chapter which assumes a more rigorous analysis of his work. Like Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, Thoreau's *Walden* is rooted. *Walden* is a versatile text covering social, political, and environmental themes, and it is the product of Thoreau's life at Walden Pond spanning the course of two years (1845-1847). While Thoreau does embark on occasional adventures away from the banks, the text primarily focuses on the landscape in which Thoreau lives, whether that be the immediate Walden Pond or more distant—though still close—city of Concord. From this local geography, he derives knowledge about the human and nonhuman happenings he is surrounded by. One example is Thoreau's remarks on building his house in the beginning of "Where I Lived and What I Lived For." On this process, Thoreau states that:

[a]n afternoon sufficed to lay out the land into orchard, woodlot, and pasture, and to decide what fine oaks or pines should be left to stand before the door, and whence each blasted tree could be seen to the best advantage; and then I let it lie, fallow perchance, for a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone (Thoreau 79).

Thoreau's rooted intimacy is evident. He acquires the materials necessary for his dwelling from the same place in which he builds his dwelling. One consequence of this is the knowledge he acquires

about a wholesome human life, specifically, the true meaning of wealth/ riches, expressed in the words following the quote's semicolon. He realizes that preserving nonhumans—such that they are “let alone” or “fallow perchance,” using his terminology—is positive. Through restraining development, Thoreau concludes that human relationships to nonhumans in the form of preservation makes one rich. This is not richness in the monetary sense. Instead, it is best understood cognitively, that the letting alone of the more-than-human world is psychologically good.

What makes this conclusion possible? The easy answer is to say that it is Thoreau's rationality. But this is too simplistic, and I think something deeper is at play in Thoreau's account. What is significant is that the letting alone of nonhumans at the start of his experiment allows Thoreau to be in nonhuman's presence for the duration of his time at Walden. This extended time is the condition for intimacy from which knowledge springs forth; it allows for observation and interpretation of experience. In some sense, this phenomenon is like academic study, where a person who has spent the time to become deeply immersed in a subject is a more reliable knower than one who merely dabbles in that same subject by taking an intro class. While the intro class may provide some knowledge, it would be wrong to say that it equates to the same rigor—and hopefully splendor!—which decades of study awards. In this respect, Thoreau serves as an ecological extension of this dynamic within in the academy.

Now, this account can be further supported by other environmental philosophers. One thinker is Christopher Preston who is interested in place and its role in knowledge. For Preston, places have “considerable agency in the knowledge claims that individuals and societies make,” and “human ecological rootedness in the natural environment, though now often obscured by artifice, is still a deeply important part of who we are” (Preston 45). To this, Preston draws from anthropologist Keith Basso's idea of “sensing of place,” a concept derived from Basso's time with

the Western Apache. Under this, sensing of place entails “the ongoing, synaesthetic interaction of a people with their physical environment that creates the attachment, not an idea grasped by a disembodied intellect,” with place acting as a source of moral knowledge from our experience rather than being the product of detached observers using only rationality for conclusions like a thoroughgoing Enlightenment thinker might do (Preston 83-84). This means that “[t]he physical environment is not just a site in which mind operates; it is a characterful place that influences the products of the mind” (Preston 88). It is like philosopher Martha Nussbaum says of Aristotelian rationality where “[p]erception [...] is the process of loving conversation between rules and concrete responses, general conceptions and unique cases, in which the general articulates the particular and is in turn further articulated by it” (Nussbaum *LN* 95). Thus, place strongly promotes this further articulation, revising past knowledge—its guiding principles—through the creation of new knowledge which can, in turn, be more sensitive to the idiosyncratic conditions of present locales.

Preston connects this to his time as a National Park Service volunteer in Dry Bay, Alaska.

Using first person narration, he describes his initial unfamiliarity with the landscape, writing:

[i]n my hometown, a creak in the night was the reassuring sound of my home contracting as the temperature changed. In Dry Bay, the same creak was a brown bear nosing around my cabin. Bringing with me to Dry Bay an excessive, culturally inscribed fear of the brown bear, I first turned every sound at night into an alarming reminder that I was really rather a small and powerless kind of creature. But the longer I lived there, the more I became able to set that fear into the context appropriate for the place (Preston 91).

Ultimately, Preston reveals that more time in a place awards one with greater understanding of that place. His account suggests that outsiders cannot know much about those environments from the get-go. In this, arriving in a new landscape requires an extended stay before one can make proper judgements. Otherwise, the judgements can be inappropriate, like an extreme fear of brown bears.

Preston’s point about interaction is something echoed by the recent work of critical theorist Steven Vogel. For Vogel, knowledge arises from being:

an active bodily participant *in* the world [...], necessarily and always already engaged in concrete physical practices that change that world, whose knowledge of the world arises and is expressed within those practices [...] knowledge is rather an *organism-in-an-environment*: and to be in-an-environment is to be in it *actively* (Vogel 54).

With Thoreau, Walden Pond is such a specific environment. In it, Thoreau exhibits the interaction/participation which both Vogel and Preston discuss, specifically the creation of his (Thoreau's) home and the setting aside of land. By practicing in that environment, Thoreau simultaneously develops knowledge of it. Specifically, this is the deliberate decision to abstain from some practices—mainly, cutting *all* of the trees—which drives knowledge creation on how one becomes rich. Thus, Preston and Vogel support the idea that ecosystemic knowledge is place based, increases with time, and arises from one's activity in that place.

The key point from this discussion is that ecosystemic organization informs concerns. This means the second question is affirmed, that there are concerns which come out of ecosystemic organization. But what I have shown about concerns is much deeper. What I am arguing is that concerns become knowable when one is active in a place for an extended time. To this, the place-based nature of concerns helps to satisfy the local component which the above thinkers Anderson call for. This is opposed to an unmanageable scale like a nation; my body can only be in one place at one time.

A deeper conclusion can be drawn from this. Because there is both ecosystemic organization and concerns which follow from that organization, it is rightful to say that humans *are* in communities with nonhumans based upon the meaning of the word *community* described by Raymond Williams. Not only are my mother, father, neighbor, and classmates examples of my community members (in this case, *human* members), so too are the magpies, squirrels, deer, and box elder bugs which live outside and inside my present dwelling. The longer I spend among these nonhumans, the better grasp I will have on their lives in relation to mine and what is incumbent on

me to do. This is not to say that I have attained or will surely attain absolute, exhaustive knowledge. Instead, it is to say that I will have achieved a more refined understanding, one that is ever-growing.

Even with this, a key issue remains, which I shall address in the following section. Mainly, how do normative concerns follow from the idea of community; how does an ought come from an is. What precedes Thoreau's call for leaving the landscape fallow is a value, broadly, being "rich." Values, in this sense, are specific ends which one seeks to make good. The broader impact of place is guiding one morally or revealing how one ought to live in the wake of these values. In Thoreau's case, to value richness is to abstain from total development of the environment.

It is here that I turn to virtue ethics to better unpack this question of how one ought to live given the nature of community.

2. Flourishing in Ecosystemic Community

*“Not till we are lost, in other words,
not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves,
and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations.”*

-Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

In the previous section, it is fair to say that most of the work I do is ontological. I am describing what community *is*, its nature, by working directly from the word itself. In doing so, I convey not only that community is a word describing human relationships. It also captures how humans are part of an ecosystemic community which includes nonhumans. Yet this thread is on a collision course with a torturous philosophical problem: the is/ought gap. Sure, it is fair that I describe how concerns—the desire for something positive given the threat of something negative—arise out of organization. But the is/ought gap questions if this truly instills obligation.

For my purposes, I will use virtue ethics as my normative foundation, the school of thought pioneered by Aristotle which values flourishing (*eudaimonia*), the *telos* for an excellent human life. I will show that ecosystemic community is imperative for the good life’s fulfillment to which virtue ethics aims. In short, by being in an ecosystemic community, a human being can achieve the good life. Because of this relationship, it is incumbent upon humans to protect the ecosystemic community. To do otherwise is to severely stifle human excellence. I will be using Martha Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach, an account of flourishing, and the Central Capabilities she identifies. I will discuss these in a moment, but it is essential to say upfront that I take Capability eight, *other species*, to have a special role insofar as it assists the cultivation of the other Central Capabilities. This is to say that the capability, *other species*, which I take to be analogous—or *mostly* synonymous—to ecosystemic community, is an imperative such that “a life that lacked this one

item, even [if] you had as much as you like of every other item, would fall short of full value or goodness in an important way” (Nussbaum *LN* 60).

To support this claim, I will be applying Nussbaum’s work to nonfiction literature. In the preceding section, I gestured at literature’s power in expressing the intimate ties one can have to a place. This section continues this discussion. Specifically, I will look at Terry Tempest Williams’ *Refuge* and Thoreau’s *Walden* as works exemplifying the positive impact ecosystemic community has on the Capabilities. If one values the good life, and I can show ecosystemic community (the is) is imperative for the good life’s actualization, then this provides the basis for ecosystemic community’s protection (the ought). While this is an extremely instrumental way of valuing, I shall show that it is not crudely instrumental by later drawing upon Bryan Norton, Thomas Hill, and then finally, Katie McShane.

Let me start by outlining Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach. Nussbaum’s thought imports some concerns from Immanuel Kant. It would be a mistake not to acknowledge her interest in dignity which, for her, “focuses on the protection of areas of freedom so central that their removal makes a life not worthy of human dignity” (Nussbaum 31). Even so, her account deals with human flourishing, and what Kantianism does appear is mild. The Central Capabilities (henceforth abbreviated *CC*), excluding Capability 7B and 10 which do not intersect with environmental issues, are as follows, quoted at length for referential purposes:

1. *Life*. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length, not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. *Bodily health*. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. *Bodily integrity*. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4. *Senses, imagination, and thought*. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic

- mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain.
5. *Emotions*. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety [...]
 7. *Affiliation*. (A) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another [...]
 8. *Other species*. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
 9. *Play*. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities. (Nussbaum 33-34)

Nussbaum provides a strong menu of things people tend to care about. When asking any rational human being if they would be willing to live without these areas, I think that the answer would be negative. It is worth noting that this sort of story will be unlikely to work in a culture without commitment to some form of liberal equality. For example, a theocratic society might fail to satisfy these areas for groups such women or LGBT folks due to religious doctrines. For Nussbaum, this egalitarian commitment follows from a Kantian belief that “all people have some core entitlements just by virtue of their humanity, and that it is the basic duty of society to respect and support these entitlements” (Nussbaum 62).

Building upon this, why are literature and philosophy being linked here? Lawrence Buell, an early pioneer of ecocriticism, can be used as an answer. Buell lays out the “ingredients that might be said to comprise an environmentally oriented work” one criterion being that “[t]he nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history” (emphasis original) (Buell 7). Applying Nussbaum to Buell's criterion, human history is not the only thing tied to the more-than-human in an environmental work. Instead, this linkage can be made thicker. In the books I shall discuss, I am attempting to show, in part, that

correct human behavior—the base interest of normativity—is something that is also implicated in nonhumans, that the human and nonhuman are bound together by ethics and morality in addition to human history, as Buell suggests.

Now, before diving into the books I intend to discuss, there are a few, preliminary notes. I feel it is necessary to revise the wording of *CC8*. “World of nature” uses the tricky word “nature.” I have been avoiding its use for conceptual clarity, using *nonhumans* instead, and I shall continue using this latter term. I take nonhumans to mean other animals, plants, funguses, rocks, soils, the atmosphere, waterbodies, etc. which comprise part of the ecosystemic community. For my analysis, I am not thoroughly considering artifacts, objects produced by the labor of an organism.

I shall admit up front that there will be two problems in my account which are too large to address given length constraints. For one, I will not present an argument on why narrative is needed to bridge the is/ought gap. However, despite not *arguing* for this, I hope to *show* that the inclusion of literature in philosophical analysis provides source material on how an *is* (ecosystemic community) can inform an *ought* or *certain values* (Nussbaum’s Capabilities, human flourishing). Secondly, my account clumps all nonhumans together without distinction. While this provides no nuance between plant, animal, and fungus, the more serious problem is that I cannot account for native vs. nonnative vs. nonnative invasive species. Under my account, as it will stand, there seems to be permission for even the nastiest nonnative invasives to persist.

It is here that I now turn to Terry Tempest Williams’ *Refuge*. Set in northwestern Utah, *Refuge* is a text documenting the loss of Williams’ loved ones to cancer, with intimate and painful attention to the losing battle her mother, Diane Tempest, waged against ovarian cancer in the 1980s. It is a text that culminates in a conjecture, that the prevalence of cancer in Williams’ family is due to nuclear bomb testing near their home in Utah. Rising next to this are the rising waters of Utah’s

Great Salt Lake, and Williams documents the deliberation of the Utah government on how best to mitigate the matter and protect the lakeshore's economic ventures. In both threads, birds assume a central importance, a specific species of *aves* informing the contents and title of each chapter, with others swooping in to join the chapter-bird's spotlight. *Refuge* documents how people go on living when both the bodies of their family members and landscape go awry, and Williams urges readers to see that coping with hardship is not necessarily graceful. Instead, it can be painful, tumultuous, and without a happy ending. While the Great Salt Lake proves fixable, Diane Tempest's cancer battle reaches a point where hardship surrenders to the hopelessness of terminal illness, with the inevitability of death becoming embraced. But even as cancer consumes life, it would be wrong to say that the story ever becomes nihilistic. The ecosystemic community remains a powerful agent in the text which counterbalances the devastation. It shows glimpses of nonhumans assisting humans in developing their Capabilities. Above all, human excellence/flourishing mysteriously persists in communion with illness and death. The striving for the good life holds the reaper's hand in compromise, showing that flourishing remains a possibility even as annihilation encroaches.

Now, where in *Refuge* does *CC8* (nonhumans) assist the other *CCs*? An early instance comes in the chapter "California Gulls," where Williams provides a detailed account of the title birds and their importance to Mormon culture, her religious background. She explains that the birds "rescued the Mormons in 1848 from losing their crops to crickets. The gull has become folklore. It is a story we know well" (Williams 69). Immediately, *CC4* (*senses, imagination, and thought* which deals with artistic endeavors) is influenced by nonhumans in the Utah ecosystemic community; the gulls are characters in a folktale about a crop crisis. I only want to gesture at *CC4* for right now; I will be tabling it for the end of the section, referring to it in the discussion of *Walden*. Instead, the other *CC* of interest in this section is *CC2*, *bodily health*. The important facet of this *CC*, for my purposes, is nourishment, the adequate availability and intake of food.

Williams' account of the gulls proceeds such that humans appear pitted against nonhumans. The Mormons are threatened by tiny insects, an exodusic plague threatening nourishment's realization. Williams explains that the Mormon settlement of Utah: in 1847:

wasn't easy. Winter quarters for the poorly provisioned families who had just arrived proved difficult. Their livestock had been decimated by wolves and Indian raids. Untended animals grazed down their crops and the harvest of 1847 consisted of only a few 'marble size potatoes' (Williams 69).

Certainly, I cannot say that the response of indigenous peoples to the settlement is unjustified, as the Mormon pioneers forged a new life through the seizure of another's land. But this is a separate matter which I cannot fully address here. Instead, I am drawn to the harsh winter, the hungry wolves, the ravenous livestock. Aren't these examples of nonhumans negatively affecting a human life? Sure, they are undesirable. But in answering this question, it's important to recall the discussion of community from the previous section. Community is, after all, highly place-based and intimately so. In spending time in place, knowledge of that place is acquired. What hardships the Mormon pioneers face comes partially from not knowing their new location. Spending more time there might have meant better potatoes, or it might have meant better protection of livestock from wolves, a beast not so common in their former, American East home.

Even with this, Williams' following descriptions prevent the Mormon tale from easy categorization; it is not one of human vs. wild. Consider her further detail of the crickets. She writes that "[t]he harvest of 1848 looked more promising and the Saints' spirits were buoyed. But just when a full pantry for each family seemed assured, hordes of crickets invaded their wheat fields" (Williams 69-70). A quote from an uncited Mormon pioneer follows Williams words, reading that:

[u]pon looking up, I beheld what appeared like a vast flock of pigeons coming from the northwest. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon...there must have been thousands of them; their coming was like a great cloud; and when they passed between us and the sun a shadow covered the field. [...]

At first, we thought that they also were after the wheat and this fact added to our terror; but we soon discovered that they devoured only the crickets. Needless to say, we quit fighting and gave our gentle visitors the possession of the fields (Williams 70)

This is an instance of nonhumans saving humans, aiding in the adequate nourishment Nussbaum wants. In this case, the presence of one animal species negates the problems of the other. Thanks to “the white angels [eating] as many crickets as their bellies would hold,” the Mormon pioneers avoided total starvation. Thus, nonhumans assist in agriculture rather than being a villain. Applied to modern times, Williams’ account, backgrounded by Nussbaum, might call into question the clouds of pesticides or gene manipulations now commonplace in agriculture. The California Gulls suggest that the secret to a fuller stomach might be flying overhead rather than existing in a laboratory.

Moving from *CC2*, the emotional strain of cancer on Terry Tempest Williams reveals the influence of ecosystemic community on processing her mother’s illness. The *CC* of concern here is *CC5, emotions*. For Nussbaum, this *CC* deals with love, forming attachments, and being able to grieve. One instance of *CC5* comes in the chapter “Meadowlarks,” following “Gray Jays” where Diane Tempest, in great pain, remarks on how she has “learn[ed] to relinquish,” and feels “there is nothing more to fight” (Williams 165). The pain accompanying a parent preparing for death is obvious. But a daughter’s time among nonhumans in southern Utah describes the powerful solace ecosystemic community provides. Williams notes her time by the Escalante River, that there is “[s]ilence. Juniper green. Cottonwood green. Sage blue. Red earth. Burnished skin. Refuge once again, this time in the reverse of southern Utah” (Williams 167). Among colorful flora and spectacular geology, she cultivates tranquility. Here, the term which also forms the book title, “refuge,” appears. By this, Williams suggests that a “refuge” is more than a legal designation for space. It is also the consequence of ecosystemic community in a human life. As low theorist Jack Halberstam writes, it is a type of forgetting, and “[f]orgetting allows for a release from the weight of the past and the menace of the future [...] we all engage in willful forgetting all the time; sometimes

we have to simply erase something on our brain's hard drive in order to allow for new information to take its place" (Halberstam 83). Instead of always being aware of a crisis, Halberstam suggests that Williams' forgetting is a powerful alternative to paralyzing remembrance. Nonhumans, therefore, assist with human coping, allowing for a brief amnesia which, in turn, awards a refuge.

A similar experience comes at the end of "Birds-of-Paradise," the first chapter following Diane Tempest's death. Williams describes "a holy place in the salt desert, where egrets hover like angels" (Williams 237). Of that place, she writes:

I kneel at the spring and drink

This is the secret den of my healing, where I come to whittle down my losses. I carve chevrons, the simple image of birds, on rabbit bones cleaned by eagles. And I sing without the embarrassment of being heard (Williams 237-238).

Ecosystemic community is further revealed to be a powerful influence on human emotion. In this instance, Williams' separation from the human community and relocation in wilder spaces provides her with power to confidently process her emotions. Shrouded in secrecy by the scenery, she gains privacy from others—in everyday life, perhaps an overbearing friend or a family member unfairly asserting the right way to grieve—and death is mourned via song. This is freedom from the threat of judgement, thus making ecosystemic community a place of emotional healing.

In relation to this, prior to "Meadowlarks," while Diane Tempest is still in the thick of her cancer battle, Williams describes "the long corridor of the medical building," writing "I realize how much I hate this place. The smells, the color of the paint, the wallpaper, the claustrophobia of rooms with no windows" (Williams 205). Absent in this illustration are any nonhuman others. This is a key, qualitative difference; by juxtaposing the Escalante River with this account of the hospital, an easy distinction emerges. Whereas nonhumans' presence accompanies an alleviation of emotional stress, spaces without nonhumans exacerbate said stress. Even nonhumans commonly found in hospitals—an elegant vase of flowers or therapy golden retriever—are absent in Williams' description. And yes,

correlation does not necessarily mean causation. But I think this shows that ecosystemic community plays a strong role in the realization of *CC5* such that the absence of its nonhuman members renders *CC5*'s achievement less likely. Here, the practical fallout of the hospital scene suggests that total human development of spaces, such that nonhumans are absent, might ultimately harm the human psyche. It calls into question the reign of human artifice on architecture. Instead, the inclusion of nonhuman in design has a net benefit and thus assists in achieving the good life.

Next, *CC7A*, *affiliation*, comes into play. This *CC* deals with being concerned with others' lives. While Nussbaum's account involves human to human affiliation, *Refuge* pushes this further so that it includes nonhumans. The key moment of this also appears in "Birds-of-Paradise." In the opening of the chapter, Williams writes:

Mother was buried yesterday.

These days at home have been a mediation I have scoured sinks and tubs, picked up week-worn clothes, and vacuumed.

I have washed and wiped each dish by hand, dusted tables even under the feet of figurines.

I notice my mother's hairbrush resting on the counter. Pulling out the nest of short, black hairs, I suddenly remember the birds.

I quietly open the glass doors, walk across the snow and spread the mesh of my mother's hair over the tips of young cottonwood trees—

For the birds—

For their nests—

In the spring (Williams 233).

The narration is choppy in this quote. This could be a consequence of the psychological strain induced by a loved one's passing. Within this form, the first few lines document life as it returns to some sort of normalcy apart from the strenuous responsibilities of caring for the terminally ill. The major shift here is Williams' awareness of the hairbrush holding her mother's hair, which she associates with a bird's nest. This comparison is where the quote becomes interesting. Rather than

disposing of the human materials in the trash, Williams opts to give them away to the birds. This is where nonhumans intersect with *CC7A*.

Surely, Williams meets this *CC* due to the thoughtful attention she provides Diane Tempest. But observe what the awareness of birds adds to her cultivation of *CC7A*. Her act is a manifestation of affiliation with nonhumans, and in it, Williams shows a recognition that nonhumans have lives of their own with their own ends. In response to this, she gifts them materials which may assist with raising children. While much of *Refuge* involves the effect nonhumans have on humans, this moment is an instance of the reverse. It is an account of a human affecting their ecosystemic community. For all that has been given to Williams by nonhumans, it becomes her turn to give back, a relationship motivated by an extended, more inclusive affiliative capability. Thus, from this value, an action of giving follows, and nonhumans become a new frontier for *CC7A/affiliation's* development.

Before moving to the final *CCs* in *Refuge*, I want to try to explore something which captivates me about this scene. This interest does not fit neatly into Nussbaum's Central Capabilities as it is more metaphysical, perhaps even mystical. In giving up the hair, the end of one life begins its entrance into the start of another; what was made by Tempest's body shall aid in the construction of a nest holding the growing bodies of baby birds. It is here that, though so very opposite, death and life, like the wings of a swallow brushing a pond, meet one another in a delicate exchange of matter. And perhaps, after the young birds become bigger, their matter will be subsumed further, into a bigger bird then becoming worm, or soil, or fungus, then plant, and maybe, human again. But in this, Diane Tempest is in the chain of life; the human and the nonhuman are inextricably connected.

Overall, this draws my mind to one of the quotes compiled by Walter Benjamin in his unfinished *Arcades Project*. It comes from the French thinker Auguste Blanqui, who writes how:

[e]very human being is thus eternal at every second of his or her existence. [...] All worlds are engulfed, one after another, in the revivifying flames, to be reborn from them and consumed by them once more—monotonous flow of an hourglass that eternally empties and turns itself over. The new is always old, and the old always new (Benjamin quoting Blanqui 114).

I first encountered this quote in the Fall of 2019 as I accidentally read the wrong section of Benjamin's unfinished masterwork for class. Blanqui's quote awed me. While Benjamin will surely hate this—as he yearns for politicization and not aestheticization—I find this quote overwhelmingly beautiful. But what does it mean for the hair and the nests? It reminds readers that to be in this world, to exist in it, is to be immortal, that a body is the congealment of past materials that have moved through other bodies and shall move through other bodies. That when I die, the molecules and compounds which construct my being shall be subsumed into others' lives as life continues, like the hair of a human mother which assists in a bird parent's nesting. And thus, Blanqui's quote suggests that community's organization is perhaps also found on the most intimate level of existence, that being the body, which comes forth by materials which were once the bodies of other members and, in the future, will become the bodies of others in unity with other materials which were once other others. This seems like a paradox: to be an individual body and communal material all at once. And I often wonder if it is paradox from which the bottom of the world is woven. Perhaps this is one of the threads.

It is here that I turn to the final *CCs* I shall discuss in *Refuge*. They are *CC1* and *CC3*, *life* (a normal length of life without premature death) and *bodily integrity* (roughly, a freedom from violence), respectively. I should note that I will be discussing *CC9*, recreation, with respect to *Walden*. The relevant moment in *Refuge* which involves these *CCs* comes in the epilogue, “The Clan of One-Breasted Women.” Following the many cancer diagnoses afflicting both herself and her family, Williams attempts an alternative diagnosis. Rather than using the tools of a mammography room

found in a stuffy hospital, she looks at both the landscape and the past. She begins this by stating that “living in Utah may be the greatest hazard of all” for illness (Williams 281). How so?

The cause of cancer manifests in a recurring dream which Williams recounts to her father, John Henry Tempest, at the end of a dinner. She details a “flash of light in the night in the desert—that this image had so permeated my being that I could not venture south without seeing it again, on the horizon, illuminating buttes and mesas” (Williams 282-283). Her father replies that she “did see it” as if “it” is well-known by Tempest, though she expresses confusion at the reference (Williams 283). John Tempest further details “it”:

[t]he bomb. The cloud. We were driving home from Riverside, California. You were sitting on Diane’s lap. She was pregnant. In fact, I remember the day, September 7, 1957. We had just gotten out of the Service. We were driving north, past Las Vegas. It was an hour or so before dawn, when this explosion went off. We not only heard it, but felt it. I thought the oil tanker in front of us had blown up. We pulled over and suddenly, rising from the desert floor, we saw it, clearly, this golden-stemmed cloud, the mushroom. The sky seemed to vibrate with an eerie pink glow. Within a few minutes, a light ash was raining on the car (Williams 283).

Until this point, Williams’ descriptions paint the landscape as positively impactful. But here, the antithesis is described: landscape is a site of nuclear bomb testing. And Williams’ response to this is powerful; it describes, unapologetically, why this sort of behavior is inexcusable. Following the anecdote, she explains that “[i]t was in this moment that I realized the deceit I had been living under. Children growing up in the American Southwest, drinking contaminated milk from contaminated cows, even from the contaminated breasts of their mothers” (Williams 283). While Williams notes that her conjecture cannot be totally verified, she suspects that the bomb testing was the cause of her family’s cancer. While she states this, her evidence remains unsettlingly convincing, that “[i]t took fourteen years, from 1957 to 1971, for cancer to manifest in my mother—the same time, Howard L. Andrews, an authority in radioactive fallout at the National Institute of Health, says radiation cancer requires to become evident” (Williams 286). “[O]ne by one, I have watched the

women in my family die common, heroic deaths,” she writes “[i]n the end, I witnessed their last peaceful breaths, becoming a midwife to the rebirth of their souls” (Williams 285-286).

Related to this, literary scholar Rob Nixon assists with unpacking *Refuge*'s forceful final pages. His book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, analyzes the silent, long-term effects of environmental abuses, like the martyrdom of Ogoni environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, or ongoing radiation from depleted uranium in warzone munitions. Nixon's general framework is environmental abuses whose consequences are “forms of violence that are imperceptible,” much like Williams' account of nuclear testing which has likely (slowly) caused cancer (Nixon 10). Relating this further, Nixon notes that armed services have concocted “euphemisms like ‘precision’ warfare, ‘surgical’ strikes [...] [which] have helped legitimize recent high-tech conflicts [...] [and this] rhetoric of precision lulls us into regarding the fatalities of war as swift, immediate killings” (Nixon 200-201). But Nixon urges readers not to be fooled. He maintains that these are examples of slow violence—deaths like Diane Tempest's—remain “slow, invisible deaths that don't fit the news cycle at CNN or Fox, but they are war casualties nonetheless” (Nixon 201).

This is what is so haunting. Nixon's ideas question the role of nuclear testing on the good life, namely *CC1* and *CC3*. What is implored is that if one indeed wishes to cultivate these areas, then the ecosystemic community cannot be conceived of as a laboratory subservient to national military strength. Williams suggests that testing newer, stronger weapons is a delayed harm, a slow violence, to the ecosystemic community's members. It renders the landscape toxic such that humans cannot separate themselves from the fallout. As she notes, “[t]olerating blind obedience in the name of patriotism or religion ultimately takes our lives” (Williams 286). Thus, slow, domestic deaths are the forgotten start of military success; in order to kill abroad, a nation must begin killing at home.

It is here that I now turn to *Walden* so to unpack how Thoreau makes sense of Nussbaum's Capabilities.

What interests me is the reading that Thoreau's alleged separation allows for labels like hermit or, more unfairly, misanthrope. But as Mary Elkins Moller puts it "clear-cut expressions of misanthropic feeling a relatively few" in *Walden* (Moller 1). To this, such labels only hijack his attempt to connect with nonhumans for an unfair spin, that his experiment is somehow an attempt to shun human life, a disconnection from his own species.

Given the topic of community which I have been exploring, the characterization of Thoreau's *Walden* as hermitic or misanthropic is what I shall take up here. I have been arguing that the ecosystemic community plays an enormous role in making possible a flourishing human life, and I have made this case by working from Martha Nussbaum's list of Central Capabilities. In short, the values Nussbaum raises for human flourishing are greatly enhanced by nonhumans. Moreover, under what I proposed in the previous section, there is an *always already* character of community: one cannot separate themselves from the bonds. Recalling Aristotle, only a beast or a God can do that, and Thoreau is neither of these extremes. So, the case I want to make quietly is that he is not so hermetic and misanthropic. Ecosystemic community, as it appears in *Walden*, seems to strengthen the bonds Thoreau has with humans. This is a case which can be made textually and historically with reference to biographical detail. Before diving in, in the interest of length, this will not be done by discussing each *CC* once more. Instead, I'll only look at a few. With this, I turn to the text.

To begin, I have yet to discuss *CC9, recreation*, the physical activities one does for pleasure. Recall, too, that I am saving *CC4* until the end. Recreation is an easy thing to conceptualize, and it clearly deals heavily with nonhumans. Many folks go for walks in the woods, climb canyon walls, kayak in waterbodies, identify wildflowers, or play basketball on hardwood. Here, nonhumans are

present, and sometimes necessary, for the realization of these activities. In this, the connection of *CC8* with *CC9* seems obvious to me. But where does Thoreau exhibit this?

A rich instance appears in “The Ponds” where Thoreau talks of fishing. He writes:

[o]ccasionally, after my hoeing was done for the day, I joined some impatient companion who had been fishing on the pond since morning, as silent and motionless as a duck or a floating leaf, and, after practicing various kinds of philosophy, had concluded commonly, by the time I arrived, that he belonged to the ancient sect of Coenobites. There was one older man, an excellent fisher and skilled in all kinds of woodcraft, who was pleased to look upon my house as a building erected for the convenience of fishermen; and I was equally pleased when he sat in my doorway to arrange his lines (Thoreau 168-169).

The recreating character of fishing is quite clear, and it occurs following Thoreau’s daily labor of tending to his crops. Building upon this, he joins an unnamed person he terms his “companion.” What’s more, this individual is welcomed by Thoreau as he generously permits the man to utilize the Walden cabin for fishing preparations. In this, a community of two is formed: they are organized together in a pair and both have joint interest in an enjoyable fishing excursion.

Thoreau further unpacks this community of two, writing that “[o]nce in a while we sat together on the pond, he at one end of the boat, and I at the other; but not many words passed between us for he had grown deaf in his later years, but he occasionally hummed a psalm, which harmonized well enough with my philosophy” (Thoreau 169). Here, the organization is tightly bound in a boat, two bodies sharing a vessel, and content from this organization arises, that being a joint religious/philosophical tune made possible by individuals combining their skills collectively. In fact, what is more telling in this account is that the Walden Pond backdrop seems to gather people together. By being a spot for fishing, the Pond not only makes a fishing trip possible, but simultaneously makes fishing a joint exercise, an experience shared by individuals. Through this joint desire—or perhaps, in Thoreau’s case, to be among fishermen—a tiny, human community comes into being. Rather than the more-than-human environment being a place of isolation, Thoreau

reveals that the ecosystemic community is a meeting place for inter-human relationships. It seems, then, that this suggests something deeper, that nonhumans are not just contributory to human recreation. Rather, through these activities, nonhumans facilitate *human community opportunities*.

Literary critic Laura Dassow Walls is the appropriate person to turn to on this matter, her biography, *Henry David Thoreau: A Life*, serving as a helpful source. The useful chapter that moves this further is “Walden, Is It You” which documents Thoreau’s time at Walden Pond. Walls offers other, historical examples apart from the text itself which document Thoreau’s deeper connecting with other humans. Her discussion of the Walden stint’s beginnings speaks to this. Of Thoreau’s cabin, she uncovers that:

[b]y early May, the frame was ready to be raised. Thoreau called his friends to help. [Ralph Waldo] Emerson, [Amos Bronson] Alcott, and [Ellery] Channing came, as did George and Burrill Curtis, lately from Brook Farm, their friend Edmund Hosmer, the ‘dreadful dissenter’ from the farm over the hill, and his strong sons John, Edmund, and Andrew (Walls 188).

Moreover, Walls explains that “[i]n his solitude, Thoreau became a sort of magnet. Most folks he welcomed, especially girls and boys who seemed glad to be in the woods, and young women who ‘looked in the pond and at the flowers and improved their time’” (Walls 192). And these visits are broader, with Walls explaining that Thoreau’s “most frequent visitors were his closest friends: the farmer Edmund Hosmer, the poet Ellery Channing, and the philosopher Bronson Alcott, who that second winter walked over every Sunday, [...] Emerson, or the French-Canadian woodchopper Alek Therien” (Walls 198).

Quite the hermit! And what a misanthrope! How fitting these labels are for a person with so many visitors and friends! Jokes aside, what Walls’ historical detail shows is Thoreau’s desire for eco-immersion actually gathers others together, contrary to what would be expected of a well-functioning “hermithrope.” What’s more, in order to begin his adventure, Thoreau needs a dwelling, and Walls reveals how this commencement is done with the assistance of the broader Massachusetts

(human) community. And one might take this further by recalling the common knowledge that Thoreau lived on Emerson's land; another's property was key in making the experience possible. So, by going to the woods, Thoreau brings others along with him, enticing them outside such that human and ecosystemic communities are not falsely separated by neat city centers apart from rolling wilds. Here, a valuation of the ecosystemic community's presence in a human life sparks cooperative and intimate associations: a team of house builders, magnetic visits from strangers and friends. Thus, the peculiar character occurring here and in "The Ponds" is that the desire to be among nonhuman others can evoke new human relations. This speaks to the "attachments" of *CC5*. Thoreau's desire to include the more-than-human in his life brings citizens together such that they are not atomistic individuals but rather co-builders.

I want to turn to another *CC*, that being *CC7A* which deals with affiliation. While Nussbaum's account conceptualizes this in terms of interhuman affiliation, I used *Refuge* to suggest that the ecosystemic community assists with extending its scope so to incorporate nonhuman others for a thicker Capability. Thoreau also exhibits this extensiveness in "The Bean-Field" when discussing woodchucks. Thoreau has a complicated relationship with these burrowing rodents. Of his agricultural practice, he writes "[m]y enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks" (Thoreau 150). And this is a conundrum. Thoreau, the environmental prophet, expresses distaste for a nonhuman. The severity of this is that it calls into question how affiliative Thoreau really is, if his moral sensibilities *really extend* outward to the entirety of the ecosystemic community. Furthermore, a way of distilling the trouble is that Thoreau might be a speciesist, caring about some species while scorning others. Prior to this in "Solitude," Thoreau even notes a "beneficent society in Nature," so the concern at hand seems to be both moral trouble and textual contradiction (Thoreau 128).

However, Thoreau, being a reflective philosopher, does not sustain this opinion. In fact, the conclusion of “The Bean-Field” exhibits a 180 from his initial position, with Thoreau writing how “[t]hese beans have results which are not harvested by me. Do they not grow for woodchucks partly?” pushing the theme of this rhyming phrase further to weeds “whose seeds are [also] the granary of the birds” (Thoreau 161). This is where Thoreau’s thick affiliation appears. What his rhetorical question gestures at is whether the end results of agriculture—an edible material—are all for human taking or benefit. The alternative which is suggested here is that humans are not the sole benefactors of agricultural production. Instead, what materials they do cultivate, whether they like it or not, are partially for the benefit of the ecosystemic community. In Thoreau’s case, he grows not just for himself but also for woodchucks, the end of “The Bean-Field” being the sprouting of his realization.

Thoreau’s benevolent thoughts are consistent with recent trends in the environmental humanities. One such writer is feminist, epistemologist, and multi-species theorist, Donna Haraway. Through a catchy and concise maxim, she calls for moderns to “‘Make Kin Not Babies!’ [T]o which [m]aking kin is perhaps the hardest and most urgent part” (Haraway 161). By this, rather than having children in the traditional—and, more descriptively, patriarchal—structure of care like the nuclear family, Haraway suggests the more inclusive network of kinship as an alternative matrix of association. While I can only make babies with members of my own species, making kin is unique insofar as the cared-for is always already in the world. By this, I mean that I can care for an existing shelter animal, a human neighbor, a park tree, an upside-down turtle. Here, the inhibiting prerequisite of matrimony then baby making do not inhibit my ability to care for another; I do not need to be in a traditional family structure with someone *so then* I can give them love. And this is not to say such structures are somehow demonic or void of value, but that Haraway’s critique is about how these models sometimes incarcerate love’s possibility to *only* the family.

This sort of extensive affiliation can also be seen with plant ecologist and Potawatomi citizen, Robin Kimmerer, whose work on kinship and reciprocal relationships is well documented in her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*. One chapter, “Allegiance to Gratitude,” inquires into the Pledge of Allegiance, which Kimmerer’s daughter refuses to say. Kimmerer notes that “you [don’t] have to be an eight-year old Indian to know that ‘liberty and justice for all’ [is] a questionable premise” (Kimmerer 106). Suggesting alternatives to these inconsistently distributed values of liberty and justice, Kimmerer references the Haudenosaunee Confederacy’s (Iroquois) Thanksgiving Address—given by John Stokes and Kanawahientun in 1993—as a better pledge. Her quotation of the source alternates with her commentary on gratitude. Of this, Kimmerer writes:

[c]ultures of gratitude must also be cultures of reciprocity. Each person, human or no, is bound to every other in a reciprocal relationship. Just as all beings have a duty to me, I have a duty to them. If an animal gives its life to feed me, I am in turn bound to support its life. If I receive a stream’s gift of pure water, then I am responsible for returning a gift in kind. An integral part of a human’s education is to know those duties and how to preform them (Kimmerer 115).

Like Thoreau and Haraway, this quote from Kimmerer captures a broader sense of affiliation where obligations of aid extend to others outside of *homo sapiens*. By valuing gratitude, Kimmerer draws attention to nonhumans’ contribution to a human life like an animal body providing nourishment (certainly an example of *CC2*, *bodily health*, in play). Because of an organism’s contribution to her life, Kimmerer argues that a human, in turn, has an obligation to contribute to that organism’s life. So, species in which an organism is a member is not a precondition for reciprocity; any sort of aid a species provides a human demands a gracious return. And the potential of applying this to other cultures is not without hurdles, for taking and applying Kimmerer’s insights could be deemed a kind of cultural parasitism given her status as a Potawatomi citizen. However, I think that the philosophical crux in her account is one calling for giving and *not just* taking, to which the giving end of this equation could be as simple as giving thanks to the giver. Thus, I think Kimmerer’s proposal

is consistent with Haraway and Thoreau's accounts of care. For Haraway, it is giving care beyond what is traditional, and for Thoreau, it is relinquishing total control of a crop.

But what does the woodchuck give Thoreau? For all of Thoreau's affiliation, it remains unclear how that pesky woodchuck, now with a belly full of beans, contributes to Thoreau's life in any way. Isn't the rodent *only taking* from Walden Pond's famous bean farmer?

It is here that the *CC* I have tabled, *CCA, senses, imagination, and thought*, finally comes into play. This *CC*, most broadly, deals with art. I think what the woodchuck gives Thoreau is an experience which makes *Walden*, a work of literary art, a possibility; Thoreau's interaction with the woodchuck in is an encounter which he can write about. It is to say that art—literature, visual art, film, music, etc.—in life is made possible by the nonhumans in the ecosystemic community.

I think that this is an important point which requires a more intensive discussion than the previous *CCs*. So, to explain this sufficiently, I am turning to phenomenology and then to Aristotelian causation. Phenomenology, as a philosophical method, at its worst, is pedantic and shows nothing but a philosopher's familiarity with adjectives. However, at its best, phenomenology increases a subject's awareness of the surrounding world and the material entities of which it consists; it is a way of perceiving which puts one presently in the present. To this, my intent is to reveal the materiality of artwork as a material thing in the world. And I think that, if this is successful, a reference to Aristotelian causation will become appropriate. Aristotle's material cause, specifically, is where the influence of ecosystemic community will become apparent.

To begin this, from my embodied perspective, as I type this, I am in the room of my apartment where I keep my books, a modest library collected from my studies in English literature and Philosophy. It is young, still growing, I hope. Currently, it is not even 8 A.M., and most of Missoula is still sleepy, the morning coffee just beginning to brew, the sun not yet cracking above

Mt. Sentinel. The soft glow of my floorlamp casts shadows of my bookpiles, and the jagged darkneses cast by these stacks mimic the mountains which hug Western Montana's valleys.

While I take breaks from my writing to admire these ranges, my left elbow rests on *Walden*. It is a hardcover edition, its binding a rich shade of maroon, the corners a bit worn and white. The beige pages are bathed in ink from fervent annotations (some of which are not mine), and the book is dressed haphazardly by a slippery, gray dust jacket. My left palm now touches it, my fingers sliding out and in over the surface, following the expansion and contraction of my lungs.

This is a presence in the world. Too often, it is forgotten that books are existing objects which have been brought into being. And this being is powerful, forceful, and can greatly affect how individuals or cultures go about being in the world. When one reads *Walden*, they may be sparked to reconsider their life just as Thoreau did. In short, by its very existence, *Walden* affects the world. And all objects seem to have this character. Think of a stop sign. This octagonal, red object is a presence in the world which, in turn, changes the world; it causes me to break when my vehicle encounters it.

But the following question about *Walden*, the physical object, is how did it come into being? At the surface, this can be explained through a description of the printing process, the activity of a publisher once an author's work is accepted. Yet such an account comes rather late in the game, and this would drastically diminish the role that an author, Thoreau, plays in a book's emergence. I think a better account can be derived from Aristotle's *Physics*.

In the *Physics*, Aristotle provides an account of four causes which allow an object to "happen" or come into being. The four are the material, formal, efficient, and final cause. Of material, it is "that from which [...] a thing comes to be [...] the bronze and silver [...] are causes of the statue or bowl," the formal or "the form—i.e. the pattern," the efficient or "the primary

principle of change or stability [...] in general the producer is a cause of the product,” and the final—the *telos*—“something’s end” (Aristotle, 194b 24-33).

From this, *Walden*, the book is, most microscopically, a specific arrangement of letters—which are “the cause of syllables” that are the cause of words, sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and eventually the books itself (Aristotle, 195a 17). To misplace or omit this sequence, even the smallest of words, is to transform *Walden* into something else, something that is no longer *Walden* (a subtle Platonism seems to be at hand here; that it becomes a deficient resemblance).

Let me explain the causes of the sequence of words called *Walden*, beginning with the final cause, working backwards. The final cause of *Walden* is apparent in “Economy” where Thoreau states his mission. He notes “very particular inquiries [...] made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life” which he attempts to answer (Thoreau 1). And on writing, he furthers this cause, stating that he “require[s] of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men’s lives” (Thoreau 2). Here, Thoreau’s subtly stated convictions express the final cause as documenting personal experience.

Moving backwards once more, Aristotle’s next cause is the efficient cause, the producer. This is easy. It is Thoreau. He is the author who edited and compiled this arrangement of words. Just as a bronzeworker brings a bronze statue into being, Thoreau does the same with *Walden* the book through his arranging the words in the sequence which one reads today.

Now, the formal cause comes in, the form the object takes. Most simply, this is the form of a book. But *Walden* also has a logical structure. It that reveals its form to be deeper than bound pages. It is a certain logic which is mimetic of the seasons. It begins by documenting the summer, then fall, then winter, finally concluding with accounts of the spring. So, the form is two-fold: book and seasons. And this seems to suggest some influence of nonhumans—the regimented, cyclical

passage of time—as influential in *Walden* as an example of *CCA* (*senses, imagination, and thought*). But the material cause, which I am discussing next, is a thicker notion of this.

For the material cause, it is what an object is made from, like a bronze statue being made of bronze or a bench being made of, perhaps, wood. As for *Walden*, the surface level answer to this is materials like ink, paper, glue, etc. But the book is more than its material stuffs; so, too, is the crystallization of experience in language. The sequence of words requires events to transpire in an author's life which sparks their creative imagination, a key portion of *CCA*, *senses, imagination, and thought*. This is to say that for *Walden*'s possibility, its very presence as an object in the world, experiences had to have been had by Thoreau which could be written and weaved into a book. And this is precisely where nonhumans come in. They are indispensable to *Walden* and to many human artistic endeavors. Nonhumans' presence in these objects—books or paintings, for example—cannot be understated. A horse on a Hellenistic vase, a mask which mimics a bird, leaves on an Art Deco building's trim, these works, and more, are all initially reliant on the nonhuman world which they mimic. To this, the ecosystemic community's nonhumans inspire the pottery maker, the mask maker, the architect to capture these nonhumans in the art object. And so, what is *Walden* without woodchucks, blue jays, wasps, johnswort, pines, fishes? It seems that the interaction, the meeting of Thoreau and nonhuman subjects, is what made *Walden* a possibility in the first place. On the contrary, without these agents, Thoreau's work would have suffered. It could be expected as nothing but a man in a dusty room writing about the world, a dry critique of institutions without connection to the surrounding landscape. Thus, if one values art in a flourishing human life, then it is imperative to recognize how these works and, above all, *objects* arise. This is a recognition that understands art as not appearing *ex nihilo* but from the presence of nonhuman life near a human one. So then, the woodchuck, in this sense, offers Thoreau a subject to write about “in exchange” for the beans; while Thoreau gives food, the woodchuck gives him—and so many generations—art.

Aside from Thoreau, two worries remain. Isn't my account anthropocentric? And shouldn't an environmental ethic have a notion of intrinsic value to be efficacious? I will start with the first question, though the second is related. Question one arises from the role which ecosystemic community plays, and phrasing like *impact, role in, influence on* indicates instrumental valuation, that which is good for a further end. Broadly, the fear is that the instrumental character of an account like mine will not be ecologically protective; nonhuman others will always be treated as mere means. This has been a nightmare for the field of environmental philosophy since its genesis, a problem addressed by early figures like Richard Sylvan, Holmes Rolston III, and J. Baird Callicott who have all provided accounts of intrinsic value. My reply to the problem of instrumentalism could be that I am a virtue theorist, and, thus, not very interested in intrinsic value. However, I think the reply can be better than this. In fact, the worry of anthropocentrism need not be so paralyzing; it does not diminish the strong reasons for environmental care which come from my account.

As philosopher Bryan Norton explains, an environmental ethic could involve weak anthropocentrism, an approach which generates normative constraints thanks to guiding, rational worldviews. This contrasts with strong anthropocentrism, arbitrary preferences determined by individuals. By appealing to human worldviews, Norton thinks that "a framework for developing powerful reasons for protecting nature" remains possible (Norton 329). He cites religious worldviews like Jainism, noting its commitment to nonviolence. In terms of my account, Thoreau's *Walden* could be considered one such framework. Thoreau rationally reflects on what humans *ought* to do, recounting his relationships with and observations of nonhumans in his time at Walden Pond. In turn, this is ethical experimentation, an empirical account of an alternative lifestyle, its results, and the guidelines for behavior which are derived—leave some land fallow, leave some beans for woodchucks, etc.

Related to this point, Norton explains that employing weak anthropocentrism hinges upon “the extent that environmentalists can show that values are formed and informed by contact with [the environment],” and if this is achieved, the environment “becomes an important source of inspiration in value formation” (Norton 328-329). Certainly, this seems to echo some of the points Christopher Preston makes about the external world and its role in knowledge generation. The character of Norton’s claim is that something happens “downstream” from our experiences with the ecosystemic community: we begin to form values. Moreover, philosopher Thomas Hill refines Norton’s point, suggesting that being around nonhumans causes one to “fully accept themselves as part of the natural world” and such individuals come to “lack a common drive to disassociate themselves from nature by replacing natural environments with artificial ones” (Hill 345). Under Hill’s idea, a human begins to decenter themselves as of the utmost importance in favor of a view where the ecosystemic community is centered.

Expounding on this, there is a restraining of behavior. Ecosystemic community urges a human to fit within it, a part nestled in the greater whole. This is a rather Leopoldian point, who suggested that humans become a “plain member and citizen” of the land community (Leopold 240). Therefore, from these thinkers, what is risked by the total, human manipulation of space, like endless strip malls or aggressively manicured lawns, is two-fold. For one, flourishing is put in a precarious spot because those beings which aid flourishing might vanish. Secondly, new values and alternative behavioral frontiers risk elimination. Without influence of the ecosystemic community, an individual may continue their fervent destruction of the environment because they have not properly recognized the influence of the ecosystemic community, its imperative role in human development. This negates the possibility of loving nonhuman others, respecting them, or being urged to care for them. In the case of Thoreau, presences of nonhumans like the woodchuck steer him in a direction where he is absorbed into a whole greater than himself. He is, in this sense, an example of

Nortonian contact resulting in Hillian connection. So, to reply to the first concern, yes, my account is initially instrumental, but even with this attribute, strong environmental obligations are still formed.

Moving from this, the second concern deals with intrinsic value. It is admittedly difficult to provide a notion of intrinsic value in my account which would satisfy the traditional environmental philosophy canon. This is a metaethical disjuncture. I am partaking in moral constructivism, using human rationality to develop principles which inform human behavior. Early thinkers have subscribed to moral realism, that there are objective facts about the world independent of humans which, once discovered, impose normative demands. And most of intrinsic value theory has worked from this latter position. A notable example is Holmes Rolston's argument which uses DNA's tendency to create and continue life as an indication of intrinsic value. This is to say that intrinsic value is "in" the organism. In contrast, the constructivist will *always* begin by working from an inextricable human perspective rather than looking into the world for objective, independent, normative facts that are *a priori* to human experience. So, under moral constructivism, if intrinsic value is present, *it is so because humans have evaluated something as intrinsically valuable.*

I hold that my account can have room for intrinsic value. Let me try to explain how this might be. Nonhumans can obtain a stable, good-in-themselves status by virtue of their initial, instrumental worth. To be sure, prerequisite qualities which grant moral consideration are commonplace in normative theories. Kant deemed rationality necessary for a being to be treated as an end-in-itself. Similarly, Bentham and later Singer hold that a being's ability to suffer provides reason to apply the utility calculus. For my purposes, the argument goes like this: once I recognize how an other influences my life, I am motivated to treat that other in a particular way. This is because the experience I have with that other causes me to develop love, respect, or care for it, and

these help to maintain the relationship beyond instrumentality. For instance, my family impacts me instrumentally, and goods like love arise from this initial, instrumental character. It seems, then, that these virtues are good for what they are, but I shall address this in a moment. The more pressing thing is that these goods persist even when the instrumental value that sparked them has vanished. In the family example, just because my family member is ailing such that they no longer take care of me, provide emotional support etc. does not mean I jettison the powerful sentiments developed from our bonds. In a virtue ethics, this would seem to involve vices such as capriciousness, callousness, or selfishness. I think what my account does, if anything, is reveal that something occurs *a posteriori* in human experience with the broader ecosystemic community. Relationships within a community conjure—or, more crudely, produce—goods of love, respect, or care which come to capture the human-nonhuman relationship.

These goods must be thought of as intrinsically valuable. As the family example shows, if I love someone, then I love them through thick and thin, no matter what, and the instrumental starting point eventually assumes irrelevancy. In this, intrinsic value is necessary as a designator for the type of value which something like love involves.

Katie McShane sees things similarly. She writes “[w]e might well agree that [instrumental] values have been underappreciated and that the ultimate value of things will always depend on their relationships to other things. But we can do so while insisting that some things are worth caring about in their own right” which lack an instrumental character, such as virtues of love (McShane 59).

McShane also suggests, I think rightly, that:

we need to be able to account for the difference between valuing things intrinsically and valuing them [instrumentally]. In order to have an adequate ethical theory, we need to be able to say something about when these ways of valuing are or are not appropriate. That is to say, we need to be able to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic value. If we were to give up the concept of intrinsic value, we would have no way to make such a distinction. (McShane 56).

So, I think that intrinsic value remains in my theory in relation to what comes from ecosystemic community contact. Of these results, as McShane explains, intrinsic value is a helpful category which assists in making sense of goods that are ends-in-themselves, the terminus of valuation. Thus, intrinsic value is needed to make sense of the love, respect, or care which come from our constructed, normatively desirable ways of relating to the ecosystemic community.

The key takeaway here is that my account has intrinsic value, and is, in this sense, a flipping of the cart and the horse. The distinction between me and early environmental philosophers is that intrinsic value comes *a posteriori*, it follows from human experience, rather than being an objective feature that is “in the world” independent of human life. By follows, I mean to say that intrinsic value is a needed category to make sense of the products which arise from our constructed ways of being in the world, the love or respect which follow from contact with the ecosystemic community. In the literature I cite, it is exemplified by Williams’ gift of her mother’s hair to the birds which signifies a thicker notion of affiliation. It is Thoreau’s abstention from a total harvesting of beans so woodchucks may eat. To sum, my notion is not “out there in the world,” it is not a morally real. But it nonetheless *becomes* present.

To conclude this section, I have been arguing for the protection of the ecosystemic community. I have done so by working from an account of human flourishing provided by Martha Nussbaum. As the texts *Refuge* and *Walden* show, the good life is not something achievable independent from others. Rather, it is aided by and achieved through the presence of the ecosystemic community. If one wishes to live their best possible life, ecosystemic community is a *necessary* condition. To degrade, destroy, or diminish the presence of nonhumans in a human life is, in a sense, a form of self-harm such that human potential is inhibited. Yes, this is instrumental

valuing, but it still provides strong obligations for the protection of nonhuman life, with intrinsic value being a needed type of value for the products of our constructed ways of being in the world.

Conclusion

“Things do not change; we change.”

-Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

What I want the reader to have taken away from my argument is that humans are in an ecosystemic community with nonhumans, and the scale of this tends to be smaller in size such that one can come to know a place. Moreover, if humans wish to live a life of excellence, then it is incumbent upon them to preserve the ecosystemic community because of the essential role it plays in a life of human flourishing. Even though this valuation is heavily instrumental, it still provides the basis for a powerful environmental ethic, with intrinsic value being a descriptor for the goods which result.

All of this is to say that what I want to be taken away from this project is one thing: remain. If allowing, remain where you are and love it. Learn that place, learn its people, learn its animals, learn its plants, learn the fungus, learn the rocks, learn the smells, learn the sounds, learn it all.

Embrace the challenge of rootedness. There are so many contraptions which can take one far from where they are and back again. This is the trip, the vacation, the getaway. Similarly, there are so many conservation programs that take young folks into the wilderness while forgetting their home environments. This is far too transient to learn places, and as indigenous activist Winona LaDuke writes, “[t]ransience means that we do not come to know and love a place. We move on, and in so doing are not accountable to that place. Always looking for greener pastures, a new frontier, we, I fear, lose depth, and a place loses its humans who would sing to it, gather the precious berries, make clean the paths, and protect the waters” (LaDuke). So, stay. Love your view of the fluorescent city, its pigeons and peregrines which take to the air. Love your rural farm and the geese that graze in its fields. Love your place, no matter what it is. I think LaDuke suggests that an

ecosystemic community needs people whom it affected, whose characters the community shaped. An environmentalist cannot simply enter a new locale without connection. This is like being an ecological missionary, who suggests solutions by making the problems from a bit too much zeal.

It is here that I return to myself, the beginning of this thesis, and offer an answer, which in philosophy, is always another problem. *Should I stay here in Montana?* The homesickness I once felt for the East is no longer so strong, having found out how to go on living where I am. My thanks for the that place frequents my mind's eye, suspended there like morning fog does in these mountains.

As one scenario, I am imagining a future in the East, in the place where the water empties into the Atlantic, where the rivers are turbid with silt, where land is swampy between rolling hills. I am imagining that my arms will come to stretch across the Great Plains in longing for Montana, a few of its features. There is one, I know, that I will yearn for quickly.

I adore magpies. If I stay, I think this will be one of the strongest reasons. That elegant, chatty bird! Those flopping tail feathers splashed by seafoam iridescence! That penguiney waddle! Those flocking rows perched on dumpsters! Missoula's loveliest, the gem of the west. How alive is the sky loud with magpies?

And if I stay, I am leaving food for you which has grown moldy in the back of my fridge. If I stay, there is a flock of you descending from Mt. Sentinel's brambles, white wings spread wide, weaving like the paragliders over the valley. *Gree-gree-gree, gree-gree-gree* signals your coming, a familiarity as if I have known it for forever.

Eternity beckons.

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