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Something that has been questioned through the whole of the industrial and post-industrial age in the Western World is the value of nature itself. This can be applied more specifically in the idea and theory of intrinsic value; that treating the environment as simply a resource cache is wrong and immoral, and that an object can have value independent of another object or person. In light of writings by William James, John Dewey, Andrew Light and other philosophers I will present the question “is the notion of intrinsic value helpful in defending nature?”

In this paper I intend to defend the idea that nature has worth in and of itself, independent of serving human ends. It is relatively safe to say that nature has been taken advantage of through time and is in need of some help; this should be kept in mind throughout this work. By exploring pragmatist views, ecocentric versus anthropocentric arguments, the use of metaphors and some problems with intrinsic value, I will show that intrinsic value is indeed very helpful in defending nature.

By focusing on works from William James and John Dewey I will show that the intrinsic value of nature can be supported by pragmatist philosophy. Pragmatism is a method to be used to solve disputes, and in James’ *What Pragmatism Means*, we can discover some of the basic pragmatic beliefs; such as there must be practical differences and consequences in the results, or sides, of a dispute to merit having such a dispute (Thayer, p210-214). In light of this condition of pragmatism there is argument to be had in favor of intrinsic value. If I take the position in favor of an

intrinsic value of nature, then by that concept I will act in a more favorable way towards nature than if I hold the belief that nature is just a bucket of resources that serve my ends. If nature then has value, the burden of explanation and proof is passed to those who would harm nature to justify themselves and their actions. A pertinent example can be seen in today's America and its use of oil. For a supporter of the intrinsic value argument, oil can be valuable in the fact that it simply exists in the world; it has qualities that can be perceived. While for others who focus on what humans can get out of the "resources" nature provides us, I will call this group anthropocentrists for lack of a more specific term, only see oil as having value in how many miles a gallon we can get in our cars or how many gallons we need to heat our houses in the winter. The colors reflecting off of the oil's surface in the sun have little, or significantly less, importance to the anthropocentrists than to the supporters of intrinsic value theory. Though, this would also be a bit misleading to say that supporters of intrinsic value theory (I am borrowing a page from Louis Menand's interpretation of Dewey and avoiding using a label, specifically "ecocentrists" here as I feel that term encompasses more than the issue with which I am trying to address in this paper), only value the empirical aspects of oil. Another practical difference in intrinsic value theorists and anthropocentrists can be seen in the application of conservation efforts like the Endangered Species Act. In order for an animal or organism to be placed on the Endangered Species Act and have active realistic attempts to curb the extinction trend, a species has to basically be "cute and cuddly" or of some economic use (Ando, 1999). The species has to have some sort of use to humans, even if on occasion it is only aesthetics. What I am attempting to show here

is that there is practical application differences. If most people subscribed to intrinsic value theory then the “ugly” or “scary” endangered species would be being saved at an equal rate to the more aesthetically pleasing or useful species.

Crucial for both James and Dewey is the idea that we cannot escape the context of our inquiry. Beliefs are not isolated but come in context (Thayer, 230-231), or in other words, “...values are drawn out of experience” (Light and De-Shalit, 272). That beliefs come in context is tough hurdle for a theory that is asking to take an object completely out of its context and evaluate it on the basis of itself. But, this is not detrimental to intrinsic value theory because for James, truth and value can be relative (Thayer, 214). Since value of a thing can be relative, then it can be relative to its own existence. Although this condition of pragmatism seems problematic it is not, as it reaffirms that an object can have value in and of itself. Also, for the pragmatists, if we do not have any concept or reason to have a thought, like intrinsic value theory applied to nature, then such an idea will not even be able to emerge in the first place, because it will not conform with our current set of beliefs. Here I will, however, be careful to avoid the trap that the pragmatists often accuse of Descartes, and not affirm intrinsic value based on its own existence.

Another pragmatic tell is expressed in Dewey’s *Moral reconstruction*; he is critical of setting up agendas that must be reached, or fixed ends (Dewey, 170-1). Dewey seems to be critical of intrinsic value as this belief could rigidify our thinking to a small section of problematic situations (A. Light, *Identity Politics*). The concerns here that intrinsic value theory when applied to nature is narrowing perspective is justified, but going a bit overboard. Of course the idea in this situation is to narrow

the field of concern, for the moment. But, other statements Dewey supports also apply to intrinsic value. “Anything becomes unworthy whenever it is thought of as intrinsically lacking worth” (Dewey, *M.R.*, 171). So, in this view, unless we can ascribe intrinsic value to nature, nature is worthless. Dewey seems to put nature in an interesting predicament here, on one hand it must have intrinsic value but on the other if we use an intrinsic value theory we are being too near-sighted. This is not so much of a predicament as it seems, but it is more of a trade off; this will become clearer after sighting another of Dewey’s passages, “...if life is to be worth while, [the organism] must acquire ideal and intrinsic value” (*M.R.*, 171). “Ideal” for Dewey includes aesthetics, so it can be said that nature, as a whole, is in no danger of violating this condition. We have national parks and wonders for several reasons, one of which is obviously aesthetic pleasure, like that derived by anyone who has ever purchased a calendar of the Painted Caverns of the Grand Canyon, or taken a walk in autumn in Maine to look at the leaves. This, combined with applying intrinsic value to nature, allows it to fall into sync with Dewey’s theories. The key to the trade off for Dewey is to keep our concern and view of nature as a whole. We should not limit ourselves to an Endangered Species Act, as that is tending towards the near-sightedness Dewey is concerned about. Yet, it is things like the Endangered Species Act that help to weave ideas into the “texture of daily life” and make them “substantial and pervasive” (*M.R.*, 172). When Dewey is viewed like I have suggested that he can be, his concerns about focusing on fixed ends can be monitored and avoided, as they will be part of daily public life. As long as there is no labeling of an intrinsic value of

nature as a “higher end,” nor have I remotely suggested that there be, in this format social irresponsibility and vanity concerns of Dewey’s are also eliminated.

Perhaps one of the most compelling reason to find that pragmatism is beneficial to the intrinsic value theory are the cases for a reality existing independent of beliefs that James and Dewey outline. James makes room for the possibility of a reality independent of beliefs by denying that reality is fixed “out there” (Thayer, 225). James’ idea that there is an “end point” where all of our inquires will converge, requiring revised beliefs shows hope for nature (Thayer, 207-210). If, say Dewey’s case for reality independent of belief is this end point of James’ then nature will be in a much better position than it is currently. But, even if it is not the case that James’ “end point” exists, even though we would never be able to realize we are at this end point, Dewey’s case presents much hope. Dewey includes in his case that knowledge not something in our mind, but is about furthering interaction with the environment and the way an organism interacts and reacts with the environment (Menand, 349). Now, if humans are to have knowledge, and it is not a question of it we want it as we surely do, evidenced by one of the main goals of philosophy itself being the search for knowledge and what constitutes it, then in the pragmatic essence an intrinsic value for nature is almost a necessity. If we destroy the environment and nature with our currently dominant anthropocentrism, as numerous philosophers and professionals can demonstrate we are, then what will we have left to drive our knowledge from? Dewey is clearly saying that nature, and our interaction with it, is crucial to our discovery of knowledge and thus with out nature we would have no opportunity for knowledge.

For, it seems, all pragmatists' reality is not fixed "out there," there is more of a quality of engagement. This engagement should allow for people to come out of their anthropocentric shells and experience nature for itself. Richard Routley argues, "...that anthropocentrism represents a kind of moral 'chauvinism'" (Light and Katz, 287). I offer that by not coming out of their shells, people remain in this trend of chauvinism. Routley would also argue that this chauvinism is as blind as racism or any other type of discrimination (Light and Katz, 287). We, as a society, have already deemed that racism, chauvinism, sexism, etc are generally just not acceptable. Routley combined with pragmatic theories of independent reality previously mentioned should then be enough to have careless anthropocentrism included into this group of socially shunned attitudes. A problem here though is recognition. Too many people in society fail to, or simply reject recognizing their anthropocentric views. Intrinsic value theory applied to nature would hold much more weight if recognition and awareness were increased in society. Few people can or do see the "tree behind the paper" or "farmer behind the food."

Here, the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, can prove valuable as a tool to help support nature having worth in and of itself. I have already covered some metaphors and their value to this topic. John Dewey's "intrinsic value as higher ends," and I will discuss both James' "ideas as parts of experience that function as tools" and "nature as a capitalist resource," from Roger King's "Narrative, Imagination, and the Search for Intelligibility in Environmental Ethics" (*Ethics and the Environment*, 4(1) p23-38).

We can now use James' "ideas as parts of experience that function as tools" (Thayer, 216), metaphor to help us apply intrinsic value to nature. While I am making the case that intrinsic value is an inherent property of nature, it is also useful to say that it is a tool. With this intrinsic value, the idea that it is going to be applied to help protect nature, like a wrench helps fix and protect a faucet from leaking. As leaking is gradual, so must be the application of intrinsic value to nature. Too much pressure and intensity and we may run into some of Dewey's concerns; like loyalty to older truths kicking in and disregarding new possibilities. Too little pressure and nature will continue to be in harms way. We will be able to tell that this "tool" is working when the environment becomes less of a resource cache or an inanimate part of the majority of people's lives and gains respect, thus here we are avoiding James' concern that we may never know when we have actually reached an end goal. We can also say that the idea of intrinsic value is definitely a part of experience with nature that we hope to apply it to and again, this can relate back to the pragmatic concept of practical consequences that I have discussed.

Roger King helps focus on the metaphor of "nature as a capitalist resource," among others. If, as King holds, this metaphor "dominates our culture's understanding of the nonhuman world" and Dewey is also correct in that "only in connection with [economic ends] can [the metaphor] be woven into the texture of daily life and made substantial and pervasive" (*M.R.*, 172) then nature is a crucial element of our society and livelihood. Such a crucial element effecting millions of peoples' everyday lives then must be taken care of and looked after or our society and economy will be in jeopardy. Again, as King notes, this metaphor is one step in

justifying abuse of nature, as it is seen like a bank where we can continue to make withdrawals (King, 32). The problem here is the bank is eventually going to run out, and if we do not realize this before it is too late we will end up in a grave situation. When we apply intrinsic value to nature we are at least slowing the process of withdrawal from the bank of nature.

It is crucial to any argument defending nature that metaphors be addressed as metaphors “help to set the narrative context within which people act” (King, 33). If people are acting in accordance with these metaphors then reconstructing, or re-evaluating the metaphors is important as they are partly responsible for the neglect that is being cast on nature. We should try to put in place metaphors such as “nature is a friend.” If nature is a friend that we can lean on when we need a hand, or will loan us some time or money when we need it then we can develop the same respect for nature that we do for people. By using language like “loan” here I am trying to use this metaphor to help us reform our current metaphors like “nature as a capitalist resource.” By associating with what people currently know, and working from there, meaningful progress could be made in the defense of nature; progress towards realizing the intrinsic value of nature.

In order to realize the intrinsic value of nature it is helpful here to incorporate the work of Peter Winch. The important questions to ask relative to Winch are, “what is the rule that defines the meaning of ‘intrinsic value of nature,’” and “what counts as following the rule/making a mistake?” The rule that defines the meaning of intrinsic value is, as Winch says many times, seen in the consistency of actions of people with respect towards nature. It is difficult to flesh out this rule, as consistency relative to

nature itself is a very broad and general idea. The problems that Winch points out here is that often it is not really clear what the rule is in many situations, and this is a perfect example. Also, James' "rule for action" applies here. We must learn the rule to respect nature over time, through repetition. Since no one does what they believe is wrong, according to James, then the rule must be structured in a way to influence people to believe the current trend of abusing nature is wrong. Perhaps what we should ask is, from a pragmatic view, how easy is it to understand the practical meaning of intrinsic value of nature? The basic answer is that accepting intrinsic value of nature will help protect the environment. It may be difficult for many people to realize this, and that is where philosophers and environmental supporters (I will not call them activists as that has developed a negative connotation in many parts of our society) come in. These people must spread the good word and reasons in a manner that will attract other supporters, even if it means appealing to the public's wallet instead of their moral reason.

Since there must be a quantifiable rule to work from I will present here a helpful and practical rule for making a definition of what can be a starting point of intrinsic value of the environment: treat nature with respect. This is something that sounds simple enough, that many people have heard throughout their life in some form or another, and this is even represented by laws to some extent. No littering, no dumping toxic waste, etc. By starting off with something simple here, and working towards enforcing this rule we can build towards the goal. However, we must remember according to Winch this rule may change over time, as it should as the idea

of intrinsic value of nature begins to take root in society. The next logical question then is “what counts as following the rule?”

Following this rule can be defined in many ways. By no throwing the cigarette butts on the ground, or carpooling, or turning off the lights when no one is in the room. There are hundreds of ways to describe instances of when this rule is being followed. If I were going to take on the issue of motivation in following the rules here would be an ideal place, but I am not. To begin, following the “rule” for any reason will do, and once there is mass conformation then motivation can be discussed. There is no point is disassociating people from the goal because they are not following the same agenda, that is counterproductive. The next logical question, if we now know what constitutes following a rule, is to ask, “what is making a mistake, or breaking a rule?” This, in most cases, is an easier question to answer than either of the previous two questions. Making a mistake or breaking the rule is when actions are the opposite of an action that is considered as following the rule; throwing a cigarette butt on the ground, leaving the lights on when not in use, etc.

There are, as evidenced by the lack of widespread appeal to intrinsic value, some problems with this argument that I will address. It is unclear what “intrinsic value” means to most people. Establishing any sort of continuity to this idea in the general public would be greatly beneficial to, and a necessary step, towards applying this to the environment. I have defined what I mean my intrinsic value earlier in this paper, but there seems to be more of a widespread confusion about the term to most people. Perhaps in the progression of rules towards the goal of applying intrinsic value to the environment an accurate common idea will develop.

Another problem comes from Dewey, and that people show loyalty to their older truths (Thayer, 217). By using his discussion of inquiry we work through this. Dewey calls for a turn towards goals of individual action, and this is good for intrinsic value. If each person is taking responsibility for their actions then some excuses for taking advantage of nature will be eliminated. No longer will anyone say “someone else did it, so it’s ok,” or “we have been doing it for years, it is the way it has always been done.” These lazy excuses will be eliminated by Dewey’s tendency towards individual actions. More specifically to Dewey’s actual method of inquiry, hopefully though this method of encountering an indeterminate situation to a problematic situation to resolution there is definitely room for change. In this pattern, whatever originally happens to show doubt on your “older” beliefs will be strong enough or makes enough sense to help breed change that will be in accordance with intrinsic value.

By exploring both the problems and continuities of pragmatism with a theory of intrinsic value of nature I have made an argument in favor of applying such a theory. It is important not to cut our livelihood of from under us and assure our future, the intrinsic value theory can help with this. Both James and even Dewey have writings that support the application of this theory in many ways. The work of Lakoff and Johnson on metaphors shows that intrinsic value theory can be very useful in analyzing our views and actions as a society, as well as the investigation into rules by Winch. It is time for our society to take a step back and realize what we are doing and what the consequences may be. Once we can take the time to do that then nature will

be well on its way to a respect that it deserves, a respect that intrinsic value will afford.

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