

Animals, Ethics and Geography

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You ought to follow the example of shunk-Tokecha (wolf). Even when he is surprised and runs for his life, he will pause to take one more look at you before he enters his final retreat. So you must take a second look at everything you see.

Ohiyesa¹

Introduction

For many of us the moral status of animals seems abundantly clear. For thousands of years most people believed animals to be resources that lay beyond the boundaries of moral community. Like the rest of the earth, animals were said to exist solely for the benefit of humans. Aristotle put the matter nicely:

Plants exist for the sake of animals, and brute beasts for the sake of man -- domestic animals for his use and food, wild ones (or at any rate, most of them) for food and other accessories of life, such as clothing and various tools. Since nature does nothing purposeless or in vain, it is undeniably true that she has made all animals for the sake of man.²

If the moral status of animals is so clear, why am I bothering with this topic? The reason is that, like shunk-Tokecha, geographers and other scholars across the academy are taking a second (and clear-eyed) look at animals and animal ethics. As a consequence of our inquiries, we are remapping the moral landscape of animal-human relations, revealing a diverse world of ethically relevant non-human beings. Moral value is the keystone concept for remapping this world and locating animals in our moral landscape. My intention in this chapter is to centre our attention on the subject of moral value, and present a geographically informed argument on the moral status of animals. This avowedly normative project is indispensable, for it holds the key to reconfiguring how humans (including geographers) understand and relate to the animal world.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of “geoethics”, a geographically informed theory of moral understanding that positions context at the centre of our moral concerns. Geoethics’ contextual emphasis on geographical being and community serves as the starting

point for our exploration of moral value. Next, I examine anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric value paradigms (including one I call geocentrism) to explain the case for including animals in our moral community. I conclude with a set of principles to help guide our thought and action toward the animal world.

Geoethics

Ethics and Geography

Like any complex tradition of scholarship, ethics has a blizzard of concepts -- definitions, distinctions, principles, theories, etc. -- and espousing order in this haze can be difficult. Yet Socrates' definition provides an excellent place to start. Socrates reminds us that when we discuss ethics, "we are discussing no small question, but how we ought to live".³ In other words, ethics concerns how we should live our lives, what ends we should seek, and what means we should use in pursuit of our ends. Through moral discourse we develop norms to serve as guidelines for evaluating and directing our conduct toward animals and people, nature and society. Moral reflection does this by generating justifications for our actions using principles about what is good, right, just, or of value. Perhaps most importantly, ethical norms not only reflect who we are, but simultaneously condition how we think and act, and thereby who we may become.⁴

Yet what does it mean to seek justifiable principles for action? Answers to this question vary with one's ethical tradition. My answer is rooted in the hermeneutic tradition of moral understanding, where 'justifiable' means good and defensible reasons, 'principles' are rules-of-thumb applicable in a wide range of circumstances, and 'actions' are statements or behaviours that affect the well-being of others. Ethicians are therefore in the business of using principles which are reasonable, widely applicable, and practicable to adjudicate (and perhaps solve) moral problems.⁵

Ethics is sometimes dismissed as an ineffective word-game in the face of unequal power relations. Such a dismissal is ill-advised, as ethics is both a critique and source of power. As a critique of power, moral norms (however they may be named or generated) are the necessary concepts we use to identify and analyze oppressive power relations. Ethics is also the creative ground from which we envision a non-exploitative future. The importance of ethics, therefore, does not diminish in the face of indifference or malevolence: the harsher the circumstances, the more we need recourse to sources of moral critique and renewal. As a source of power, ethics constitutes (in part) how we understand (describe, explain, and evaluate) whether we are in 'right relationship' with the world, that is, whether our individual and collective lives are morally worthwhile and defensible. Ethics delivers a power of insight that unmask previously unproblematized power relations. Just as importantly, it deeply affects human motivations and actions in light of that insight. People routinely struggle against injustice and compassionately help others, often at great personal risk or self-sacrifice. They do so not only because their moral outlook helps identify wrong-doing or suffering, but because it helps motivate them to act and make ethically directed change a reality. This is why ethical debate is so important, contentious, and consequential -- a moral 'victory' will influence not only our vision but our actions in the world, and this certainly applies to the world of animals.⁶

Unfortunately, geographers commonly set their moral interests and intentions in the background. Perhaps this is because many of us think of ourselves as disinterested physical or social scientists seeking universal explanations for spatial phenomena. In a similar vein, we

often marginalize the ethical relevance of geography itself, regarding moral inquiry as external to the discipline, something best left to philosophy, a stance that does not reflect the character of ethics itself, nor the ethical inquires of other disciplines alongside philosophy.⁷ Both these postures contribute to a moral lassitude: we do not ask moral questions of ourselves in an ongoing or deep manner, nor do we fully appreciate the sources of moral insight latent in the discipline.⁸

As importantly, geography is not a value-free or value-neutral inquiry. There is a wide-ranging consensus that all human understanding is at least value-laden, if not rife with moral implications. The moral experience -- a conscientious reflection on the ends and means of life, an emotional disposition to nurture, a desire to know what is right or good as opposed to expedient or profitable, a sense of injustice over a state-of-affairs -- is ubiquitous to human life. Humanity's continual engagement with ethical debate is one of our species' special competencies. The reason(s) for this competence are intricate, and whether it is explained by an innate sociality or cultural dispositions, the phenomenon is ever-present in human beings.⁹ Geographers are like other people in this regard. Whether we know it or not, we bring moral presuppositions to our work, and whether we like it or not, our work has moral ramifications. Indeed, many of us became geographers because we care about the world and want to make a positive difference.

GeoEthics

What is geoethics, and what does it add to our moral understanding of animals? Geography has much to contribute to ethical theory, discourse, and action. The contribution emphasized by geoethics is the importance of context. Geoethics develops this insight into a distinct kind of contextual ethics, one which generates situated understandings of moral problems. With respect to animals, geoethics directs our attention to the shared contexts of all life-forms, contexts which inform our moral understanding and relationship to animals.

Geoethics develops the contextual insight of geography in the following way. Geographical knowledge is more often than not appreciative of the natural, social, spatial, and temporal circumstances of phenomena. These circumstances are what we call contexts, and when taken together, what I call *geographic contexts*. Geography is a contextualizing tradition of scholarship: geographers commonly contextualize cultural and natural phenomena by emphasizing the interrelations between sites and situations, humans and nature, values and social actions. We indirectly refer to contextuality in many ways -- space, place, location, positionality, networks, linkages, scale.

All human activity, including moral conflict, occur at *sites* embedded in *situations*, making geographic context a constitutive element of all ethical problems. As the site and situation change, so too (to greater or lesser degree) does the moral problem, the interpretations, intentions and actions regarding that problem, as well as the intended or unintended consequences of those actions. In other words, changes in the geographic context of ethical problems can change the problems themselves, as well as our understanding and response to those problem. If we wish to find appropriate moral guidance, we must take context into account.

With respect to shared contexts, there is a continuity between humans and animals. From distant evolutionary lineages to intimate loving relationships, animals are both “familiar and extraordinary”.¹⁰ Humans have often articulated a radical separation from other species using cultural, linguistic, cognitive, social, technological, and theological criteria (to name a few). These differences do exist and we should not make light of them. But the differences remain

distinctions, not dichotomies. We are simultaneously part of and distinct from the natural world, related to yet different from the other species with whom we inhabit the earth.

As *geographic beings* we are necessarily *embodied* as individuals, and *ennatured*, that is, situated in nature's rich web of life-forms and life-forming processes. The natural world is a precondition for our individual and species existence. What this means for human and non-human animals alike is that our consciousness manifests differing kinds of cognitive and perceptual faculties that are consistent with our particular species' traits. At one end of the spectrum are sophisticated biological 'machines', life-forms akin to automatons, such as single-celled organisms. Their consciousness is nil, but their relation to us is both evolutionary and ecological. At the other end are species like ourselves that manifest a high degree of consciousness. Humans, for example, excel at cognition, language, social organization, and technology. No other species manifests these characteristics so abundantly (for better or worse). The power thus enabled over the natural world is astounding. George Perkins Marsh was correct when he termed humans "geographic agents" of environmental change.¹¹ Some groups of animals -- canines, cetaceans, felines, and primates -- share analogous characteristics, the emergent properties of well-developed nervous systems, comparatively large brains, and complex social groupings. They have a commensurate (if different) degree of consciousness and emotional authenticity that parallels, and in some cases exceeds, our own.¹² More striking still is the communicative competence manifest by human and some non-human animals. Humans are supremely capable of empathizing and communicating with our own kind. Yet we are also capable, to varying degrees, of a similar understanding with others of different species. This is so because they too, in their own ways, are sentient, sapient, social, and communicative, emotional, and social beings.¹³

Animals and humans share more than an individualizing embodiment and a contextualizing ennaturation. Wild and domestic, in wilderness or the countryside or the city, animals and humans share *geographic environments* -- reciprocally constituting natural, social, and artifactual contexts. We humans live amongst a host of other social creatures, from companion and work animals, to human adaptable yet wild neighbors like squirrels, skunks, raccoons and coyotes, to wild and seldom seen bears, caribou, cougars, pine martins, and wolves. This is the *geographic community* -- multiple and overlapping communities of humans, domestic animals, and wild creatures.¹⁴

Moral Value and Geocentrism

Moral Value

How scholars conceptualize and identify moral value varies significantly.¹⁵ Some claim it is an intuitively known, objective truth. Others believe it reports nothing more than emotional states or aggregate social preferences. A more sophisticated and contextual account is developed by Holmes Rolston. Without denying the element that feelings and preferences can play in moral valuations, Rolston also points out how moral value names distinctive and/or intrinsic properties of a being or thing, properties that are necessary for cogent ethical thinking. In this view, while humans are "valuers" generating "valuations", the "value" can be a property intrinsic or distinctive to the being or thing itself. A moral value in this sense is both objective and subjective. People recognize something in the world external to themselves that is critical element for moral understanding, and they call this a 'moral value'.¹⁶

An example may help to clarify this point. Sapience (self-awareness) is a distinctive and intrinsic property of *Homo sapiens*. It is an emergent property of our physical natures and

cultural milieu. This is not to say that it is exclusively or uniquely human, but it is a defining feature of our species nonetheless. To reflect on human morality without taking sapience into account is impossible. Indeed, it is our sapient nature that is responsible for our species' capacity for ethical thought and conduct. In a similar way, sapience is a defining feature of certain families of animals -- primates, canines, felines, and cetaceans (to name a few). While their self-awareness differs in degree from that of humans, there is a continuity between related kinds of animals and the forms of consciousness they manifest. More importantly, while humans may recognize and name this sapience, it exists independent of our recognition and naming. It is an objective (non-subjective) feature of some animals themselves. So my friend Copper (an exuberant Weaton terrier) is cognizant of his own life-world, irrespective of whether I or other humans acknowledge that fact. Reflecting on the moral value and considerability of animals, like Copper, without taking their sapience into account, would miss a feature as critical to them as it is to ourselves.

Geographic context is an important, if implicit, element in Rolston's system of recognizing and naming moral value. Rolston implicitly uses the characteristics of geographic context when providing case-study vignettes to explore the nuances of a particular moral value. What distinctive properties exist, as well as which of these we use to generate moral values, will depend on the natural, social, spatial, and temporal circumstances of a particular case. The moral values identified by human valuers may therefore differ from place to place, and from time to time (even in the same place). Yet values are not simply relative to social norms and personal desires. While contextual differences produces a diversity of values, some of these values (like sapience) are real properties of the world. In animal ethics, subjectivity (sapience and sentience) is often emphasized. We tend to direct our attention (and affections) to 'charismatic megafauna' such as wolves, apes, and elephants, subjective creatures like ourselves. And in my experience, it is easier for people to appreciate the moral value of a highly subjective creature, than a disembodied social or ecological relationship. Yet subjectivity is not the only real property of the world from which we generate a moral value. The mutual attachments between people and companion animals, the ability people have to empathize with the personal and collective well-being of wild or distant animals, the effects that social structures and policies have on animal well-being, and the essential role animals play in the integrity of ecological relationships (e.g., reproduction, adaptation, and speciation), are all real features of animal-human relations. Social relationships and ecological processes are, therefore, generative sources of moral value as well. Alongside the emphasis on subjectivity then, our moral values may legitimately emphasize care and integrity. Whether we stress subjectivity, care, or integrity in ethical deliberation will depend on the characteristic features of the animals themselves, as well as the context in which they exist.

A common means of identifying the presence of subjective, social, or ecological values is through two interrelated distinctions -- intrinsic versus extrinsic value, and direct versus indirect duties.¹⁷ *Intrinsic value* refers to a being having moral value in and of itself, while *extrinsic value* (also called instrumental value) refers to the usefulness of a being for someone else. Because we regard beings with intrinsic value as ends in themselves, they are owed *direct duties*, meaning we have direct moral responsibilities to these creatures. Beings with extrinsic value, however, are not regarded as ends in themselves. They are things, means to another's ends, and we can only have *indirect duties* to them, meaning ancillary duties that derive from our direct duties to others. To claim that animals have intrinsic value, then, is to say that they are ends in themselves and humans have direct duties to non-human creatures. Alternatively, to claim that animals have only extrinsic value is to say that they are only means to our ends, and we have only indirect duties to these creatures.

Moral Community and Boundary Transgressions

Having distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic, we can now appreciate why the concept of moral value is so critically important -- it determines who has intrinsic value, and is the direct recipient of moral duty. Beings with intrinsic value are said to be within our 'moral community'. A *moral community* is composed of all beings having moral standing, where *standing* means that one's well-being can be considered for moral reasons. Moral value is the criteria (often unrecognized) by which we determine who has standing within our moral community. Without moral value one is left outside the boundaries of moral community.¹⁸ In effect, moral value marks a boundary between ethically considerable persons and inconsiderable things. In human affairs, these boundaries are most obvious in extreme cases. For example, racism and ethnocentrism attaches greater significance to the moral value of some human beings than others. Thus Nazi ideology regarded Jews as subhuman and homosexuals as pathologically abnormal. Both were consequently placed outside the Nazi's moral community. The consequences of this kind of boundary-marking was tragic -- genocide. This is a pattern of boundary marking with which we are all too familiar, from the massacres in Cambodia and Rwanda, to ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.

This kind of boundary-marking is also at work with regard to animals. Just as it does for people, the placing of animals outside humanity's moral community justifies the most brutal and exploitative of power relations. But unlike humans, animals cannot organize and challenge the practice for themselves: they require human interlocutors to speak and act in their interests. When we speak out for the moral value of animals, we are engaging in *boundary transgressions*, that is, transgressing the boundaries of our human centred moral community by demanding the inclusion of animals.¹⁹ Boundary transgressions elicit great alarm amongst anthropocentrists, and eventuates several objections. Rooted in claims about theology, agency, and species loyalty, each objection tends to be acontextual and categorical, predicating its recognition of moral value on one or more human characteristics. Because these criteria are self-referential, they have the effect of creating thence reinforcing specious moral boundaries between animals and humans.

One theological objection holds that God made men and women in His (sic) image, gave dominion over the earth to human beings, and did not endow animals with a soul. For these reasons animals have only extrinsic value. While this represents the oldest and dominant tradition of Judeo-Christian argument, theological interpretations of creation have undergone a tremendous shift in recent decades. For Judeo-Christian eco-theologians, all of nature is in the image of God (with humans representing only one aspect of that image), dominion is not to be interpreted as exploitation but as stewardship, and God pronounced the creation and all its animals good on each of the six 'days' before the creation of humans. For these reasons animals have intrinsic value, with or without a soul. Given our distinct species capacities, our earthly role is to act as guardians of creation, to protect and restore the earth for the well-being of ourselves, future generations, animals, and the rest of nature.²⁰

According to the agency objection, animals lack the sentience to be self-aware political subjects, the linguistic skill to understand moral rights and obligations, and the capacity to reciprocate a moral regard for human being. They are not, therefore, agents of their own moral lives. Because moral agency is the 'test' of moral value, only humans are within the boundary defining the moral community. Critics of the agency argument challenge its veracity and relevancy. First, as we have noted before, many animals are self-aware subjects living complex psychological lives. Denying moral value to these creatures, while justifying such for ourselves using similar criteria, is contradictory. Second, while animals are generally incapable

of linguistic production (chimpanzee and ape exceptions notwithstanding), they are quite capable of communicative expression and comprehension, as anyone who has been charged by a moose in rut or been comforted by a companion animal in a moment of emotional need can tell you. It is certainly true that animals cannot speak to us about their needs or intentions, for like human infants, they are not the sort of creatures who are capable of doing so. Yet by attending to their communications and behaviours we can interpret their needs, and thus what interests they have that require our respect. Third, the ability to reciprocate rights and duties is hardly a determinative criterion for human membership in a moral community. Infants, persons with severe developmental disabilities, and otherwise unconscious or asleep adults are in no position to reciprocate anything. Yet we continue to recognize moral value in them, and they retain their standing in our moral community.²¹

A non-reductive resolution of this issue is to recognize that animals and humans are distinct kinds of moral beings. Animals are moral 'recipients', incapable of ethical actions, but legitimate recipients of human moral consideration nonetheless. In contrast humans are moral 'agents' -- "the moral primate" in the words of Mary Midgley -- beings capable of moral thought and conduct, obligated to consider the consequences of their actions for other moral beings, human and non-human alike.²²

The final objection is the assertion that humans have (or should have) a species loyalty that overrides all moral relationships to other animals. Species loyalists worry that we lose our moral concern for humans when we become concerned about animals. There are powerful social and biological reasons why humans do have a partiality for our own kind. Although we should not overstate the case, there are human relationships that are impossible, difficult, or inappropriate to share with animals. Yet there are interspecies relationships that are as deeply (if differently) satisfying, and we should not discount these either. Moreover, there is no reason to suppose that a moral regard for animals will diminish our moral regard for people. Indeed, the practice of moral concern across a range of beings and issues may strengthen our ethical insights and commitments. In addition, moral boundary-marking based on species membership is potentially malicious. It replicates, in the worst possible ways, the identity-based arguments that legitimate prejudice, injustice, violence, and genocide against other humans. Indeed, many moralists have noted the continuities that exist between the exploitation of the human and animal worlds.²³

Value Paradigms

We are now in a position to specify the value paradigms which structure our individual and collective understandings of the moral status of animals. A *value paradigm* is a conceptual map of moral value. Value paradigms are configurations of concepts regarding moral value that are used to orient and guide our actions in the social and natural world. They help us navigate ethical and social space by locating where we stand in *moral* relation to others. Most crucially, they lay-down the boundaries of intrinsic value, and in so doing, map the extent to which our moral community overlaps the geographic community.

Anthropocentrism claims that moral value is centred in *Homo sapiens* alone. Humans are the centre of all intrinsic value -- we are ends in ourselves, alone within the boundary of moral community, and owe consideration only to other human beings. We are, in short, the only beings to have moral standing. Non-human animals have only extrinsic value -- they are either means to human ends, or instrumentally valuable for the continuation of ecosystemic functions. They are not morally considerable as they exist outside the moral community, and they can consequently have no moral standing or significance within that community. In anthropocentrism, the boundaries of the moral community are a subset of the geographic

community. Anthropocentrism has been the dominant value paradigm in western discourse on animals and nature. As a taken-for-granted and generally uncontested norm, it is embedded in virtually all laws, policies and regulations about animals, society and nature.²⁴

Despite its dominance in our public discourse, anthropocentrism is not the only value paradigm about animals. In opposition to anthropocentrism are multiple value paradigms collectively termed *non-anthropocentrism*. As a whole, non-anthropocentrism claims that moral value is not centred on human beings. It extends beyond human beings to include parts or all of the natural world, including animals as either individuals, species, or ecosystems. Non-anthropocentrism does not deny the moral value of human beings, nor does it set the moral value of animals above that of humans. Rather it expands the boundary of moral concern to include non-human animals.

Where non-anthropocentric value paradigms do differ is in their scale of analysis. From these different scales of analysis come different locations of moral value. *Biocentrism* emphasizes the parts of nature, that is, animals at an individual scale of analysis, and centres moral value in individual creatures themselves. Biocentrists see a continuity between humans and animals, a continuum of subjectivity that help us recognize the moral value in ourselves as akin to that of other animals. Biocentrism is the predominant value paradigm of the traditional humane movements, as well as the more radical animal rights movement. *Ecocentrism* emphasizes wholes in nature, that is, collectivities of animals at a systemic scale of analysis (e.g., populations, species, ecological communities), and centres moral value in the ecological functions of species and ecosystems. Ecocentrists claim that the moral value of these wholes outweighs the significance of their constitutive units, that is, individual animals. Ecocentrism is a widely-held doctrine in both mainstream environmentalism, as well as the values-oriented wing of disciplines like conservation biology.²⁵ In biocentrism and ecocentrism, the boundary of intrinsic value overlaps both the moral and geographic communities, but only at a certain scale of analysis.

Geocentrism

I have no argument with anthropocentrism's strong moral valuation of human beings, and I appreciate the equally strong claims of biocentrism and ecocentrism that moral value extends beyond the sphere of humans. Yet I am equally uncomfortable with biocentrism and ecocentrism's *a priori* location of moral value in individual or collective life-forms. Because most animal and environmental ethicists are contending with anthropocentrism, the differing scales of analysis in biocentrism and ecocentrism remains under-theorized. Unfortunately, this under-theorization has led animal ethicists into dead-ends. Tom Regan's overinterpretation of ecocentrism as a form of "environmental fascism" is a case in point. Because Regan is pre-committed to an "individualistic" (biocentric) scale of analysis, he rejects the efforts of other ethicists to think "holistically" (ecocentrically) about species or ecosystems.²⁶ Geographers too, have appropriated these paradigms as fixed categories, deploying them in a manner insensitive to geographic context.²⁷ This rigid and acontextual approach to the moral value of animals is unnecessarily restrictive, and positions us between binary choices -- to value either parts or wholes, individuals or species and ecosystems, but not both. This binary logic creates a false dichotomy, and constrains our ability to think clearly and creatively.

As a value paradigm, *geocentrism* avoids false dichotomies. It emphasizes both the parts and wholes of the earth. This includes animals and humans as individuals, species, and ecosystemic components of the geosphere. Geocentrism is similar to other forms of non-anthropocentrism because it does not locate moral value in humans alone. It is dissimilar to biocentrism and ecocentrism, however, because it recognizes plural centres of moral value in

both parts *and* wholes. The vast diversity of life creates a multiplicity of diverse life-forms with distinct properties. From these we generate moral values, the diversity of which reflects this continuum of parts and wholes. To account for the shifting scales and circumstances of moral values, we need to contextually adjust our understanding to fit the properties of the being(s) and situations we are examining. Recognizing the simultaneous and overlapping importance of subjectivity, social relationships, and ecological function in moral understanding, geocentrism regards all animals (including humans) as ends in themselves, as well as a means to other ends; we are variable mixtures of both intrinsic and extrinsic values. In geocentrism, the maps of the moral and geographic communities are isomorphic at whatever scale of analysis we choose.

Practicing Solidarity in the Geographic Community

The whales turn and glisten, plunge
and sound and rise again,
Hanging over subtly darkening deeps
Flowing like breathing planets
in the sparkling whorls of
living light --

Gary Snyder, "Mother Earth: Her Whales"²⁸

Solidarity

Gary Snyder is a geographer. Not a professional geographer, but a geographer at heart, a poet with a profound sense of place, and an acute understanding of the intricate symbolic, social and natural connections between animals, humans, and nature. He has a talent for opening our hearts and minds to the wondrous geodiversity of this world. He can also strike a sadder, even angry note, unveiling how we live at the expense of ourselves and our neighbors -- wild and domestic animals, species and ecosystems, indigenous peoples, the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized -- all the 'others' with whom we share this planet.

Brazil says "sovereign use of Natural Resources"
Thirty thousand kinds of unknown plants.
The living actual people of the jungle
sold and tortured
And a robot in a suit who peddles a delusion called "Brazil"
can speak for *them?*²⁹

Penned at the United Nations Environment Conference (Stockholm) in 1972, "Mother Earth: Her Whales" portrays our home as resplendent -- a wondrous "breathing planet", a cybernetic ecosystem transforming matter and radiant energy into "living light", a geome (global biome) packed with an ever evolving diversity of life-forms and life-ways. Our home is also materially and spiritually degraded -- raped of resources, its creatures (human and non-human alike) enslaved or exploited for profit, the richness of life "parceled out" like commodities with nary a concern for the well-being of ourselves, our neighbors, or future generations. Thus,

The robots argue how to parcel out our Mother Earth
To last a little longer

like vultures flapping
Belching, gurgling,
near a dying Doe.³⁰

Central to Snyder's writing is a moral valuation of animals and the rest of nature.³¹ Snyder envisions a moral community to which all life belongs, a global geographical community in the language of geoethics. This moral valuation of animals and nature destabilizes the routine view of animals as resources, as instrumental means to human ends. The whales, for example, are not fungible commodities for humans to use at our pleasure, but members of an extended moral community. They are morally considerable in and of themselves; they have intrinsic value; they are the property of no one -- except the web of life we call Mother Earth.

For these reasons, Snyder would have us stand in solidarity with each member of the geographical community against the forces that ravage and despoil animals, nature and ourselves.

Solidarity. The People.
Standing Tree People!
Flying Bird People!
Swimming Sea People!
Four-legged, two-legged, people!³²

Thus for Snyder our solidarity should not be restricted to ourselves, human beings, the 'two-legged'. Our solidarity should extend to the standing, flying, swimming, and four-legged 'people', that is, with the geographical community of life in which we are pragmatically and morally interlaced. But what does solidarity *mean*?

Solidarity is a condition of relative unity binding members of a group into a fellowship of rights and responsibilities. Amongst human beings the basis for unity is multi-faceted. It has a social edge with respect to material interests or shared identity(ies); a locational edge regarding affective ties to place; a political edge with regards to contested and common purposes. There is a moral edge as well. Solidarity presupposes a felt recognition that we are part of a moral community of beings whose welfare is not only important to our own well-being, but is important in its own right, a value for which we are willing to struggle and to sacrifice.

The question remains, however, whether solidarity is possible between humans and the other animals. Because of our distinct capabilities, humans practice solidarity with one another through flexible strategies of mutual aid -- fair trade, social networks and alliances, political negotiations and protests and direct actions, appeals to good sense, moral arguments, and the like. Basic to all these strategies is a context of linguistically constituted personal and social interactions. We argue, bargain, promise, scheme, organize, and evaluate our actions. Structuralist accounts of social forces notwithstanding, we act with a high degree of intentionality. We are after all, *Homo sapiens*, the wise ones. Yet the gifts of animals are different from our own. Animals are not the sort of creatures who can linguistically conceptualize and strategize mutual aid. How we may practice solidarity in our relationship to them is, therefore, on the face of things, not at all clear. Moreover, acting on behalf of animal well-being is obviously a large and complex undertaking. We have individuals and species, domestic and wild, microfauna and megafauna, human needs and social justice, as just some of the contextual considerations to take into account.

Principles for Solidarity

A moral principle is a rule-of-thumb used to help guide our thought and conduct in the world. Principles are developed from moral concepts into prescriptive or proscriptive statements. Thus the moral concept of equality is developed into the principle, "Treat like cases alike; different cases differently". Because they inform our ethical outlooks and deliberations, principles are very helpful (if insufficient in themselves) to the task of changing or concretizing our moral relations in the world. Good principles are guidelines, not axiomatic truths, and have four characteristics that we should keep in mind. First, they should be *general*, that is, applicable in a wide variety of contexts. Second, they should be *practicable*, by which I do not mean narrowly pragmatic or immediately attainable, but possible in the long run for agents of average intelligence, good will, and social organization. Third, they should be *interpretable*, as in subject to a legitimate range of interpretation and innovative use. Finally, they should be *limited*, meaning we should be suspicious of simplistic formulas and give due regard to a principle's intended use(s) and limitations.

Geoethics can help us actualize solidarity by providing principles directed at animal-human relations. So I conclude this chapter with four principles -- geocentrism, equal consideration, hard cases, and moral carrying capacity. These are not the only principles we might (or should) consult, but I offer these as a geographically informed place for geographers to begin their moral and policy reflections (Figure 7).³³

1. Principle of Geocentrism -- *Recognize the moral value of animals, humans, and the rest of nature.* This is our "first principle" because it values animals in our moral landscape, encourages humans to acknowledge their membership in the geographic community, and implies duties to respect and protect the community's human and non-human members. It also emphasizes the importance of considering 'soft' (non-tangible) values in the public policy process, and as such, helps reveal the implicit value paradigms that pervade such discussions. The words 'respect and protect' are intentionally meant to make this principle a strong regulative ideal, that is, we not only have duties to refrain from causing harm (a duty of non-malevolence), but duties to act to promote the well-being of the geographic community as a whole (a duty of benevolence). This principle does not deny or diminish our parallel concerns for human rights, interests, or justice. It does, however, reject the automatic privileging of human over animal well-being.

2. Principle of Equal Consideration -- *Give equal consideration to the well-being of all creatures affected by our actions.*³⁴ This principle's intent is to help us identify and then balance the well-being of animals and humans. If we refuse to transgress anthropocentrism's moral boundary, the matter is comparatively simple -- we restrict moral value to human beings, pass humane legislation to protect our emotional sensibilities about the treatment of individual animals, and conserve the biological resources of species and ecosystems efficiently. The matter becomes complex when we recognize animals as members of our moral community, and is much more so when we realize there are several scales of analysis and associated varieties of moral value.

Differences in moral value are important when weighing competing ethical concerns, and thus the *moral significance* we accord a claim is a critical feature of moral deliberation.³⁵ The well-being of certain beings can be more significant than that of others, such as when the well-being of an human being outweighs that of an insect because of the person's sapience and social relationships. But this does not mean that we never face inevitably difficult choices about whose well-being to favour. Weighing multiple kinds of moral values (e.g., subjectivity, social relationships, ecological relations) is complex and fraught with uncertainty. An example is the conundrum of animal experimentation. There are reasonable arguments that justify certain experiments as necessary for the benefit of both human and non-human animals. Yet there is no justification beyond anthropocentrism to forcibly use apes and chimpanzees in

medical experiments we are unwilling to perform upon ourselves.³⁶ In each case, the significance of different ethical claims must be weighed carefully.

Most importantly, this principle does not justify outlandish comparisons. Humans are not microbes, sapient creatures are not machines, and species are not individuals. Each of these will manifest differing kinds of moral value as we change the scale of our analysis. Nor does it require us to treat different animals in exactly the same manner. “Equality of consideration’ does not imply ‘sameness of treatment’. Where beings differ, then equality of consideration will positively require appropriate differences of treatment”.³⁷ A contextual recognition of moral value encourages us pay close attention to the characteristics of the being(s) themselves, as well as to the circumstances of the moral problem. Finally, what this principle does require is for humans to give due consideration to the well-being of other creatures, and to do so without prejudice.

3. Principle of Hard Cases -- *When faced with hard cases pitting animals against humans, solve the problem, look for alternatives, or choose a geographic compromise that defends the well-being of animals.* Cases of win/lose conflict are a fact of life, and when these cases involve multiple values, they can be hard to judge. This is clear to all of us who value predators as well as prey, and must therefore accept (even embrace) the suffering and death that comes with predation. Of course, there is no choice in predation, for it is a natural given of the geosphere, an intrinsic property necessary to the survival of all geographic beings. So too, all geographic beings require habitat, viable populations, food sources, etc. Our universal need for ‘space’ makes conflicts over resource use, land-use planning, habitat change or destruction, and destructive or dangerous animals, an inevitable feature of our lives. Inevitably, we will face hard cases where the well-being of humans and animals are in conflict, for geographically, it is impossible to maximize the well-being of all members of the geographic community in exactly the same place. These conflicts are especially acute at the macro-scale -- between the growing urban and rural landscapes of the humanitat, and the shrinking wildlands necessary to sustain large carnivores, herds of herbivores, and the full range of biodiversity. Yet they are as troublesome at the micro-scale, as when suburban homeowners refuse to share their habitat with adaptable wild creatures like raccoons.

When we face such difficult choices, the principle of hard cases asks that we take the following steps. First, we should resolve the underlying conflict in order to eliminate the problem and prevent its recurrence in the future. Second, if no resolution to the conflict is possible, we should look for the best possible alternative, a course of action that does the least harm while optimizing animal and human well-beings. Third, if no clear alternative is available (or agreeable), we should seek a geographic compromise that maximizes animal and human well-being in different places. One caveat, however, is that the reality of hard cases should not be used as a justification for ‘mitigation’ planning, or other subterfuges to acting on behalf of animals. In the words of Rolston, while we should emphasize “non-rival values”, we should be careful of compromise, especially when the balance of land-use practices and habitat change is already skewed against the interests of animals.³⁸

4. Principle of Moral Carrying Capacity -- *Humans should live within a carrying capacity that preserves the integrity of the entire geographical community.* Viewed historically and geographically, there is no ‘essential’ carrying capacity for the earth, meaning we cannot specify a single, quantifiable value for the human population. How many people nature can sustain depends on our numbers, consumption, negative externalities, social organization and conflict, technology, and the like. This is not to imply there are no limits, whether to resource use or population growth or environmental degradation, but these limits do co-vary with other factors.³⁹ Embedded in this discourse of carrying capacity, however, is an anthropocentric bias. We

often speak of carrying capacity as if it were solely a matter of matching economic resources to human demands, as if the conflict over carrying capacity only pertains to human haves and have-nots. So to, we often fail to consider the implications for animal well-being and diversity, not to mention aboriginal cultures and their ways-of-life.⁴⁰

This is especially important at the global scale; there is nowhere else to go, after all. Yet it is as important in certain biogeographical regions and locales, some of which are more sensitive to human disruption, others of which harbour animals especially threatened by human activities. So the carrying capacity of a locale, a region, or the globe is partially constituted by the value we recognize in the various kinds of animals, biomes, and societies living or capable of living in these areas. Different forms of human ways-of-life are more (or less) compatible with the existence of diverse life-forms and cultures, if only because of variable resources and habitat requirements. The use of these resources and habitats inextricably affects the well-being of non-human animals, as well as of other (especially indigenous) cultures. A comparison of the cultural diversity and biological fecundity of the Serengeti plain, with the cultural and biological impoverishment of North America's prairie, drives this point home. When we talk about carrying capacity then, we must justify the burden our society places on the natural world, and justify that burden according to ethical principles. If we wish to live morally in concert with a diversity of human and non-human animals, we must adjust our population, consumption, and interactions accordingly.

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Notes

¹ As quoted in Brown, Joseph Epes (1992) *Animals of the Soul: Sacred Animals of the Oglala Sioux*, Rockport: Element.

² Aristotle (1916) *Politics*, London.

³ Rachels, James (1986) *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, New York: Random House.

⁴ Midgley, Mary (1993) *Can't We Make Moral Judgments?*, New York: St. Martin's Press; Singer, Peter (ed.) (1993a) *A Companion to Ethics*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell; Taylor, Paul W. (1967) *Problems of Moral Philosophy: An Introduction to Ethics*, Belmont: Dickenson.. I use the words ethics, moral, and their cognates interchangeably. There are scholars who assign these terms mutually exclusive definitions, but these are stipulative not descriptive definitions, and do not affect my arguments Urmson, J. O., and Jonathan Rée (ed.) (1989) *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers*. New & Completely Revised ed, Cambridge: Unwin Hyman..

⁵ Aristotle (1985) *Nicomachean Ethics*, Translated by Irwin, Terence, Indianapolis: Hackett; Cooper, David (1993) *Value Pluralism and Ethical Choice*, New York: St. Martin's Press; MacIntyre, Alasdair (1966) *A Short History of Ethics*, New York: MacMillan; Toulmin, Stephen, and Albert R. Jonsen (1988) *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning*, Berkeley:

University of California Press; Walzer, Michael (1983) *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*, New York: Basic Books..

⁶ See Ball, Terence (1987) Deadly Hermeneutics; Or, Sinn and the Social Scientist, in Ball, Terence, *Idioms of Inquiry: Critique and Renewal in Political Science*, Albany: State University of New York, 96-112.

⁷ Callahan, Daniel, and Bruce Jennings (ed.) (1983) *Ethics, the Social Sciences, and Policy Analysis*. New York: Plenum; Gustafson, James M. (1991) Ethics: An American Growth Industry, *Key Reporter* 56 (3-Spring), 1-5; Kimmel, Allan J. (1988) *Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research*, Newbury Park: Sage; Sieber, Joan E. (1992) *Planning Ethically Responsible Research: A Guide for Students and Internal Review Boards*, Newbury Park: Sage; Wueste, Daniel E. (ed.) (1994) *Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

⁸ But ethics is no stranger in our midst. The geographical tradition already incorporates a long history of moral discourse, from ancient Greek and Islamic cosmology, early modern writing on natural history and teleology, turn-of-the-century debates over environmental determinism, to contemporary research on social and environmental justice Glacken, Clarence J. (1967) *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press; Livingstone, David N. (1992) *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Discipline*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Lynn, William S. (1995) Geography, Value Paradigms, and Environmental Justice, *Newsletter of the Society for Philosophy and Geography* 1 (2), 2-4; Smith, David M. (1994) *Geography and Social Justice*, Oxford: Blackwell..

⁹ Midgley, Mary (1995) *The Moral Primate: Humans, Freedom and Morality*, New York: Routledge.

¹⁰ Shepard, Paul (1996) *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*, Washington, DC: Island Press.

¹¹ <Marsh, 1965 Marsh, George Perkins (1965) *Man and Nature, or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*, Edited by Lowenthal, David, Cambridge: Belknap Press. Originally published in 1864. #865>

¹² I do not mean these comments to privilege human characteristics. Animals have a wide range of skills (e.g., sensory acuity, physical grace and power), many of which exceed our own.

¹³ Griffin, Donald R. (1992) *Animal Minds*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Masson, Jeffrey Moussarett, and Susan McCarthy (1995) *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*, New York: Delacorte Press. As I write these pages, Casey (a sundown red Chow-Shepherd mix with the most gentle disposition) is dropping a tennis ball in my lap, cocking her ears, tilting her head and wagging her tail, communicating to me in no uncertain terms what she desires at this moment. And I have no trouble communicating to her that I share that desire!

¹⁴ See Lopez, Barry Holstun (1986) *Wolves and Humans*, New York: Vintage; Midgley, Mary (1984) *Animals and Why They Matter*, Athens: University of Georgia Press; Naess, Arne (1974) Self-Realization in Mixed Communities of Humans, Bears, Sheep, and Wolves, *Inquiry* 22 (Summer), 231-241.

¹⁵ While this discussion is directed towards animals, much of its content reflects a parallel debate about the moral value of nature.

¹⁶ Rolston, Holmes, III (1988) *Environmental Ethics: Duties To and Values In the Natural World*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

¹⁷ An ethical duty is simply an action we ‘should’ take for defensible moral reasons.

¹⁸ Fox, Warwick (1990) *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism*, Boston: Shambhala Press; Simmons, I. G. (1993) *Interpreting Nature: Cultural Constructions of the Environment*, London: Routledge.

¹⁹ These are transgressions (not just crossings) because, as the beneficiaries of excluding animals from the sphere of moral concern, humans can be quite callous or reactionary to attempts at crossing or deconstructing such boundaries.

²⁰ Berry, Thomas (1988) *The Dream of the Earth*, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books; Kinsley, David (1995) *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall; White, Lynn (1968) The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis, in White, Lynn, *Machina Ex Deo: Essays in the Dynamism of Western Culture*, Boston: MIT Press, 75-94.

²¹ Feinberg, Joel (1981) The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations, in Partridge, Ernest, *Responsibilities to Future Generations: Environmental Ethics*, Buffalo: Prometheus, 139-150; Fox, Michael (1981) "Animal Liberation": A Critique, in Shrader-Frechette, Kristin S., *Environmental Ethics*, Pacific Grove: Boxwood Press, 113-124; Goodpaster, Kenneth E. (1978) On Being Morally Considerable, *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (6), 308-325; Midgley, Mary (1984) *Animals and Why They Matter*, Athens: University of Georgia Press.

²² Benton, Ted (1993b) Animal Rights and Social Relations, in Dobson, Andrew and Paul Lucardie, *The Politics of Nature: Explorations in Green Political Theory*, New York: Routledge, 161-176; Midgley, Mary (1995) *The Moral Primate: Humans, Freedom and Morality*, New York: Routledge.

²³ Benton, Ted (1993a) *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice*, London: Verso; Gaard, Greta (ed.) (1993) *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, and Nature*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Naess, Arne (1989) *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Spiegel, Marjorie (1988) *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, Philadelphia: New Society Publishers; Warren, Karen J. (1990) The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism, *Environmental Ethics* 12 (Summer), 125-146.

²⁴ See Decker, Daniel J., and Gary R. Goff (ed.) (1987) *Valuing Wildlife: Economic and Social Perspectives*. Boulder: Westview Press; Dunlap, Thomas (1988) *Saving America's Wildlife: Ecology and the American Mind, 1850-1990*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Langley, Gill (ed.) (1989) *Animal Experimentation: The Consensus Changes*. New York: Chapman & Hall; Mighetto, Lisa (1991) *Wild Animals and American Environmental Ethics*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press; Wagner, Frederic H., Ronald Foresta, R. Bruce Gill, Dale R. McCullough, Michael R. Pelton, William F. Porter, and Hal Salwasser (1995) *Wildlife Policies in the U.S. National Parks*, Washington, DC: Island Press; US Fish and Wildlife Service (1993) *Refuges 2003: A Plan for the Future*, Washington, DC: US Fish and Wildlife Service.

²⁵ Callicott, J. Baird (1989) *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, Albany: State University of New York Press; Naess, Arne (1986) Intrinsic Value: Will the Defenders of Nature Please Rise?, in Soule, Michael E., *Conservation Biology: The Science of Scarcity and Diversity*, Sunderland: Sinauer Associates, 504-515; Rolston, Holmes, III (1988) *Environmental Ethics: Duties To and Values In the Natural World*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Taylor, Paul W. (1986) *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Naess and Rolston's are probably the two authors most associated with the terms 'biocentrism' and 'ecocentrism', respectively. They use these terms to identify their non-anthropocentric alternatives, and neither imposes a bifurcation between the moral value of individuals or collectives. My intention in specifying a narrower meaning to

biocentrism and ecocentrism is not to turn them into fixed categories, but to enunciate a distinction to clarify our scales of analysis.

²⁶ Regan, Tom (1983) *The Case for Animal Rights*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

²⁷ For example, see Dear, Michael (1994) Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Reflections on Symanski and Cosgrove, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84 (2), 295-300; Symanski, Richard (1994a) Contested Realities: Feral Horses in Outback Australia, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84 (2), 251-269; Symanski, Richard (1994b) Why We Should Fear Postmodernists, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84 (2), 301-304; Lynn, William S. (1996) An Open Letter on Ptolemy, *AAG Newsletter* 31 (4).

²⁸ Snyder, Gary (1974b) Mother Earth: Her Whales, *Turtle Island*, New York: New Directions, 47-49.

²⁹ Snyder, Gary (1974b) Mother Earth: Her Whales, *Turtle Island*, New York: New Directions, 47-49.

³⁰ Snyder, Gary (1974b) Mother Earth: Her Whales, *Turtle Island*, New York: New Directions, 47-49.

³¹ Snyder, Gary (1974a) *Turtle Island*, New York: New Directions; Snyder, Gary (1990) *The Practice of the Wild: Essays*, San Francisco: North Point Press; Snyder, Gary (1995) *Place and Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds*, Washington, DC: Counterpoint.

³² Snyder, Gary (1974b) Mother Earth: Her Whales, *Turtle Island*, New York: New Directions, 47-49.

³³ Other and equally helpful principles can be found in the "Code of Environmental Ethics & Conduct" of the Canadian Environmental Network, Naess's "Platform of the Deep Ecology Movement", and Rolston's "...rules for balancing natural and cultural values" Canadian Environmental Network *Code of Environmental Ethics & Conduct* 1995 [cited. Available from <http://nceet.snre.umich.edu/greenlife/canamsn.html>]; Naess, Arne (1989) *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Rolston, Holmes, III (1994) *Conserving Natural Value*, New York: Columbia University Press..

³⁴ Peter Singer is the author of this principle, and phrases it as follows: "We [should] give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions" Singer, Peter (1993b) *Practical Ethics*, Second ed, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..

³⁵ *Moral Significance* means that one's well-being counts in comparison with another's well-being for ethical reasons Simmons, I. G. (1993) *Interpreting Nature: Cultural Constructions of the Environment*, London: Routledge..

³⁶ Cavalieri, Paola, and Peter Singer (ed.) (1994) *The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

³⁷ Benton, Ted (1993b) Animal Rights and Social Relations, in Dobson, Andrew and Paul Lucardie, *The Politics of Nature: Explorations in Green Political Theory*, New York: Routledge, 161-176.

³⁸ Rolston, Holmes, III (1994) *Conserving Natural Value*, New York: Columbia University Press.

³⁹ Catton, William R. (1982) *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change*, Urbana: University of Chicago Press; Ophuls, William (1977) *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity: Prologue to a Political Theory of the Steady State*, San Francisco: W. H. Freeman; Turner, Billy Lee (ed.) (1990) *The Earth As Transformed By Human Action: Global and Regional Changes in the Biosphere over the Past 300 Years*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press with Clark University.

⁴⁰ Naess, Arne (1990) Sustainable Development and Deep Ecology, in Engel, J. Ronald and Joan Gibb Engel, *Ethics of Environment and Development: Global Challenge, International Response*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 87-96.