

NATURAL MEANINGS AND CULTURAL VALUES

In many cases, rivers, mountains, forests and other so-called natural entities have value for us because they contribute to our well-being. According to the standard model of such value, they have instrumental or 'service' value for us on account of their causal powers. That model tends, however, to come up short when applied to cases when nature contributes to our well-being by virtue of the religious, political, historical, personal or mythic meanings it bears. To make sense of such cases, a new model of nature's value is needed, one that registers the fact that nature can have constitutive value for us on account of the role it plays in certain meaningful wholes, such as a person's sense of who she is. This paper presents such a model.*

1. Introduction

In 1972, the Navajo activist Katherine Smith told Senate investigators that she would never quit her home on Big Mountain. I will 'never leave the land, this sacred place', she said. 'The land is part of me and I will one day be part of the land... All that has meaning is here.'¹

In the following, I argue that environmental thinkers have typically failed to understand what sort of value nature has for us in cases such as this – cases, that is, in which people value natural entities on account of the *meanings* they embody.

The paper is structured as follows. I begin by noting the common assumption that if some natural entity has value on account of the contributions it makes to human well-being, then it must be of *instrumental* value to certain humans on account of its *causal* relations to them. I argue that that assumption is false. In many cases, I propose, natural entities have value, not because they are means to certain ends, but because they are parts of certain meaningful wholes. Hence the standard *causal-instrumentalist* model of nature's value for us must, I suggest, be augmented by a *semiotic-constitutive* one. In the final three sections, I consider the latter model's implications for debates

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about (i) concepts of naturalness, (ii) environmental rights and (iii) the intrinsic value of natural entities.

2. Instrumentality and causation

Many natural entities have value because they contribute to human well-being. Whether or not they have value for other reasons too, they have value *for us* in this sense.² It is often assumed that if some natural entity has this sort of value then it must be of *instrumental* value to certain humans – of value, that is, as a means to some end that is of value to them.

As Mark Greene and several other writers have noted, instrumentality involves *causation*:

To have instrumental value is to make a causal contribution to bringing about a valuable state of affairs. The notion of a causal contribution is to be understood broadly. Both proximate causes and causally relevant background conditions can ground instrumental value.³

Accordingly, in considering nature's value for us, its value as a contributor to human well-being, people tend to think in terms of instrumentality and causal relations. They tend to assume that if some natural entity has value for certain humans then it must be of instrumental value to those humans on account of its causal relations to them. Indeed, this is typically assumed both by those who see natural entities as resources-to-be-plundered and by those who see them as providers of valuable ecosystem services.⁴ It doesn't matter whether Gretchen sees the wood as nothing more than potential timber or as a provider of certain ecosystem services; either way, she sees it as being of instrumental value to certain human beings on account of its causal relations to them.

Let me summarise these points by saying that in considering nature's value for us, environmental ethicists, ecological economists and other environmental thinkers tend to adopt a

causal-instrumentalist (C-I) model. Now that model is not without merit. In fact it provides a good account of many cases in which natural entities are valuable for us humans. When, for instance, a tree supplies Aileen with shade from the fierce midday sun, then it is of instrumental value to Aileen on account of its causal relations to her. More generally, when nature provides us with supporting, provisioning or regulating services, the C-I model gives a good account of the value the relevant service-providers have for us. Conversely, it provides a good account of many of those cases when natural entities have *disvalue* for us because they *detract* from our well-being.

In other cases, however, the C-I model comes up short. The case mentioned in the introduction, that of the late Katherine Smith, is one. Here are very brief sketches of two more:

Saami reindeer herding: Reindeer are of instrumental value to the Saami people of Northern Scandinavia because they provide them with meat, hides and other products. But they are also of cultural value to them. Though only about ten-percent of Saami people continue to herd reindeer, the practice ‘remains at the heart of their culture and is central to their celebrations and traditions’.⁵ As the anthropologist Robert Paine observes, the Saami are not all agreed on who *exactly* they see themselves as being; even so, many of them continue to see themselves as reindeer herders. In this manner, reindeer make an important contribution to their ‘sense of self’.⁶

Indigenous Australian spirituality: The stories of indigenous Australians tell of a time when creator beings, such as the Rainbow Serpent, moved through the land, moulding its features. The journeys of those beings are thought to have been preserved as ‘songlines’ or ‘dreaming tracks’ criss-crossing the country. Furthermore, the beings themselves are, in many cases, thought to persist in the natural forms into which they transformed at the end of their journeys. A goanna-shaped headland might be seen as a physical manifestation of the creator being Dirawong; a rainbow shimmering in the mist at the foot of a waterfall might be

taken to be a manifestation of the Rainbow Serpent. Accordingly, the spiritual beliefs and practices of particular indigenous tribes are rooted in particular landscapes. For them, the land is ‘the core of all spirituality’.⁷

In many respects, these cases are unlike one another. Even so, each seems to involve some natural *x* being of value to certain people because it contributes, by virtue of the meanings it embodies, to their well-being. For example, Katherine Smith’s well-being seemed partly to depend on her continuing to live on Big Mountain – the place that was, as she said, ‘part’ of her. Likewise, the well-being of the Saami seems partly to depend on their retaining a sense of their own identity as reindeer-herders.⁸ Similarly, the well-being of many indigenous Australians appears partly to derive from their continuing to find certain spiritual meanings in the land they inhabit (or once inhabited).

One could, I admit, *try* to express the values highlighted in these cases in terms of instrumentality and causation. For example, one could adopt the instrumentalist idiom of the ecosystem services approach and say that the three cases illustrate cultural ecosystem services that nature provides. And, moreover, one could try to conceive of those instances of service-provision in causal terms. Certainly, some of those who adopt the ecosystem services approach seem to think that when nature provides us with cultural ecosystem services, it does so by causing certain mental states, such as ‘aesthetic experiences’ or ‘moral satisfaction’, to arise in us.⁹ Similarly, one could suppose that reindeer benefit the Saami by causing them to experience a sense of identity, for instance, or that certain landscapes benefit indigenous Australians by causing them to experience spiritual solace or inspiration.

References to instrumentality and causation fail, however, to capture the intimacy of the nature-human relations in such cases. As many writers have noted, one problem with instrumentality, for its part, is that it implies *substitutability*.¹⁰ It’s possible, I guess, that *x* could be of merely instrumental value as a means to achieving some end, *y*, yet be the *only* possible means by which *y* might be achieved. But the suggestion seems to overstretch the meaning of

‘instrumentality’. For claims to the effect that something is a means to some end imply that the end in question could, if only in principle, be brought about by some *other* means.

In none of the cases we have considered do any such substitutions seem possible. The shotgun-wielding, fence-wrecking Katherine Smith would not have happily moved to any other place, even one with greener grass and better amenities. For her, no other place would do. The Saami would not, I predict, count that nothing had been lost were they forced to swap reindeer herding for sheep-farming, even if the latter proved more lucrative. Likewise, one could not adequately compensate indigenous Australians for their eviction from their ancestral lands by moving them to other places that supply equivalent cultural ecosystem services. For them, as for Smith and the Saami, there could be no alternative service providers. Their relations with nature are closer than talk of service-provision, or any other form of instrumental relation, would suggest.

References to causation are also inadequate. As John Heil observes, causal relations are typically conceived of as external relations – relations, that is, in which ‘you could have the relata, just as they are, without their standing in the relation.’¹¹ Yet none of the cases we have considered can adequately be framed in such terms. Take the case of the Saami. It is not as if there are two distinct entities, the Saami on the one hand and the reindeer on the other, and an external relation tying them together. No, one cannot describe who the Saami as a people are without referring to the fact that they are *reindeer* herders.¹² Even if all the reindeer were to die out, the Saami would, I suspect, continue to regard themselves in the light of their dealings with those animals. Insofar as they retained a sense of their own cultural identity, they would see themselves as the people who *once herded reindeer*.

Though it would take much more argument to prove the point, it seems that the C-I model cannot provide an adequate account of any of the three cases sketched above. To account for the cultural value of Big Mountain for Katherine Smith, or of reindeer for the Saami, or of certain natural landscapes for indigenous Australians – to provide a complete and adequate account of those values, one cannot rely solely on appeals to instrumentality and causation.

This is a troubling result. For it suggests that some people find a sort of value in nature which cannot adequately be expressed in the instrumentalist language favoured by those who adopt the currently-popular ecosystem services approach. So if such people are required by researchers to adopt such language, they will find it hard to express some of the value they find in nature, which, in turn, may well lead the researchers to *underestimate* that value. This raises an issue of procedural justice. Thomas Sikor et al. maintain that the ecosystem services framework ‘closes down possibilities for justice’ since it tends to ‘marginalise people by denying the recognition of their... conceptions of value’.¹³ Though more work would be needed to prove the point, it seems likely that a one-sided focus on the C-I model could also exacerbate this marginalisation.

3. Constitution and meaning

The C-I model is based on causal relations; however, not all relations are causal. For example, the relation between the words ‘fierce’ and ‘ferocious’ – namely, synonymy – is not a causal relation. It is a semantic relation – a relation of meaning. That is to say, it is a relation that obtains between ‘fierce’ and ‘ferocious’ by virtue of the respective meanings of those words.

What sorts of things can have meaning? Some will be sceptical of the view that *anything* has meaning, perhaps because they have fallen into a state of despair and/or because they have come to believe that there is something metaphysically dubious about the very notion of a meaning. Others will maintain that although some things have meaning, natural entities, such as marjoram, mandrills and mangroves, cannot. This would be the view taken by those writers for whom meanings can, strictly speaking, be borne only by linguistic items (such as words), uses of them (such as assertions) and users of them (such as speakers).¹⁴ Such people will concede, of course, that meanings are conventionally attributed to non-linguistic items; however, they will propose that any statement that such an item has meaning could be perfectly translated into terms that do not refer to meaning

at all. For example, they may translate the statement ‘Those clouds mean rain’ into something like ‘Those clouds cause rain’.¹⁵

There is not enough space, here, to refute either of those views. In what follows, I will merely assume that (a) some things do in fact have meaning and (b) not all of them are linguistic items, uses of them or users of them.

So, again, what sorts of things can have meaning? It does not stretch the meaning of ‘meaning’ to say that a smile, a bow or the eating of a communion wafer have meaning. (And, to switch languages, it certainly doesn’t stretch the meaning of *sens* to say that such things have *sens*.) But it is not just human acts, practices and institutions that can have meaning. Material things can have them too. This is not simply to say that some such things embody the intentions of their makers, for artefacts can acquire meanings that do not reflect those intentions – as when, for instance, a particular mass-produced pen acquires historical meaning because it was used to sign some important political treaty. Nor is it to say that anything may have meaning conferred upon it, as when children agree that a certain ditch is a moat, a certain hill a fort and a certain stick a flag. Rather, it is to say that we find ourselves in a world in which things are – as phenomenologists say - always already meaningful.

This includes natural things.¹⁶ When Aldo Leopold saw the crane as ‘the symbol of our untameable past’ he saw it – that is, *the crane*, and not simply the word ‘crane’ - as having a certain meaning.¹⁷ To see the bamboo’s hollow core as a metaphor for the essenceless nature of all things is to find a certain religious and philosophical meaning in the plant.¹⁸ To find in buddleia, ‘the butterfly bush’, a wonderfully non-indigenous symbol of wildness for post-Brexit Britain is to find a certain meaning in the plant.¹⁹ To see God’s ontological simplicity and lofty indifference symbolised by the great sweeping dunes of a desert is to find a certain cluster of meanings in that landscape. I make no attempt, here, to catalogue the different sorts of meanings nature can have.²⁰ Instead, I merely note that in this sense of ‘meaning’, all manner of natural things, organisms, processes and events, from hedgerows to the changing of the seasons, can be said to have meaning.²¹

Meaning depends on context. A word has whatever meaning it has in the context of the sentence in which it occurs; a musical phrase acquires its meaning from its place in a particular musical piece; a particular sacred grove owes its meaning to some wider constellation of religious beliefs and practices – and so forth.²² Take the consumption of a communion wafer. That act has meaning only in the context of the Christian ritual of the Eucharist. To be sure, an extraterrestrial observer might infer that the act had some sort of religious meaning; yet if she had no understanding of the concept of religion, she wouldn't even be able to infer that. In her (giant, UV-sensitive) eyes, the act might well be entirely incomprehensible. The relation, in this as in all such cases, is not of a means-end sort: it is a part-whole relation. The word has whatever meaning it has as *part of* the sentence, the act has whatever meaning it has as *part of* the ritual – and so forth.

In some of those cases in which some natural *x* has meaning, *x* will have *value for us* (in the special sense specified above) on account of the meaning it bears.²³ And in these cases the value will track the meaning. That is to say, when *x* has value for us on account of its meaning, and that meaning depends on some context, *y*, then *x*'s value for us will depend on *y*. For example, suppose that a certain act has meaning in the context of a certain religious ritual. If that act has value for us on account of this meaning, then it will have value as *part of* the ritual. More generally, when something has value for us on account of its meaning, it is of value because it is *part of*, rather than merely a *means to*, something that is of value for us. Though it may well have value for other reasons too, it is of *constitutive* value for us on account of its meanings.²⁴

One important difference between the concept of constitution and that of instrumentality is as follows. As we saw above, claims that *x* is in principle the *only* means to some end sound odd. It is hard to fathom the idea that something has value as a *necessary* or *essential* means to some end. By contrast, there is nothing at all strange about the notion that something might be an essential part of some whole, as apples are essential to apple pie, for instance, or the Mona Lisa's smile is essential to the *Mona Lisa*. That is not to say that if *x* is of constitutive value in relation to some whole, *y*, *x* *must* be an essential part of *y*. But it *might* be. And, indeed, each of the cases considered above

seems to involve some natural x having constitutive value as an *essential* – that is, non-substitutable – part of some meaningful whole.

Take the example of the Saami people. As we saw, reindeer provide a sort of ‘master symbol’ in their culture.²⁵ Amongst other things, they have value for the Saami because various practices involving reindeer, including their capture, herding, castrating, branding and slaughter, contribute to the Saami’s sense of who, as a people, they are.²⁶ In fact reindeer seem to be an essential part of the Saami people’s sense of who they are. As the Saami themselves put it, their culture ‘has traditionally been and remains essentially based on reindeer husbandry.’²⁷ And even if reindeer are not, strictly speaking, an *essential* part of the Saami people’s sense of who they are, they seem to play such an *important* role in it that it would be bad for the Saami were they to lose their connection with the animals.²⁸

Much the same can be said of Big Mountain’s value to Katherine Smith or of the spiritual value of the land for indigenous Australians. In such cases, nature has value on account of the fact that it is, by virtue of the meanings it embodies, part of some meaningful whole. To comprehend such cases, one cannot rely on a causal-instrumentalist model of nature’s value for us. One must appeal to a semiotic-constitutive model, too.

4. Clarifications

Before moving on, let me clarify what I am *not* claiming. First, I do not mean to suggest that if some natural entity has constitutive value for certain humans then it must be of value all things considered. Consider the ‘holy rats’ of the Karni Mata Temple in India, for instance. They seem to have some measure of constitutive value to priests and worshippers on account of the religious meanings they bear. Nonetheless, if the animals turn out to be carrying bubonic plague, they are unlikely to have value all things considered. Second, I do not mean to suggest that if something is *taken* to have constitutive value, it must *really* have that value, nor that if a thing is of constitutive

value to some person, that person must *take* it to have that value. Some entity, *x*, may be of constitutive value to some person, *A*, even if *A* regards *x* as being of value in itself, independently of any relation to her own well-being.²⁹ Indeed, *x* may be of value to *A* even if she regards it as having *disvalue*. (For instance, wild nature might play an important positive role in the form of life of a rugged frontiers-person, even though she regards it as an enemy to be uprooted and replaced with farmland.)

So I have not claimed that every natural entity that has constitutive value has value all things considered, nor that every entity that has constitutive value is taken to have that value. All I have suggested is that some natural entities have value for us on account of the fact that they are parts of certain meaningful wholes.

5. A brief note on naturalness

The preceding arguments might also be used to support the conclusion that certain *non*-natural entities have this kind of value. The Statue of Liberty, for instance, has constitutive value for many New Yorkers just as Uluru ('Ayer's Rock') has constitutive value for some indigenous Australians. What is more, even when a certain natural entity has constitutive value, it is a further question whether it has such value precisely because it is (or is taken to be) natural. Consider reindeer. Even if they qualify as being in some sense natural, it is a further question whether they are of value to the Saami because they are natural in that sense, or because they are regarded as such.

Do any entities have constitutive value precisely because they are (or are taken to be) natural? It depends what one means by 'natural'. In the present context, that word may be taken to mean something like *largely unshaped by human intentions*. So, do entities that are natural in this sense of 'natural' have constitutive value for us precisely because they are natural? Some will reject the question as misguided. Steven Vogel, for instance, argues that to claim that any part of the world is natural in this sense is both apt to generate confusion and indicative of an erroneous dualistic

metaphysics.³⁰ Nonetheless, whether or not this sort of nature-scepticism is justified, the fact remains that many people in modern Western societies do mark out some parts of the world as being largely unshaped by human intentions. And for such people, those entities they regard as natural in this sense may be of constitutive value precisely because they seem to be natural. For example, apparently natural entities may have constitutive value for those who lament the fact that such entities are being either destroyed or, through anthropogenic influences, rendered less natural, and for whom, therefore, 'natural' connotes *fragile*, *precious*, etc. They may also be of constitutive value to green consumers, for whom 'natural' implies *wholesome*, *ethically produced*, etc. In the lives of such people, certain entities may play a central and positive role precisely because they are taken to be natural.

6. Environmental rights

In many cases, natural entities – and, as we just saw, a great many other entities too – are of value because of the roles they play in certain meaningful wholes. Such wholes can take various forms. They can, for instance, take the form of cultures (such as that of the Saami), individual lives (such as that of Katherine Smith) or spiritual traditions (such as the spiritual tradition of a particular group of indigenous Australians).

Suppose that some entity plays an important role in some meaningful whole. It is a further question whether the entity has constitutive *value*, for it acquires constitutive value by virtue of its contribution to the whole only if the whole is *itself* valuable.

To clarify this idea, it may help to consider an extreme case:

Cornflowers: Between 1934 and 1938, the Nazi party was banned in Austria. During this period, Austrian Nazis wore blue cornflowers as secret badges.

Suppose that blue cornflowers are an essential part of a certain meaningful whole - the Nazi form of life. It is a further question whether they acquire constitutive value as a result. And the answer to that further question is clear: the Nazi form of life is not itself valuable; so the cornflowers do not acquire value by contributing to it.

Now consider a second (fictitious) example:

The benevolent volcano: Manaka is a police officer in Tokyo. Following an injury to the head, she comes to believe that Mount Fuji is a benevolent deity that watches over her and ensures that she doesn't come to harm.

Though Mount Fuji plays an important role in Manaka's life, it is a further question whether it acquires constitutive value as a result. And, again, the answer to that question would seem to be 'no'. Manaka's life might not be morally dubious; however, since it is marked by delusion, it does not seem to qualify as a *valuable* whole.

The general principle that is emerging is as follows. To judge whether any particular entity has constitutive value, one must appraise the meaningful whole to which it contributes. If that whole does not qualify as valuable – because it is morally dubious, for instance, or because it is marked by certain delusions – then the entity does not acquire constitutive value by contributing to it.

A third example:

Whale hunting: The annual hunting of long-finned pilot whales plays a key role in the culture of the people of the Faroe Islands in the North Atlantic.

This presents a rather harder case. If the Faroese form of life is morally dubious, then the whales do not acquire constitutive value by virtue of the role they play in it. If, by contrast, that form of life qualifies as valuable – or valuable enough - then the whales have constitutive value, which is,

amongst other things, to say that the value of the creatures is enhanced by the fact that they play an important role in the Faroese form of life. That suggestion will strike some as wrong. However, it is worth noting that even if the whales have constitutive value for this reason, they have other sorts of value, too – and acknowledging the normative ‘pull’ generated by these other values may undermine one’s commitment to the practice of whale-hunting. So, for example, the whales may have constitutive value on account of the roles they play in the Faroese form of life and value by virtue of the fact that they are sentient beings; and the latter may outweigh the former. In such cases, then, the constitutive value of the entity generates a normative pull that is in tension with the ‘pulls’ generated by some of the entity’s other values. Yet not all such conflicts are irresolvable. Sticking with the whale-hunting case, one could hold that the whales gain some measure of constitutive value on account of the roles they play in Faroese culture and yet consistently condemn the practice of *hunting* them. Perhaps the Faroese form of life could evolve in such a way that whales, though not the hunting of them, remained central to it.

I do not want to insist that my reading of the whale-hunting case is correct. I used the example merely in order to convey the general point spelt out above. That point bears upon more than just matters of value; it connects with concepts of moral rights, too. For *if* a certain natural entity is found to be sufficiently important to a certain form of life, and *if*, moreover, that form of life is judged to be sufficiently valuable, then the best way to express the entity’s constitutive value may be by means of appeal to the concept of a *right* to cultural identity.³¹ Return, one last time, to the example of the Saami. If reindeer really are very important to the Saami’s form of life, and if that meaningful whole is indeed valuable, then there may be grounds to argue that reindeer ought to be protected under the auspices of the Saami’s moral or legal right to their own cultural identity. In the legal sphere, such an argument could take its cue from existing legislation designed to protect cultural identity, such as Article 5 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society or Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.³²

7. Beyond nature's value for us

We have been considering nature's value for us – the value it has on account of the contributions it makes to human well-being. Yet readers towards the dark green pole of the environmental spectrum may well dismiss this focus on nature's value *for us* as unacceptably anthropocentric.

An initial response to this charge would be to point out that the semiotic-constitutive model calls into question the following assumption:

(A) nature's value must ultimately have its source either in us humans or in nature.

Consider those cases when some natural entity has constitutive value because it has helped to shape, not just who a certain people take themselves to be, but who they actually are. In such cases, no clear line can be drawn between the people and the natural world they inhabit, and (A) therefore becomes difficult to uphold.

Still, the objection can be pushed. 'Is it not the case,' the critic will ask, 'that nature can have value which isn't value for us?' Nature can indeed have this sort of value. For instance, some natural entities have value because they contribute to the well-being of *nonhuman* beings. I am not sure whether any such entities have constitutive value to any nonhuman beings on account of the meanings they have for them. But some certainly do have *instrumental* value for them, as berries are of value to bears or aspen twigs to beavers. Moreover, perhaps some natural entities are of value not because they contribute to anyone's – or anything's – well-being, but for other reasons. And, in fact, some natural entities might matter to us in a positive way which is not well-expressed by saying that they have *value*.³³ Consider, again, a case where x is essential, not just to A's *sense* of her own identity, but to A's identity. Is x of *value* to A? The claim that it is might be thought to raise a non-identity problem; for what sense (one might wonder) could there be in saying that x is of value to A, if A would not *be* A were it not for her relation to x? To take another example, consider the place

described in Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*. Abbey doesn't seem to think that the sun-bleached landscape of Arches National Park has any instrumental value: it is, he writes, 'totally useless, quite unprofitable.'³⁴ Nor, however, does he appear to think that it has any value on account of the meanings it embodies. In his view, the desert 'means nothing. It is as it is and has no need for meaning.'³⁵ Nonetheless, the place obviously *matters* to Abbey. It matters, I suggest, in a way that is not well captured by talk of value. References to *sanctity* seem more apt.

I will not explore these issues here. But I hope I have done enough to show that we will need to use a broad palette of concepts, if we are to comprehend all the ways that nature matters to us. We will certainly need to look beyond appeals to instrumentality and causation. Amongst other things, we will need to consider part-whole relations and relations of meaning.

¹ Quoted in Ward Churchill, *Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide and Colonization* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2002), p. 151.

² I address the topic of naturalness in Section 5. For now, I merely state that I use the term 'natural' as a rough and ready way of indicating the sorts of entities (events and processes included) that environmentalists characteristically wish to protect. So, setting aside any tricky cases, wolverines, old-growth forests and the annual migration of monarch butterflies are 'in', while i-Pads, Cinnabon stores and the Super Bowl are 'out'.

³ 'On the Origin of Species Notions and their Ethical Limitations', in T. L. Beauchamp and R. G. Frey (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 577-602, at p. 579. The point is also made in the following works: Shelly Kagan, 'Rethinking Intrinsic Value', *The Journal of Ethics* 2 (1998): 277-97, at p. 287; Joel Kupperman, 'The Epistemology of Non-Instrumental Value', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70, 3 (2005): 659-80, at p. 660; Katie McShane, 'Why Environmental Ethics Shouldn't Give Up on Intrinsic Value', *Environmental Ethics* 29 (1) (2007): 43-61, at p. 51.

⁴ For a more detailed defence of the claim that the ecosystem services approach is essentially instrumentalist, see Simon P. James, 'Cultural Ecosystem Services: A Critical Assessment', *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 18 (3) (2015), 338-350.

⁵ Nicole Crowder, 'Off the Grid: Preserving the tradition of reindeer herding in Scandinavia's Sami culture', *Washington Post*, February 10, 2015.

⁶ *Herds of the Tundra: A Portrait of Saami Reindeer Pastoralism* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), pp. 199-200 and p. 113.

⁷ 'Indigenous Australians: Australia's First Peoples exhibition 1996-2015, <https://australianmuseum.net.au/indigenous-australia-the-land>; accessed 7 January 2019.

⁸ On the links between well-being and having a sense of cultural identity, see Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 175-7. For a

different perspective on this issue, see Dale Jamieson, 'The City Around Us', in D. Jamieson, *Morality's Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 244-281, at p. 270.

⁹ On 'aesthetic experiences', see Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005). *Ecosystems and well-being: A framework for assessment*. Washington, DC: Island Press, p. 8; on 'moral satisfaction', see B. Martín-López, I. Iniesta-Arandia, M. García-Llorente, I. Palomo, I. Casado-Arzuaga, D. García, E. Del Amo, E. Gómez-Baggethun, E. Oteros-Rozas, I. Palacios-Agundez, B. Willaarts, J. A. González, F. Santos-Martin, M. Onaindia, C. López-Santiago and C. Montes, 'Uncovering ecosystem service bundles through social preferences', *PLoS ONE*, 7(6) (2012): 1-11, at p. 6. See also Kai M. A. Chan et al's claim that 'cultural services and non-use values generally involve the production of *experiences* that are valued without entering markets.' (K. M. A. Chan, J. Goldstein, T. Satterfield, N. Hannahs, K. Kikiloj, R. Naidoo, N. Vadeboncoeur and U. Woodside, 'Cultural Services and Non-use Values', in Peter Kareiva, Heather Tallis, Taylor H. Ricketts, Gretchen C. Daily and Stephen Polasky (eds.), *Natural Capital: Theory and Practice of Mapping Ecosystem Services* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 206-228, at, p.207. Emphasis in original.)

¹⁰ See, e.g., John O'Neill, Alan Holland and Andrew Light, *Environmental Values* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 176-7.

¹¹ 'Causal Relations', in A. Marmodoro and D. Yates (eds.), *The Metaphysics of Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 127-137, at p. 128. True, not everyone conceives of causal relations in this way: Heil, for instance, thinks that they are internal relations. Still, there is no evidence to suggest that those party to debates about nature's value conceive of causal relations as being anything other than external relations.

¹² Consider the following statement from one Saami elder who, due to his age, had been deleted from the register of his pastoral district: 'I have never had any other livelihood than reindeer management. For the whole of my life I have belonged to my District. I feel that the whole of my identity is bound up with my reindeer district... I feel it to be a wholly unreasonable and unacceptable attack on my person and my self-image that, with a stroke of a pen, I am taken off the register...' (Paine, *Herds of the Tundra*, p. 191)

¹³ T. Sikor, J. Fisher, R. Few, A. Martin and M. Zeitoun, 'The justices and injustices of ecosystem services', in T. Sikor (ed.), *The Justices and Injustices of Ecosystem Services* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 187-200, at p. 199. A similar case is developed in H. Ernston and S. Sörlin, 'Ecosystem services as technology of globalization: On articulating values in urban nature', *Ecological Economics* 86 (2013): 274-284.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Dan Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism*, translated by Alice L. Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 8-9.

¹⁵ See further, H. P. Grice, 'Meaning', *Philosophical Review* 66, No.3 (1957): 377-88.

¹⁶ I'm skirting round some difficult philosophical issues here. For a thorough and (I think) compelling defence of the claim that non-linguistic items can have meaning, see David E. Cooper, *Meaning* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), chapters 1 and 2. Environmental hermeneuticists have investigated the meanings of specifically natural things. For a good introduction to that field, see Martin Drenthen, 'Environmental Hermeneutics', in S. M. Gardiner and A. Thompson (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 162-173.

¹⁷ *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 96.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Miaohui, quoted in B. Grant (ed.) *Daughters of Emptiness: Poems of Chinese Buddhist Nuns* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003), p. 122.

¹⁹ See Mark Cocker, *A Tiger in the Sand: Selected Writings on Nature* (London: John Cape, 2006), pp. 113-114.

²⁰ For one attempt to do this, see David E. Cooper, *A Philosophy of Gardens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 113-122.

²¹ Recognising this might be thought to put pressure on the distinction between causal relations and relations of meaning; for one could argue that to see some natural *x* as causally efficacious simply *is* to see it as having a certain meaning. If one takes this route, then the distinction between causal relations and relations of meaning could be reframed as a distinction between two kinds of meaning. Alternatively, the distinction between causal relations and relations of meaning could be challenged from the opposite direction, by arguing that talk of the meaning of non-linguistic items can be translated into talk of causal relations (think ‘Those clouds mean rain’). I am supposing, against both sets of critics, that a philosophically useful distinction can be drawn between causal relations and relations of meaning.

²² See further, David E. Cooper, ‘Life and Meaning’, *Ratio* 18 (2) (2005): 125-137, at pp. 126-7.

²³ In various works, Alan Holland has argued that environmental philosophers should pay more attention to our ‘meaningful relations’ with nature. However, whereas he ‘recommends that environmental decision-making should concern itself with the continuation of meaning *rather than* the preservation of value’, I want to keep both concepts – that of meaning and that of value – in play. (Holland, ‘The value space of meaningful relations’, in E. Brady and P. Phemister (eds.), *Transformative Values: Human-Environment Relations in Theory and Practice* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), pp. 3-15, at p. 14; my emphasis.

²⁴ I provide a fuller account of the role of constitutive values in environmental ethics in both ‘Cultural Ecosystem Services: A Critical Assessment’ and ‘Ecosystem Services and the Value of Places’, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 19 (2016): 101-113. The concept of constitutive value, as used in such contexts, is in some respects similar to that of relational value. On the latter, see Kai M. A. Chan, P. Balvanera, K. Benessaiah, M. Chapman, S. Díaz, E. Gómez-Baggethun, R. Gould, N. Hannahs, K. Jax, S. Klain, G. W. Luck, B. Martín-López, B. Muraca, B. Norton, K. Ott, U., Pascual, T, Satterfield, M. Tadaki, J. Taggart and N. Turner, ‘Why protect nature? Rethinking values and the environment’, *PNAS* 113 (6) (2016): 1462-1465. On the connections between the two concepts, see L. Knippenberg, W. T. de Groot, R. J. G. van den Born, P. Knights and B. Muraca, ‘Relational value, partnership, eudaimonia: a review’, *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 35 (2018), pp. 39-45.

²⁵ Paine, *Herds of the Tundra*, p. 138.

²⁶ *Castration, branding and slaughter*, note. What we have here, I suggest, is a conflict between axiological considerations (ones concerning the value of the reindeer) and patient-centred ones (ones pertaining to the fact that, as sentient beings, the reindeer make certain direct claims upon moral agents).

²⁷ Quoted in Avigail Eisenberg, *Reasons of Identity: A Normative Guide to the Political and Legal Assessment of Identity Claims* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 129. In fact, just a few centuries ago, the Saami were reindeer *hunters* (Paine, *Herds of the Tundra*, p. 13). Nonetheless, reindeer herding would seem to be an essential part of who many of *today’s* Saami see themselves as being.

²⁸ Thanks to Don Maier for suggesting this point to me. Arne Naess makes a similar observation: ‘The Lapps of Arctic Norway have been hurt by interference with a river for the purpose of hydroelectricity. In court, accused of illegal demonstration at the river, one Lapp said that the part of

the river in question was “part of himself”. This kind of spontaneous answer is not uncommon among people...’ Naess interprets this statement in terms of his own interesting but extravagant metaphysics of ‘Self-realisation’. It seems to me, however, that the protestor might have been expressing a more familiar feeling: that the relevant section of the river was integral to his sense of personal and/or cultural identity. (See Naess, ‘Self-realization: an ecological approach to being in the world’, *The Trumpeter* 4, 3 (summer 1987), pp. 35-42, at p. 37. Note that Naess uses the term ‘Lapps’ for the people in question. Nowadays, ‘Saami’ is preferred.)

²⁹ I am grateful to Chris Diehm for drawing my attention to this possibility.

³⁰ Steven Vogel, *Thinking Like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

³¹ For a detailed discussion of that right and its role in international law, see Valeria Piergigli, ‘The Right to Cultural Identity’, *Annuaire international de justice constitutionnelle* (29) (2013): 597-619.

³² The two documents are available at <https://rm.coe.int/1680083746> and <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>, respectively (both accessed on 7 January 2019). On the application of such legal instruments in disputes concerning the cultural rights of the Saami, see Martin Scheinin, ‘The right of a people to enjoy its culture: Towards a Nordic Saami Rights Convention’, *International Studies in Human Rights* 95 (2008): 151-168, and Yvonne M. Donders, *Towards a Right to Cultural Identity?* (Cambridge: Intersentia, 2002), Chapter XI.

³³ See further, Simon P. James, ‘The Trouble with Environmental Values’, *Environmental Values* 25 (2) (2016): 131-144.

³⁴ *Desert Solitaire: a Season in the Wilderness* (London: Robin Clark Ltd, 1968), p. 29.

³⁵ Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, p. 194.