



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**BUCKINGHAM**

The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful:  
Ethics and Hunting

by

Deborah Vorhies

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of MA Philosophy by Research  
to the School of Humanities of the University of Buckingham

February 2022

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## Abstract

The subject of hunting is characterised by opposing and increasingly divergent views as to its moral acceptability, and how policy and regulation should deal with it. This thesis argues, however, that policy, particularly at the international level, is needed to address this divergence, in order to prevent negative consequences, whether they be conservation or economic outcomes. It utilises philosophical perspectives to try to understand the background and various positions of the different stakeholders engaged in and affected by hunting, and the complex relationship between hunting and environmental ethics.

This thesis begins by reviewing the current unsatisfactory situation in relation to hunting and proposes the reasons for and ways in which international approaches are necessary. Chapter 2 examines the current debate on and attitudes to hunting as they are informed by social, cultural, and political history, and explores how those attitudes might be understood through the lens of different moral philosophical approaches. Chapter 3 considers different moral philosophical approaches to environmental ethics and how these might relate to hunting, especially in light of cultural differences in approaches to nature. Chapter 4 looks at the three main protagonists in hunting and explores the relationship between them in moral philosophical terms: 'nature', 'hunter', and 'prey'. Chapter 5 reviews the prospects for international policy solutions. In finding that there is no short-term likelihood of consensus being reached on the issue of hunting, the chapter turns to the application of hunting codes of conduct and explores what contribution such an approach could make to the evolution of policy. Finally, it identifies how further research could contribute both to building consensus between different stakeholder groups, and to address some of the contradictions between different environmental ethical approaches, as they relate to hunting.

## 0. Introduction: Hunting – A Tale of Mixed Motives

This thesis applies philosophical thinking to the issue of hunting. It seeks to use philosophical thinking to understand attitudes towards hunting, the relationship between hunting and the environment, and to contribute to policy development in relation to the issue. The thesis looks at possible ethical approaches to, and the viability of, international policy and regulation of hunting. I examine the reasons why hunting has become such a vexed issue, and why agreement is hard to attain. Without claiming that this is an entirely satisfactory solution to the problems hunting represents for different stakeholders, I examine whether there is some potential for a level of international policy agreement or some other widely accepted code, in place of the divergent national policies and regulations currently emerging. The thesis aims to show that such codes could form the basis for further discussion and

development, and that philosophical inquiry can contribute to an international solution which is capable of recognising diverse interests.

In terms of scope, this work covers all hunting purposes, with the exceptions of hunting undertaken for immediate, life-sustaining consumption of the prey, known as subsistence hunting, and illegal hunting, more commonly referred to as poaching. This is to exclude those situations where survival depends directly upon the killing and consumption of the animal concerned, as this would imply a very different set of considerations than those that pertain to commercial endeavours, at whatever scale. Similarly, any illegal activity is already dealt with under national or international regulation. Legal hunting for the purposes of re-selling the meat or other animal products, even if part of a subsistence economy, is also included.

I propose to focus mainly on hunting in Africa, primarily sub-Saharan Africa, as this is where the debate is centred, largely due its being the locus of the vast majority of hunting activity, domestic and international. Africa has a widespread hunting sector, with large-scale indigenous, modern, and visiting hunters. By indigenous, I refer to those hunters who hunt as part of a traditional practice or primarily, though not exclusively, as part of a traditional cultural ritual. The reason I say 'primarily' is because it appears that most hunting occurs with mixed motives. These motives include financial gain (from the sale of meat or other animal parts), traditional practice, conservation action, pest control, to reduce human/wildlife conflict, aesthetic fulfilment, and sport.

### What This Thesis Will Do

This thesis will defend the position that international solutions are needed, for the following reasons:

1. The current state of conflict and increasing divergence of policy development in relation to the moral acceptability of hunting is unsustainable and implies risk to nature/wilderness as well as risk to human well-being. International cooperation and policy solutions are required to address these globally conflictual risks.
2. Nature/wilderness has value and is therefore deserving of protection. This responsibility is shared across all nations, and not restricted to those countries in which those ecosystems and species occur, reflecting the global nature of their value. Given that the interests and ethical attitudes of stakeholders and governments vary in relation to those natural assets, there is a need for international cooperation and internationally coherent policy in this regard.
3. The hunting value chain plays out internationally, as different stakeholders (including suppliers, consumers, communities, and other value chain actors)

operate across borders and jurisdictions. Therefore, internationally agreed approaches are necessary to properly address the issue.

4. As hunting effectively forms a subset of human action in relation to nature, policy in relation to hunting must be coherent with environmental policy.

This thesis begins by reviewing the current unsatisfactory situation in relation to hunting and proposes the reasons for and ways in which international approaches are necessary. Chapter 2 examines the current debate on and attitudes to hunting as they are informed by social, cultural, and political history, and explores how those attitudes might be understood through the lens of different moral philosophical approaches. Chapter 3 considers different moral philosophical approaches to environmental ethics and how these might relate to hunting, especially in light of cultural differences in approaches to nature. Chapter 4 looks at the three main players, elements, and components of hunting and explores the relationship between them in moral philosophical terms: 'nature', 'hunter', and 'prey'. Chapter 5 reviews the prospects for international policy solutions. In finding that there is no short-term likelihood of consensus being reached on the issue of hunting, the chapter turns to the application of hunting codes of conduct and explores what contribution such an approach could make to the evolution of policy.

## 1. International Policy

### 1.1 Why We Need International Policy

International policy is important for several reasons. First, irrespective of whether one views the value of wilderness and wildlife as intrinsic or instrumental and no matter which environmental ethical approach is adopted, conservation is already considered to be a priority within international policy discussion, vis-à-vis the consensus regarding the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations in 2015, although there is ongoing discussion as to how they should be adopted. This demonstrates that there is a desire for international policy. Second, we live in a globalised community, where international agreement is necessary for effective action on environmental as well as other fronts, since the various stakeholders in relation to the environment—whether they are polluters, hunters or conservation supporters and funders—are internationally dispersed and their actions may have global consequences. Third, the issue is further complicated by the informal political pressures and negative economic consequences of the divergent views on hunting, and this can compromise effective conservation. There are, however, many who believe that international policy is not a feasible way forward.

Roger Scruton, for example, has expressed some scepticism towards international policy.<sup>1</sup> While accepting the need for some form of international collaboration, he argues that agents, not countries, are appropriate parties to any kind of contractarian approach to environmental issues. This is because, he contends, that countries being a nebulous geographical concept are not agents suitable to accept liability, etc., and furthermore, they cannot possibly represent future generations. Scruton also doubts how impartiality could be maintained in the context of international discussion, and questions the practicability of attaining global justice through this kind of process.

There is evidently some truth to these arguments. We have seen that actions of retribution and restitution at the international level in many instances fail to provide any real moral resolution for individuals or communities. We have also observed, especially in developed countries, a very active engagement in these matters by non-state actors, largely large NGOs, and civil movements such as Extinction Rebellion, and by large corporations. These powerful players, although they are also stakeholders, frequently exert a disproportionate level of influence.

However, there are two strong arguments for the role of multi-lateral policymaking. The first is that there is no practicable alternative. Governments (or countries, or parties, as they are referred to in international agreements) are sovereign states and they personify the legislative process for their countries. They have the power to make policies and laws within their countries: in many cases they are given this power by democratic process and can therefore be deemed to represent all the peoples within that country, or in some cases they have usurped such power, but nevertheless they hold that power. It is therefore logical to extend that power into the international realm. The second strong argument is, if not them, then who else? What is the current alternative? Although we have many examples of multi-stakeholder fora, such as the World Economic Forum (WEF), these are not bodies with any statute-making mandate, and it is very difficult to see how such a mandate could be derived.

This leaves us with a rather uncomfortable situation and a challenge as to how international policy can be made more effective. Here Scruton provides us with some interesting thinking. He argues for a bottom-up approach, a local thinking and commitment which can help to build upwards towards common goals and understanding. This helps us to understand and work with different stakeholder perceptions and interests. However, it does not enable us to address the tension between this bottom-up approach and the particular perspective held by local stakeholders, and those with a more global perspective. These are some of the challenges to be faced in trying to apply international policy solutions to ethical dilemmas, such as hunting.

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Scruton, *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), pp. 403ff.

## 1.2 Current and Emerging Policy Positions

The current debate is informed, shaped, and made extremely complex by historical and cultural considerations. In order to adequately assess the claims and needs of the various stakeholders, I will briefly introduce this context.

Since colonial times, there has been a wide variety of approaches to hunting in Africa. Kenya and South Africa may be taken to represent two extremes, with the other Eastern and Southern African nations exerting intermediate levels of restriction. Prior to British rule, wildlife was widely used by the 42 tribes of Kenya, in accordance with local custom, which included respect for nature and prohibitions on excessive use. These traditional natural resource systems, although they varied across different cultural systems, remained in place until British rule commenced in 1895. However, by then Kenya had already become a significant destination for tourist hunting, and resource scarcity was beginning to become a concern. From as early as 1899 restrictions were placed on hunting, and in 1899 and 1900 two major reserves were established to protect wildlife habitat. With large-scale colonial agricultural settlement, often at the expense of indigenous populations<sup>2</sup> and increasing population, as well as the later creation of a system of national parks, human-wildlife conflict outside of the parks increased significantly. At the same time, the poorer local population could mostly not afford the requisite licence fees for hunting, and their traditional hunting practices were deemed unacceptable in the new hunting codes. Consequently, these factors combined to alienate the local population from wildlife and decrease interest in both hunting and conservation. Hunting largely became the purview of wealthy tourists.

After independence, there was increasing concern about the decline of wildlife populations (especially large charismatic species), culminating in the 1977 promulgation of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, which effectively banned all hunting (through an addendum promulgated a year later) and in fact most forms of consumptive use. This legislation, and the following Ivory Ban of 1978, presented the ideology that consumptive use was 'non-African', and resulted in the stigmatisation of all hunting practices, whether foreign or traditional.<sup>3</sup> Severe restrictions have been maintained on hunting and in fact on most forms of consumptive utilisation ever since. An additional factor has been what some regard as the disproportionate influence exerted by international organisations and internationally funded NGOs, which have perpetuated this view through political influence and the way in which they have funded projects in the country.<sup>4</sup> Only recently, in the context of the growing discourse around de-colonisation across

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<sup>2</sup> John Waithaka, 'Historical Factors that Shaped Wildlife Conservation in Kenya,' *The George Wright Forum* 29.1 (2012), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Kasmira A. Cockerill and Shannon M. Hagerman, 'Historical Insights for Understanding the Emergence of Community-based Conservation in Kenya: International Agendas, Colonial Legacies, and Contested Worldviews,' *Ecology and Society* 25.2 (2020).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Africa, have we seen a more open-minded discussion and in fact positive moves towards recognising not only the value of traditional practices, but also the potential benefits of consumptive utilisation including hunting, for conservation and the generation of economic benefits for local communities. A recent thesis produced by the African Leadership University School of Wildlife Conservation reflects the more modern and evolving thought in this area.

In South Africa, by contrast, hunting was not only widely practised by indigenous peoples at the time of the first European settlements (mid-seventeenth century) but continued to be widely practised by both settlers and indigenous peoples for the following centuries. However, international tourist hunting only became a significant element in the 1970s, together with game ranching and other forms of 'consumptive utilisation', where 'consumptive use' means any use of wildlife which implies the killing of the animal concerned. There is a tradition of regulation of hunting and all forms of consumptive utilisation, and the use of codes of conduct for hunting. Yet, it has been argued that regulation in the past strongly favoured wealthier people, and recently we have seen a significant effort to popularise hunting among all parts of society. Unfortunately, this has seen an increase in some traditional and currently illegal forms of hunting (e.g., hunting Oribi with dogs), sometimes rumoured to be connected to organised crime, which poses challenges to conservation.

All these influences and complex historical issues create a rich tapestry of interests and perspectives that make international policy difficult to negotiate but at the same time result in aggravated situations when the various interests come into conflict—thus showing the need for international agreement. The example below demonstrates one such situation.

### 1.3 'Cecilgate'

On 2 July 2015, an adult male lion was shot with an arrow on a farm in Zimbabwe by a tourist trophy hunter who had previously purchased the right to the hunt. The lion was subsequently tracked and killed with a second arrow some 10–12 hours later. The lion in question lived primarily in the adjacent Hwange National Park and was being studied and tracked by WILDCRU (The Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at Oxford University).

The subsequent widespread outcry gathered pace over the following four weeks and was vociferous. By late July, the number of articles in editorial media had peaked at 11,788 and the social media response involved 87,533 mentions. Overwhelmingly, these responses were critical of the hunt. NGO outrage was widespread, vocal, and included some dramatic gestures, such as dumping pickled pigs' feet at the residence of the American hunter. Many celebrities took up the cause with public statements, so much so that a tearful statement from late-night talk-show host Jimmy Kimmel helped raise \$150,000 in donations in less than 24 hours for

WILDCRU. This was of course somewhat ironic since WILDCRU does not oppose hunting.<sup>5</sup>

Responses from governments varied widely. Within Zimbabwe, while there was no immediate outcry against the hunt, the government, fearing international reputational damage and a consequent loss of tourism revenue, arrested the local professional hunters who had accompanied the hunt, later releasing them as the hunt had been carried out in compliance with the law, and then (on 1 August 2015) suspended all bow hunting and hunting of lions, leopards, and elephants outside of Hwange, only to lift that moratorium after 10 days. Other Southern African political leaders from Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia made statements pointing out the value of hunting to local economies.

Subsequently, some Western countries have prohibited or placed restrictions on the importation of hunting trophies, including the US, the UK, France, and the Netherlands. African countries, on the other hand, have developed greater sensitivity to their reputational vulnerability, and increased efforts to develop responsible hunting standards, all without conceding the grounds that hunting has an important role to play in conservation, finance, and economic development. Since 2015 there have been several more legal hunts in the broader Hwange area, including one of Cecil's offspring, the most recent report being another bow hunt on 5 August 2021.

The evident ethical concerns and questions arising from this story are numerous: Is it inherently wrong to kill an animal by hunting it? If so, why? Was the method of killing (bow hunting) inherently wrong, and if so, why? Does the motive or manner of hunting change the ethics of the action? Whose lion was it anyway? To whom is this a matter of interest? And what should we, as a society, do about it? These questions, and many others, arise as we look at the practice of hunting within the context of moral philosophy, and they will be addressed in the following chapters.

#### 1.4 Lessons from 'Cecilgate'

It is now evident that in general, hunting is increasingly being perceived by African countries as having positive potential benefits for conservation, social, and economic outcomes. The major issue is that, in the global North, so to speak, there is increasing opposition to hunting. The enormous public outcry following the killing of Cecil the lion in 2015 ('Cecilgate') illustrates the widespread distaste for hunting felt primarily among the UK and US populations at that time and has fuelled a growing antipathy towards the killing of animals through hunting. Several influential figures and senior politicians, particularly in the UK and the US, promoted the tabling of a bill to ban the importation of hunting trophies, and some airlines, such as Virgin, refused to carry trophies as cargo. Although such a bill has not yet been passed in the UK, it looks

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<sup>5</sup> David W. Macdonald et al., 'Cecil: A Moment or a Movement? Analysis of Media Coverage of the Death of a Lion, *Panthera leo*,' *Animals* 6 (2016), 26.

likely to do so soon, and well-known figures continue to campaign against hunting through social media, including for example the wife of the British Prime Minister Carrie Johnson (129,500 Twitter followers), Conservative Peer and Minister of State for the Pacific and the Environment Zac Goldsmith (95,000 Twitter followers), and young influencers such as Bella Lack (140,500 followers).

Furthermore, the advent of 'Cecilgate' made clear the diverse nature of the range of stakeholders affected by hunting, and the variety of interests they have. Although in some countries, wildlife can be and is sometimes privately owned, in most African countries, wildlife is legally seen as the property of the state or, in some instances, that of certain local community structures. Even these situations are not necessarily clear-cut, and in some cases, for example, the state is seen as the nominal owner of wildlife, on behalf of the people of that country. It thus becomes difficult to tease out exactly what interests are held by whom in respect of the animals. There are blurred distinctions between the interests of the population of the country as a whole, the local community whose livelihoods may be affected either positively or negatively by wildlife, and indeed even the global population who are understood to have an interest in the survival of wildlife as part of nature. These interests may not only vary but be in direct conflict.

A detailed study of the implications of 'Cecilgate' was carried out under the leadership of Muchazondida Mkonzo in the following years. His findings may be seen as summarising the moral complexity of the matter of hunting. He documents comprehensively the strongly held views that condemn all such killing that emerged through the 'clicktivist' movement, absolutely rejecting all consequentialism. On the other hand, he also notes that the clicktivist movement includes little or no participation from the African communities concerned, who maintain a strongly utilitarian perspective; looking less at the moral questionability of hunting itself, and more so at what the outcomes of hunting might be for them, and for the environment as a whole. This highlights the imbalances in influence between the Western views and the communities who are (physically) more closely affected by human-wildlife conflict, and who, moreover, may benefit from hunting. These attitudes have continued to diverge over the last few years. The consequence of this increasing divergence of perspective implies that there is little prospect of reaching any policy consensus on the matter at an international level.

## 2. Towards a Philosophical Understanding of the Problem

In this chapter we will consider the current state of affairs through the lens of philosophical approaches to hunting and the history of our relationship with hunting which has informed those approaches. This chapter will consider that the history of hunting reveals the varied purposes of hunting and the associated political/cultural contexts of hunting. We will also explore the historical divergence of approaches to

conservation and the philosophical frameworks that inform the existing variety of views on hunting and conservation.

## 2.1 The History of Man versus Beast

The history of hunting goes back to the earliest records of human endeavour. Archaeologists have found evidence of bow and arrow use from 64,000 years ago in South Africa,<sup>6</sup> and cave paintings of hunting activities and their prey in other areas such as Indonesia were found from 40,000 to 12,000 years ago.<sup>7</sup> Since livestock was only domesticated around 20,000 to 10,000 years ago,<sup>8</sup> one must assume that hunting was a primary source of food prior to that time. What is interesting, however, is that there is evidence that the teeth of foxes, stags, wolves, bears, and lions were engraved and perforated for use as pendants and jewellery as much as 55,000 years ago. This is the first indication we have of the mixed motivations for hunting, or rather mixed perceived benefits of hunting. Further evidence of mixed motives and moral approaches to hunting can be witnessed throughout Classical History and Modern History.

### A) Classical Times

By Graeco-Roman Classical times, with an abundance of literature as evidence, it was clear that the role of hunting as a leisure activity was well established, especially as a proxy or practice for battle. For example, Judith Barringer notes that 'Homeric epic repeatedly draws analogues between hunting and battle, using hunting metaphors, particularly lion hunting, to describe battle situations between Achaeans and Trojans'.<sup>9</sup> On only two occasions in the *Odyssey* is food referred to as the primary purpose of hunting: when a goat is hunted for food on the island of the Cyclops by Odysseus and his men; and when a stag is hunted for food by Odysseus. Otherwise, though the meat is usually eaten, the primary purposes of hunting in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* are for fun, sport, revenge, self-defence, training for war, and initiation into adulthood.<sup>10</sup> Greek mythology likewise is full of hunting stories that refer to these motives.<sup>11</sup> Hunting gained increasing importance in the life of Ancient Greeks. For example, Xenophon, a student of Socrates, says in his *Cynegeticus* that hunting should form the first focal point of a young man's education, after which the rest of his education might follow.

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<sup>6</sup> Marlize Lombard and Laurel Phillipson, 'Indications of Bow and Stone-tipped Arrow Use 64,000 Years Ago in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa', *Antiquity* 84.325 (2010), 646.

<sup>7</sup> Maxime Aubert, Adam Brumm, M. Ramli et al. 'Pleistocene Cave Art from Sulawesi, Indonesia,' *Nature* 514 (2014), 223–27.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Kalof, *Looking at Animals in Human History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), pp. 6–10.

<sup>9</sup> Judith M. Barringer, *The Hunt in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> Apostalia Alepidou, 'From Hunter to Hero: Hunting Narratives in *Odyssey* 19 and *Iliad* 9', Master's Thesis, University of Leiden, 2017, <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/45712>, pp. 11, 18–21.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, J. K. Anderson, *Hunting in the Ancient World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 1–17; Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Society in Ancient Rome, however, was more ambivalent towards hunting as a pastime. While some wealthy people enjoyed the pursuit, others raised questions, and even challenged the morality of hunting. For example, Plutarch implied that brutality towards animals breeds brutality towards men, while Pliny the Elder mourned the wickedness of humans when compared to animals.<sup>12</sup>

## B) Modern History

Throughout the Middle Ages and through the Renaissance, hunting continued to be a popular pastime.<sup>13</sup> At the same time the notion of 'Fair Chase' evolved, which is an indication of the idea of an ethical code of conduct for hunting. However, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some criticism of hunting began to surface. For example, the Dutch philosopher Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus condemned hunting and all the practices surrounding it in his *The Praise of Folly*. Following from Plutarch's understanding, these were reflections upon the human attitudes and behaviours of hunters rather than a reflection of concern for the animals per se, with the prevailing thought being that, as per Descartes, animals do not possess reason and therefore (by implication) are not subjects for much consideration in themselves.

By the mid-eighteenth century, however, there was a further evolution, leading to a concern for what would now be considered as animal welfare. A growing body of thought about animals, their sentience, and the possibility of a moral obligation towards them emerged. Hunting in various forms and for various purposes continued to be a popular pastime across most cultures. In Africa, as in Europe and other places, hunting continued to be undertaken for the provision of food, as a cultural practice, and over time, as other sources of food became more widely available, as a form of recreation, until it was restricted in many places in the evolution of colonialism.

In Europe, there was a development in how nature and wilderness were perceived, and during the Enlightenment an increasingly Romantic aesthetic view emerged, even profoundly impacting Darwin's natural scientific work, although, paradoxically, there was widespread use of vivisection and animal experimentation at the same time.

In nineteenth-century Europe, wild nature was considered a spiritual and healthy respite from civilised city life. Romantic poetry depicts spiritual communion with animals and nature. The Romantics also represented an increasing value being conferred on animal existence, particularly in Britain, which then saw the formation of the first animal welfare organisation in 1824, the Society (later becoming the Royal Society) for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

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<sup>12</sup> Cartmill, *View to a Death*, pp. 40-45.

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.larsdatter.com/hunting.htm>.

At the same time, in the British colonies, hunting became an extremely popular pastime, often (but not always) replacing traditional hunting practices. In some cases, indigenous hunting practices and values merged with imported colonial practices, influencing the way that hunting was perceived as a form of direct engagement with nature and adding cultural appreciation into the mix of love of nature and natural history exploration, sport, recreational enjoyment, and aesthetic experience. Faced with a seemingly endless supply of game, there was no consideration of sustainability to hinder an excess of killing, and famous hunters and writers of the late nineteenth century, such as Roualeyn George Gordon-Cumming, and Sir William Cornwallis Harris, provided the basis for the development of a mythology and mystique around hunting in Africa. Many hunters wrote about and/or painted African nature and displayed a reverence for it. An interesting example was Theodore Roosevelt, who both loved hunting and was passionately devoted to nature conservation, seeing the two processes as inextricably linked. He was also implacably opposed to cruelty to animals and his family were instrumental in the founding of the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) in 1866. Roosevelt's views were published in 'The Wilderness Hunter'<sup>14</sup>, and did much to inspire the view of hunting as a conservation-supportive practice.

The development of codes of practice for hunting soon followed, along with the emergence of professional hunting guides, forerunners of the modern-day Professional Hunters, who accompany hunts, help to track down appropriate prey, ensure that it is safe to shoot and that the animal is cleanly killed. The first and most famous of these hunting guides was Frederick Courtney Selous, popularly held to be the greatest hunter of all time, who also accompanied and assisted Roosevelt on his 1909–10 expedition for the Smithsonian. Roosevelt and Selous exemplify the Victorian ideal of 'anthropocentric conservation'—sustainable use (nature managed for the present and future benefit of man) and a consideration for the welfare of individual animals expressed through codes of conduct for hunting. Their contribution to conservation was extensive, resulting in large tracts of land being dedicated to conservation.

This approach, however, stands in strong opposition to that of preservation, an ideal of untouched wilderness, an aesthetic, spiritual, and emotional appreciation of wild nature. These contrasting views continue to underpin current philosophical differences espoused by the sustainable use conservation perspective and the preservationist perspectives.

## 2.2 The Moral Gaze

Ethical systems provide us with different ways of looking at what a problem consists in, and may help us to define the issues more clearly, through an ethical lens. This

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<sup>14</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, 'The Wilderness Hunter,' in *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (New York: G. Putnam & Sons, 1885), pp. 258–60.

section will examine different philosophical approaches to ethics in relation to hunting and the key questions raised earlier such as: Is it inherently wrong to kill animals? Does the motive for hunting change the morality of the action? To whom do the animals belong? To whom is this a matter of interest? And what should we, as a society, do about it? The objective is to see how these approaches can be used to frame questions which are central to understanding the ethical implications of hunting.

#### A) Deontology

Deontology implies that there is an ethical dimension to any act, which is to say, that any particular act can be good or bad. This can be determined in accordance with a set of rules governing rights and responsibilities, that is, a set of moral duties. Kant defines this fundamental principle as a categorical imperative. He translates this into a practical imperative by saying that one should act in a way that could and should be universally applied. An extension of this principle has been developed through the concept of intrinsic value, which leads us to the principle of moral worth, implying a consideration of something or someone for their own sake and not in terms of their value to another.

In terms of application in the context of ethical outlooks on hunting, this directly leads us to considering whether an animal or a species can have intrinsic value and therefore moral worth, and thus whether it can ever be permissible to kill an animal. It may also lead us to consider the relationship between hunting and environmental conservation, by questioning whether the environment itself has intrinsic value, and thus our duty towards the environment. This leads to understanding the relationship between species and the environment as a whole, and the consequences thereof for the permissibility of hunting.

Through this perspective, there might be two possibilities: that is, a duty to hunt, or a prohibition on hunting. So, in the first case, we would need to ask whether there is a set of circumstances in which, ethically speaking, there could be a duty to hunt. In prehistoric times, this might have been the case as hunting would have been the primary way to sustain life, but that could not be argued today, as there are many ways in which nutrition is secured by humans. Moreover, recreational hunting in the way in which we are looking at it is only ever partly motivated as a means for gaining food.

Another possible deontological moral imperative for hunting might be to preserve the environment, that is, for the maintenance of conservation balance. However, this in itself presumes that the environment, or rather wild nature, to be specific, has a value in itself that impels us to preserve it, and second that it is good to preserve it through hunting.

On the other side, the question would be whether it is morally wrong to hunt at all. This depends largely on the question of whether animals should be seen as possessing intrinsic value in themselves, such that we should also try to preserve their lives. In recent decades, this issue has been extensively discussed and powerfully argued by authors such as Tom Regan<sup>15</sup> and Christine Korsgaard<sup>16</sup>.

These deontological approaches allow us to address the issue of the intrinsic value of animals and the environment, and consequently provide a good basis for discussions regarding our duties towards them.

## B) Consequentialism

Consequentialism holds that the ethical understanding of any act stems entirely from the consequences of that act (or of something related to that act, such as a rule requiring such acts). Utilitarian theorists such as John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham provide us with some approaches to ways of calculating or weighing up consequences, which allow us to make ethical determinations.

Consequentialism, or rather more specifically utilitarianism, on the other hand, begs the question of how to evaluate outcomes of hunting, especially in relation to stakeholders. An outcome in terms of the happiness of the hunter might fit well with the concepts of pleasure and pain incorporated by Bentham in his 'Felicific Calculus.' Bentham's contribution to utilitarian thinking, while helping to focus thinking on the need to find ways to bring specificity and thus, applicability, helps us to see several issues in relation to the hunting question. First, how can we value individual versus group outcomes, not only within one community but across different stakeholder groups? Second, Bentham made an enormous assumption about the rationality of decision-making, which stands in contrast to the highly emotional positions adopted in the hunting debate, which raises the question of how, as Mitchell notes,<sup>17</sup> one may quantitatively combine such non-quantifiable elements. Mitchell also questions the calculability of Bentham's approach, noting that 'Bentham relies upon classification, and not calculation.'<sup>18</sup> Finally, and this is another relevant question in making utilitarian calculations, given that these calculations are often reduced to financial considerations, we have the problem of the diminishing marginal utility of wealth. This economic concept suggests that, as the aggregate wealth of an individual increases, he/she will derive a smaller amount of satisfaction from a similar absolute amount of gain. This is highly pertinent, not only in how it was envisioned, whereby literally the value of revenue to the receiver declines in relation to their declining need, but it is also important in this context because of the value of monetarily

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<sup>15</sup> Tom Regan, 'The Case for Animal Rights,' in *Advances in Animal Welfare Science*, ed. by M. W. Fox and L. D. Mickley (Washington, D.C.: The Humane Society of the United States, 1986), pp. 187–88.

<sup>16</sup> Christine Korsgaard, 'A Kantian Case for Animal Rights,' in *Animal Law: Developments and Perspectives in the 21st Century*, ed. by Margot Michel, Daniela Kühne, and Julia Hänni (Zürich: DIKE, 2012), pp. 7–18.

<sup>17</sup> Wesley C. Mitchell, 'Bentham's Felicific Calculus,' *Political Science Quarterly* 33.2 (1918), 161–83.

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, 'Bentham's Felicific Calculus,' p. 169.

expressed wealth being different across different countries and situations. In practical terms, an increment of wealth means more when one is starving to death than deciding whether to upgrade the yacht.

Bentham's early work, based on the assumption of a hedonistic calculus of a sum of net pleasures and pains, has also been attacked on other counts. Carlyle's 'pig philosophy' critique has been responded to with a proposed distinction of between higher and lower pleasures, by John Stuart Mill, an example of which is that he considers mental pleasures to be higher than physical pleasures, because humans prefer to use their higher abilities.<sup>19</sup> Bhardwaj accepts this approach, arguing that higher (mental) pleasures allow us to evolve and move towards a greater likelihood of general happiness in society.<sup>20</sup> However, this assumes quite a lot in terms of the human desire for perfection at an individual level, and that a society would think homogenously. In short, it encounters the same difficulties expressed above with respect to the different views of different stakeholder groups and cultures.

In addition, in terms of the modern approach to utilitarianism being the comparative calculation of well-being, there is a set of questions about what the relevant constituent dimensions of well-being might be, as well as how they could be calculated. These approaches to the application of utilitarian calculations typically look at a broader range of human outcomes, ranging from health, economic, equity, 'happiness,' etc. There is then the question as to which of these criteria might be applicable, or if they are all applicable, how they might be weighted and added up. Especially in terms of looking at hunting, well-being might be interpreted as including livelihoods, the health of the natural environment, etc. When this is applied in policy environments, we now typically look at projected outcomes across a range of globally agreed goals, most recently the Sustainable Development Goals, approved and adopted at the 2015 United Nations General Assembly.

Another potentially serious criticism of utilitarianism holds that it has no means of excluding (in a moral sense) abhorrent actions, and some might argue that hunting is an abhorrent action. As Woodard points out,<sup>21</sup> however, according to utilitarianism, the rightness of an action is determined by the consequences of the act and not by the act itself. This would imply that this criticism would not apply in the context of hunting, although it does point to the insufficiency of utilitarianism as the sole dimension of an approach to the ethics of hunting, as many would argue that the act itself might have a moral quality not captured by a calculation as to its consequences.

A third potential issue in the application of utilitarianism as an approach to ethics in hunting is understanding and applying what Woodard refers to as the 'separateness

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<sup>19</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ed. by Roger Crisp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 56–57.

<sup>20</sup> Kiran Bhardwaj, 'Higher and Lower Pleasures and our Moral Psychology,' *Res Cogitans* 1.1 (2010), 131.

<sup>21</sup> Christopher Woodard, *Taking Utilitarianism Seriously* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 4.

of persons.<sup>22</sup> This is the challenge of dealing with conflicts of interests, and the challenges inherent in trying to aggregate interests.

A final consideration is whether and how utilitarianism can be used to judge both personal choice (as in the individual choice of a hunter) and public choice (as in the development of public policy, as we shall discuss later). Here Woodard implies that public policy can successfully depend on utilitarianism, attempting as it does to be impartial and provide for standard cases. Williams, however, seems to suggest an opposing view, namely that the simplicity of the utilitarian approach is not equipped to deal with the complexities of political thought and reality.<sup>23</sup> It may be inferred, though, that utilitarianism might be of use in providing a way of bringing together into one debate the different needs and views of different stakeholders, and their prospective levels of well-being.

### C) Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics, in Western terms, derives from the thinking of Aristotle, and seeks to provide answers to the subjective question of how one should live. In very simple terms, it postulates that human flourishing is maximised through a combination of virtuous disposition and 'phronesis', moral or practical wisdom. According to Sophie-Grace (Timothy) Chappell, 'Iglood agency in the truest and fullest sense presupposes the contemplation of the Form of the Good',<sup>24</sup> following the line of reasoning of Iris Murdoch, namely that the development of virtue lies in 'anything which alters consciousness in the direction of unselfishness, objectivity, and realism...'.<sup>25</sup> These two writers provide us with an idea of how a virtuous disposition can be intentionally inculcated, and moral/practical wisdom can be developed.

Various concerns have been raised in regard to virtue ethics, on the grounds of its applicability, adequacy, relativism, and situational problems. While some of these can be addressed relatively easily, such as application, others, such as conflict or adequacy, might pose greater challenges. It is also worth pointing out that some of these concerns are similar to those experienced by other major ethical theories, such as situational challenges.

So, what are the primary virtues which, if we possess them and can apply them well, would render us virtuous characters, both as individuals and as a society? How might we develop a sense of what such characteristics should be? Classically, the core virtues were held to be justice and charity. Coope, however, places much more emphasis on the practical wisdom requirement, as put forward by the Greeks,

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<sup>22</sup> Woodard, *Taking Utilitarianism Seriously*, pp. 40–43.

<sup>23</sup> Bernard Williams, *Ethics, and the Limits of Philosophy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 118–22.

<sup>24</sup> Sophie-Grace (Timothy) Chappell, *Knowing What To Do: Imagination, Virtue, and Platonism in Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 300.

<sup>25</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of the Good* (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 82.

arguing that such practical wisdom is the 'master virtue' in itself.<sup>26</sup> One could say that this makes sense insofar as any virtue can only be as strong as the application thereof, and Coope argues well that '[t]he virtues of good sense both enable and ennoble'.<sup>27</sup> However, we need to go further to establish what these virtues of good sense are, and to this end Coope calls for a return to the primary view of justice as the leading virtue, together with charity. The idea is that these qualities, in broad terms, if considered together, might provide for a coherent ethical approach.

This subjective approach of virtue ethics has some clear applicability in looking at the matter of hunting, and indeed it has been employed on both sides of the debate. Opponents of hunting often engage in ad hominem attacks on hunters, as was evident in the social media engagement following the hunting of Cecil the lion. Earlier writers such as Henry Stephens Salt roundly condemning hunting as an expression of vice.<sup>28</sup> On the other side, however, since classical times, hunting has been considered as part of the moral education of young men particularly, as inculcating virtue.

The questions of when (that is, in which circumstances), how (using which means), and finally as a result of which intentions hunting may take place are perhaps all decisions which emanate, at least in part, from a personal disposition and determination, that is, a set of virtues held by that person. There are reasonable grounds, therefore, to consider the possible role that virtue ethics might play in reflecting on the ethics of hunting. So far, however, this has primarily been looked at in terms of the virtues of hunters, within the context of environmental ethics, effectively on the grounds that hunting occurs within the context of nature and the virtues it (or rather the hunter) exercises are those that relate to nature as well as to the specific animal. It is clear that virtue ethics can only look at an action within a specific context, as it would be meaningless if considered in the abstract. The virtue must have some kind of intention, to lead to some kind of understood and identified good. Explicitly in the context of nature, might we assume that this is the well-being of nature and conservation?

The task is then to identify which attributes, or virtues, would be considered 'good' in terms of hunting. This implies the question of whether it is good or bad to hunt at all, and, considering that hunting does take place, if there is a way to identify which virtues would make for 'good hunting' as opposed to 'bad hunting.' Jon Jenson proposes that the best way to identify whether hunting can be seen as a virtuous activity at all, and therefore to discern whether anyone can be a hunter and a virtuous person at the same time, is to look at some 'heroes' of the early environmental movement.<sup>29</sup> He bases his work on that of Philip Cafaro, who reviewed the

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<sup>26</sup> Christopher Miles Coope, 'Modern Virtue Ethics,' in *Values and Virtues: Aristotelianism in Contemporary Ethics*, ed. by Timothy Chappell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 21–23.

<sup>27</sup> Coope, 'Modern Virtue Ethics,' p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Henry S. Salt, *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress* (Clarks Summit, PA: Society for Animal Rights, 1980), p. 92.

<sup>29</sup> Jon Jenson, 'The Virtues of Hunting,' *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 8.2 (2001), 114.

contributions of Henry David Thoreau, Rachel Carson, and Aldo Leopold to environmental ethics. Both Leopold and Thoreau saw the value of hunting in providing an essential connection between man and nature. Leopold was an avid hunter and saw this as a positively virtuous activity, in that the connection is essential in developing an ecological consciousness, which would foster a care for nature at the deepest level. Thoreau, too, though he stopped hunting, finding it emotionally distasteful, continued to recognise its value in fostering this important consciousness. Of course, hunting is not the only way in which this higher consciousness of and engagement with nature can be reached, but it might lead us to conclude that hunting could be an act of a virtuous person, as it has this virtuous purpose in some cases and by some people.

The next step would then be to identify those specific virtues which would be relevant to hunting, so that we might define what would be a 'virtuous hunter.' Jensen postulates four primary and commonly environmental virtues which could serve this purpose: humility, connectedness, gratitude, and respect.<sup>30</sup> It is interesting, however, that this is a very current approach, in the sense that these are virtues which may not have been thought so valuable in the past, but also that these are very different virtues from those which in the past were held to be inculcated through hunting. For example, as we saw in the first chapter, hunting was closely associated initially with the development of war-like characteristics, courage, and strength, etc. This might therefore put into question the ethical credibility of the choice of these virtues, and whether it is ethically feasible for appropriate virtues to change over time.

Although Jensen did not attempt either to provide a 'blanket' justification for hunting, or to imply that all hunters were virtuous, his approach has been vigorously attacked. For example, Lovering postulates two primary objections: first, that these virtues may be developed in a less harmful way; and that Jensen's argument fails to provide a credible justification for hunting.<sup>31</sup> However, I do not believe that it is a useful approach as whether virtue can be developed by means other than hunting is irrelevant to whether hunting inculcates virtue altogether. Furthermore, Jensen clearly makes no effort to justify hunting in general in this way; he merely argues that it is possible to be virtuous in hunting and that hunting may therefore be the action of a virtuous person. Lovering puts forward a further criticism, noting that Jensen claims that hunting might be necessary for the development of some specific environmental virtues, such as connectedness, meaning within the food chain, humility in the face of causing the death of an animal, etc.<sup>32</sup> Here I believe Lovering may be right, and that Jensen might have gone too far. Whereas the process of killing an animal may indeed be important to the development of such a positive virtue, there is no effective argument that this is the only way in which such a virtue might be developed. In his criticism, Lovering goes further to invoke the analogy of how

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<sup>30</sup> Jensen, 'The Virtues of Hunting,' pp. 118–21.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Lovering, 'The Virtues of Hunting: A Reply to Jensen,' *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 13.1 (2006), 68–76.

<sup>32</sup> Jensen, 'The Virtues of Hunting,' p. 122; Lovering, 'A Reply to Jensen', p. 71.

killing another human can help to instil a virtue. Here Lovering goes too far in the other direction.

Virtue ethics therefore clearly has a contribution to make in considering ethical questions in relation to hunting, at the very least in helping to determine how hunting may take place, and the development of hunting codes of conduct.

#### D) Aesthetics

Why and how might aesthetics be relevant?

For each man kills the thing he loves,  
Yet each man does not die.

—*The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, Oscar Wilde

Aesthetics and ethics, the two branches of axiology (the study of value), run throughout the entire issue of hunting, going beyond the matter of taste, through recognising value, and seeking a transcendental truth in terms of existence. In hunting, as the hunter pursues his prey, he seems to enter into an ever-closer personal relationship with the prey, an ever-closer sense of intimacy, love, and appreciation, reaching its culmination in the final moment of the kill. It is encapsulated in the quotation above. Hunters all seem to confirm their love for nature and indeed for the animal they kill, which prompts the question: how do these concepts—ethics and aesthetics, and love and murder—meet and interact?

Wittgenstein, in his famous statement 'Ethics and Aesthetics are one',<sup>33</sup> seemed (or at least it may be so interpreted) to be saying that through an enhanced appreciation of what is true and beautiful in life (one might say the true glory of creation), the important and valuable becomes evident, sketching a relationship between the value and meaning provided by an aesthetic object and the value and meaning provided by a moral object. One could therefore argue that by gaining an enhanced aesthetic appreciation of nature, an attitude of respect and responsibility towards nature would be inculcated, providing an essential link to that which is meaningful to us in moral terms. Collinson interprets Wittgenstein along those lines, affirming that an aesthetic experience allows a perception of the totality of the meaning of life, which is inherent in a pursuit of the good, and the beautiful as one endeavour.<sup>34</sup>

The relevance of aesthetics in the ethics of hunting is that it helps us understand the transcendent aesthetic experience of the hunter in particular, and his relationship with the animal and nature. It points to convergence between the transcendent aesthetic experience and a notion of virtue. Interestingly, many hunters, irrespective of whether they be philosophers (such as José Ortega y Gasset or Aldo Leopold),

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<sup>33</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by Frank P. Ramsey and Charles Kay Ogden (London: Kegan Paul, 1922), §6.421.

<sup>34</sup> Diané Collinson, 'Ethics and Aesthetics Are One,' *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 25.3 (1985), 266–72.

describe their experience in terms that reflect a transcendent aesthetic experience or even an epiphany. The hunter will typically describe the three parts of the hunting experience: the preparation, the actual hunt, and the recollection. During the actual hunt, the hunter walks through nature. Their senses are heightened with the effort of multi-sensorial observation and an increase in adrenaline due to the perception of danger. The air is still, laden with the multiple smells of the bush, the dust, the faint smells of the traces of animals having passed that way. The dust also hangs in the air, providing a golden filter through which the hunter observes the tall grasses, the lazy arms of the acacia trees, insects, birds. The sounds of the cicadas and occasional bird calls, and the heat, all these sensory perceptions contribute to an enhanced and intensely experienced sense of being part not only of the surroundings and nature, but also of something even more primordial and profound. Aaltola explores four types of experience: mystical, peak experience, elevation, and attentiveness, which provide a normative imperative.<sup>35</sup> A similar perspective is offered by Sophie-Grace Chappell, who writes that 'people DO choose their ways of life and their individual actions, and change them too, in response to epiphanies'.<sup>36</sup> This illustrates the earlier point in terms of the connection between the aesthetic experience and virtue in relation to the environment through hunting.

The value of aesthetics in an ethical consideration of hunting might lie, therefore, in bringing an understanding of the broader relationship between the hunter, the environment, and the prey, and what insight it might provide to seeing how hunting could enhance a sense of responsibility for the environment through a closer relationship between those actors. We might speculate that, as a source of the moral gaze, aesthetics enables us to perceive truth, beauty, and goodness, and this is applicable to hunting through the aesthetic experience thereof.

#### E) No Easy Answers

As we have seen, each ethical approach grants us some perspective on one or more dimensions of ethics in relation to hunting, and to see more clearly the set of questions which will need to be addressed in determining international policy. However, there remain two primary challenges in using these approaches directly. The first is understanding how these approaches might fit, or be used, together.

Some attempts have been made to reach an overarching perspective, the most notable of them being the work of Derek Parfit. Parfit's 'triple theory' attempts to reconcile or bring together deontological and consequentialist approaches, through the analogy of climbing a mountain from different sides.<sup>37</sup> In this Parfit may be considered to have partially reconciled rule consequentialism and a deontological approach, but as Roger Crisp points out, rule consequentialism has largely given way

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<sup>35</sup> Elisa Aaltola, 'Wilderness Experiences as Ethics: From Elevation to Attentiveness,' *Ethics, Policy, and Environment* 18.3 (2015), 283–300.

<sup>36</sup> Sophie-Grace Chappell, *Epiphanies: An Ethics of Experience* (forthcoming), p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Derek Parfit, *On What Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

to act consequentialism in utilitarian debate,<sup>38</sup> and further research is needed to try to reconcile those and to include subject-centred approaches. Crisp goes further to identify several questions, in terms of which adherents of the three different types of approaches might indeed reach different conclusions, such as 'what makes actions right?', 'what do we have strongest reason to do?', and 'what is it most rational to do?', among others.

Roger Scruton also felt that Parfit failed in his attempt to reconcile the three types of approaches, primarily because he failed to appreciate the true nature of moral sentiment.<sup>39</sup> As Scruton said of Parfit's gigantic magnum opus *On What Matters*:

Nothing that really matters to human beings—their loves, attachments, their delights, aesthetic values, and spiritual needs occurs in Parfit's interminable narrative. All is swept into a corner by the great broom of utilitarian reasoning, to be left there in a heap of dust.<sup>94</sup>

Another criticism of Parfit's triple theory approach is that it does not include the fourth leg to ethical approaches, virtue ethics, thus rendering it incomplete. Sophie-Grace Chappell explains this by averring that Parfit took the view that virtue ethics (that is, systemic virtue ethics) is but a form of indirect consequentialism, that is, motive consequentialism. She goes on to reject this view on the simple grounds that consequentialism is focused on the future, whereas virtue is focused on the present.<sup>40</sup>

Chappell has several additional reservations concerning Parfit's approach, such as the difficulties attendant upon establishing what exactly would define 'things going best,' the optimal state of affairs, and argues that the notion of the 'rational willing' engaging in trade-offs is far from the Kantian view, among others. Critically, though, Chappell insists that Parfit himself was not putting forward his triple theory as an ultimate solution to the problem, but merely as a subject for discussion. Perhaps Parfit's primary contribution is that his work enables us in some way to focus more clearly on what is important and what we are trying to achieve.

It is clear that there are no obvious answers here. Different approaches give us different answers, and each approach leads to more questions. Perhaps it is the case that easy answers are an unrealistic expectation, and there are limits to how far moral philosophy can go in relation to difficult ethical questions. After all, even Wittgenstein questioned the capacity of philosophy to answer questions, describing it as 'not a body of doctrine, but an activity'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Roger Crisp, 'Are We climbing the same mountain? Moral theories, moral concepts, moral questions,' *ZEMO* (2020) 3:269-278, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s42048-020-00076-2>>, p. 275.

<sup>39</sup> Roger Scruton, 'Parfit the Perfectionist,' *Philosophy* 89.4 (2014), 621-34.

<sup>40</sup> Sophie-Grace (Timothy) Chappell, 'Climbing Which Mountain? A Critical Study of Derek Parfit *On What Matters*,' *Philosophical Investigations* 35.2 (2012), 167-81.

<sup>41</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, §4.112.

As Sophie-Grace Chappell suggests, perhaps what can be achieved is 'a moral outlook', a way of looking at things, a way of asking questions and studying things, that will help us in determining a way forward in engaging with difficult issues.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps, as Chappell further surmises, it is necessary and worthwhile to ask *all* the questions raised through the different moral theoretical approaches above.<sup>43</sup> Crisp, similarly, argues for a new approach, which is more constructive and more open to incorporating seemingly contradictory views,<sup>44</sup> the latter being so prominent in the hunting debate.

The barriers to reconciling or synthesising different philosophical approaches to the ethics of hunting are, of course, additional to those which get in the way of applying very general principles to highly specific and complex issues of the rights and wrongs of hunting for different reasons in different cultures. This will become evident in the section that follows. The second challenge is in addressing the issues raised through the questions 'whose lion is it anyway?,' and 'to whom is this of interest?' These questions illustrate the tensions between the perspectives of different stakeholders, whether those stakeholders be the direct actors (hunter, environment, animal) or those stakeholders which vary in their relationship and distance from the process of hunting, such as hunters, local communities, national stakeholders, and the international community.

### 3. Environmental Ethics

This chapter explores a variety of approaches to environmental ethics. After reviewing moral philosophical approaches, it considers different cultural perspectives on the environment and nature and our according duties.

#### 3.1 Moral Philosophical Approaches

The issue of hunting is inextricably bound up with environmental ethics, as hunting takes place within the sphere of environment (and the policy and rules in relation to the environment, which are in turn shaped by philosophical attitudes to the environment), and because any policy or rules which govern hunting will also inevitably fall within the greater ambit of environmental policy. In some ways, animals (species) are seen as symbols of or proxies for nature as a whole.

To start with, it might be useful to gain an understanding of whether there is a coherent view on the subject of intrinsic value and nature, as this might enable us to direct our moral philosophical thought in a more specific and targeted way. Chelsea Batavia and Michael Paul Nelson make a strong case in defence of the idea that

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<sup>42</sup> Chappell, 'Climbing Which Mountain?,' 167–81.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Crisp, 'Are We climbing the same mountain?,' ZEMO (2020) 3:269-278, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s42048-020-00076-2>>, p. 277.

nature has intrinsic value, both from a Moorean perspective, so as 'to maximise the goodness of the world, as measured by the Instrumental Value of its constituent states of affairs',<sup>45</sup> and from a Kantian perspective, demanding moral consideration because nature has value in itself.

Why is this discussion relevant? In the first instance, Batavia and Nelson argue that the chief implication of the consideration of intrinsic value is that it opens up the possibility of moral consideration, and an acceptance of morally relevant interests. They argue furthermore that conservation is a moral endeavour, which is essentially founded upon the notion that conservation happens in order to protect something that is fundamentally good, and which deserves protection for its own sake. However, this first implies that we have some consistent idea of what exactly nature is, and furthermore, that this view is consistently held across different cultures. This is not necessarily the case. For one thing, nature is almost exclusively in a state of change, due to a variety of factors, primarily including human intervention. These changes render it increasingly more altered in purist terms, to the point where different people in different circumstances may or may not deem it still to be nature. In addition, nature may be deemed to be largely a cultural construct, in the sense that it is understood and appreciated very differently across different cultures and circumstances. One might therefore argue that in its relativist form, nature it is more instrumental in value than intrinsic, as its value is interpreted and appreciated in relation to the subjective uses and appreciations thereof.

It seems that Batavia and Nelson recognise that many argue for an acceptance of the notion of Intrinsic Value of nature as it provides such a strong imperative for conservation. I am not entirely convinced that this necessarily follows, as it might still be possible to have a moral responsibility towards something which has (only) instrumental value. There is a link between the item that has instrumental value and the person (*who* does possess intrinsic value) to whom that value is instrumental, and therefore one could argue that one has a duty to conserve that item of instrumental value (the forest ecosystem of Brazil, for example) because people have need of it, both present and future generations. It does not follow that the duty of conservation is any weaker for being at one remove, so to speak.

This would imply that it might be possible to achieve the same ethical outcome regardless of whether one presupposes an intrinsic value in nature, but it does not work out like that. Essentially, the arguments for and against intrinsic value in nature are reflected in the divergent approaches to environmental ethics in terms of anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, etc., and the related moral theories upon which they depend. These in turn have different implications for the application of environmental ethics and the decisions that are accordingly taken. For example, anthropocentric environmental ethicists typically view the environment as requiring conservation for

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<sup>45</sup> Chelsea Batavia and Michael Paul Nelson, 'For Goodness Sake! What is Intrinsic Value and Why Should We Care?', *Biological Conservation* 209 (2017), 368–69.

the use of future generations, thus instrumentally, and this has significant implications for how the environment and wildlife may be used, the role of protected areas, etc. These ethicists tend to rely upon utilitarian approaches which place heavy emphasis on human well-being.

On the other hand, zoocentric approaches, such as that of Regan, in extending the notion of Intrinsic Value to animals, seem to rely upon a deontological approach that implies a duty to conserve species. This approach has been widely followed by biocentrists such as Taylor, and deep ecologists such as Naess (reference all to Batavia and Nelson). The common feature of all these approaches is that they reject an anthropocentric approach and demand moral recognition for environmental dimensions.

There is, however, also the consideration of whether an item could have intrinsic value as well as instrumental value. For example, it is conceivable that the environment could be held to have intrinsic value—and need to be valued and thus conserved for its own sake—but also to possess instrumental value, in the sense of providing food and other goods and services to humankind. In this kind of consideration, questions might arise as to how this value would be treated, whether there might be a kind of hierarchy of value, or how our normative attitudes might be adapted situationally. This kind of thinking might be implicit in the following discussions on environmental ethics.

#### A) Deontological Approaches to Environmental Ethics

As we have seen above, many deontological approaches depend upon the acceptance of the notion of intrinsic value of the environment, which provides a way of considering the good of the environment as an end in itself, and not merely as an instrument for human enjoyment, and therefore provides a very neat direct obligation to conserve nature. This has an appeal in helping us potentially to overcome some practical difficulties associated with other approaches, such as the consideration of future generations, or, for example, the allowance of protection for untouched spaces which do not directly provide any outcomes in terms of human well-being.

On the other hand, however, deontological approaches have their challenges in terms of practical applications. The first is that in looking only at the act itself and not considering its consequences, one cannot make the trade-offs that are inherent in many environmental situations. For example, it may be necessary to enact a smaller, local damage to the environment in order to secure a longer-term, greater benefit. This is quite typical in conservation ethics, where, for example, it may be necessary to cull numbers of a specific species to secure the long-term conservation status of an area.

Secondly, deontological approaches are essentially duty-based, but do not easily provide for solutions where practical situations put us into a conflict of obligations, for example, in human-conservation-animal conflicts.

### B) Utilitarian Approaches to Environmental Ethics

The most common approaches to environmental ethics that have been widely translated into policy are fundamentally utilitarian. The entire notion of sustainable development, which emerged in the latter twentieth century and has entirely overtaken the policy environment, talks about 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.'<sup>46</sup> In so doing, it presents the needs of the present in human development terms, demanding the maximisation of human well-being.

This anthropocentric approach has, in policy terms, replaced previous preservationist approaches. Although the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development refers, in its introduction, to 'working together to preserve our oceans and forests',<sup>47</sup> it is very clearly put into the context of human well-being. However, utilitarian approaches are simply not sufficient for some situations, nor are they free from challenges. For example, there are endless pragmatic difficulties in making trade-offs and evaluating preferences between different stakeholders and communities. Incorporating the interests of 'future generations' poses difficulties: how can we possibly see into a distant future (meaning beyond the present generation) and predict the various changes in technology, environment, culture, and attitudes that would provide inputs into decisions about preferences or perceptions of well-being? Already we have seen changes over time (even over the last few decades) in understanding of which factors comprise human well-being, in addition to cultural and political differences. These are evidenced by the plethora of indices which purport to evaluate well-being. Most importantly, there are diverse methodological and applicability challenges related to the comparative evaluation of well-being outcomes.

### C) Virtue Ethics Approaches to Environmental Ethics

Geoffrey Frasz considers the possibility of a virtue ethical approach to environmental ethics.<sup>48</sup> This would imply that we might start with the virtuous character of the moral agent (individuals) and consider how such an agent might act with respect to the environment. Frasz suggests that such a virtuous approach would lead to a longer-term perspective which would result in environmental benefit, or rather that longer-term thinking is generally held to generate better environmental outcomes as

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<sup>46</sup> Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (un.org) 1983. See WCED: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (un.org), p. 41.

<sup>47</sup> THE 17 GOALS – Sustainable Development, <<https://www.sdg.un.org/goals>>

<sup>48</sup> Geoffrey B. Frasz, 'Environmental Virtue Ethics: A New Direction for the Field,' *Environmental Ethics* 15.3 (1993), 259–74.

opposed to short-term thinking (often but not exclusively on the part of commercial entities) which tends to favour extractive or otherwise damaging processes. This is evidenced by the widespread environmental damage we have seen over the past two centuries.

On the face of it, this is an attractive proposition, conforming as it does to the desire within environmental ethics to consider the fate of future generations. However, it would depend very much on the capacity to make good decisions with respect to the future. This in turn is hampered by the general difficulty in predicting future environmental outcomes. Furthermore, there does not seem to be an inherent connection between virtue and the ability to make good decisions, that is, decisions that result in positive environmental outcomes, as opposed to morally wise outcomes. Looking at the value of someone's character is not a guarantee that they possess either sufficient knowledge or a capacity for decision-making. Having sufficient knowledge of the current situation alone depends on reducing the asymmetry of information and capacity that frequently hampers environmental policy development at all levels, not to speak of the ability to plan into the future. Second, any application would come up against the same constraint that virtue ethics poses in any applied ethical question, namely that of practical applicability. Any environmental problem, although it may have a global dimension (such as climate change), has an overwhelmingly 'here and now' dimension, specific to time and place, and as such it is difficult to develop a sufficiently specific set of principles from virtue ethics alone.

It thus follows that a virtue ethics approach on its own, without regard for outcomes or rules, does not provide a sufficient basis for policymaking or rule-making. However, insofar as actions do emanate from character (whether individual or collective), it can also be seen that a consideration of virtue can provide a valuable contribution to moral consideration of the environment.

#### D) Fitting These Approaches Together

Clare Palmer summarises various elements in these environment approaches to explore how they might conflict with each other when applied to any given circumstance in a policy context, and poses the question as to whether one should try to convince others of the rightness or wrongness of a particular approach rather than merely work to reach agreement on certain actions and practices, which is in itself an approach known as methodological pluralism.<sup>49</sup> The question that flows from this approach is: would it have sufficient moral or normative strength to withstand the test of different circumstances and challenges over time? I would argue that two things need to underpin effective solutions: first, the use of ethical analysis to help understand the positions of different stakeholders; and second, a

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<sup>49</sup> Clare Palmer, 'Contested Frameworks in Environmental Ethics,' in *Linking Ecology and Ethics for a Changing World: Values, Philosophy and Action*, ed. by Ricardo Rozzi et al. (London: Springer, 2014).

consistent and lengthy process of discussion to try to evolve consensus-based or at least convergence in policy discussion. The alternative, as we have seen in the context of hunting, is simply increasing conflict, divergence of policy, and environmental risk as well as instability.

The matter is further complicated by the fundamental question of how to understand the relationship between humans and the rest of nature. The discussion about intrinsic value is inconclusive, and thus also fails to contribute to understanding that relationship, as it means there is no common view as to the moral status of non-human dimensions of nature.

#### E) Expanding the Moral Universe

The major challenge in environmental ethics remains to understand and provide answers to the issue of expanding the moral universe to incorporate the rest of the natural world, i.e., understanding whether, on what basis, and to what degree moral consideration could be accorded to various dimensions of the natural world, such as species, ecosystems, etc. (Other challenges, such as the moral consideration of future generations and the consideration of different communities and groups and their interests and preferences, also remain unanswered.)

Several philosophers have tried to address this issue by drawing on different models for expansion. Brennan, for example, proposes a growing set of concentric circles to the integration of human and non-human elements with nature.<sup>50</sup> This has a problem in that it seems to assume some sort of hierarchy, and we would need to consider whether and how these various status levels might be accorded moral consideration.

As a first expansion, Brennan turns to the issue of taking future generations into account. This is the easiest extension, in a sense, as we are still dealing with humans (who are generally acknowledged to have intrinsic value and inspire a generally accepted set of duties and responsibilities). In this it falls to some extent in line with generally accepted utilitarian thinking in policy debate, which also focuses on human well-being. We can accept that future generations deserve consideration, at the very least because consequentialism argues that an action is good or bad in relation to the consequences of said action, and consequences by definition are measured within a future state of affairs. This presents an inescapable logic for ascribing consideration to future generations. The question is how this can be done using the generally accepted approaches for measuring utilitarian outcomes: welfare, preference, and hedonic. Brennan argues that there are problems with using welfare and preference approaches, such as further practical challenges in trying to assess what well-being might mean for future generations (we cannot predict their

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Brennan and Y. S. Lo, *Understanding Environmental Philosophy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 6–7.

technological, cultural, or environmental circumstances), nor can we predict what their preferences might be.<sup>51</sup>

The second round of expansion takes us into the sphere of animals. This can involve either deontological discussion, such as with respect to animal rights, as put forward by Tom Regan,<sup>52</sup> or utilitarian discussion, such as the perspective of speciesism put forward by Peter Singer.<sup>53</sup> However, neither of these perspectives is very useful in thinking about environmental ethics as a whole, because an individual animal or group of animals may be perceived differently according to where and in what context we are thinking about them. A group of elephants might be considered as having intrinsic value when occurring in a National Park, but they might be considered as having negative value when they are rampaging through the crops of a surrounding poor community.

It may therefore be more useful in terms of environmental ethics to proceed to the third round of expansion and consider all living things: ecosystems. Brennan uses his approach to link with the notion of intrinsic value, to claim essentially that all of nature, including the expansions, exists for its own purpose and not for any instrumental purpose.<sup>54</sup> In his view this therefore provides a basis for extending moral consideration to all of nature. This is an attractive proposition in that it allows for incorporation conceptually of all dimensions of nature, but of course it suffers the typical difficulties of applicability. The merit of Brennan's approach is that it helps us to see the issues clearly, rather than providing answers to the issues.

### 3.2 Perspectives on Humans, Animals, and Nature in Environmental Ethics

The notion that humans might have duties and responsibilities towards non-humans is of relatively recent evolution (twentieth century) from the notion that humans might care for nature solely in their own long-term self-interest, when Leopold first intimated that there needed to be a greater locus of concern, not limited to humans.<sup>55</sup> This inspired early thinking on the possibilities for intrinsic value in nature, which in turn inspired the development of new non-anthropocentric approaches to environmental ethics. For example, zoocentrism extends the notion of intrinsic value to animals, as has been proposed by Singer through a notion of non-speciesist utilitarianism,<sup>56</sup> and by Regan, who adopts an animal rights approach.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Brennan and Lo, *Understanding Environmental Philosophy*.

<sup>52</sup> Regan, 'The Case for Animal Rights.'

<sup>53</sup> Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 2nd edition (New York: New York Review of Books, 1990).

<sup>54</sup> Brennan and Lo, *Understanding Environmental Philosophy*, p. 108.

<sup>55</sup> Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There* (London: Penguin, 2010).

<sup>56</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*.

<sup>57</sup> Regan, 'The Case for Animal Rights.'

Alternatively, Paul Taylor has developed a model referred to as biocentrism,<sup>58</sup> based on the earlier work of Arne Naess,<sup>59</sup> whose relational view of humanity led to the notion of a single, interconnected living reality, and the 'deep ecology' movement. While using a Kantian approach to argue that all who possess inherent worth are entitled to moral consideration, Taylor extends the application of inherent worth to all living things, as having a right to life—a biocentric worldview that denies any notion of humans' superiority. This he extends to an ethic of respect for nature that requires us essentially not to touch nature at all—extreme protectionism. While it is obvious that hunting (nor indeed everyday living) could not possibly be countenanced within either of these approaches, the latter also implies many other practical limitations, such as the necessities of nutrition and health.

In any event, this approach seems somewhat asymmetrical. While the notion of seeing humans as integrally part of the broader ecosystem makes sense, it does not necessarily follow that humans should not enjoy a dominant role within that ecosystem. This is for two reasons: first, there has always been a hierarchy of domination within nature, which is evident in the food chain; and second, given that humans have had by far the greatest influence on nature (for good or bad, as destroyers and protectors), it also follows that humans should carry a greater responsibility for decision-making and ensuring the well-being of nature.

A slightly different evolution of this interconnected thinking which does not place humans at the centre of its thought was developed by J. Baird Callicott,<sup>60</sup> based on the earlier work of Aldo Leopold developing the land ethic, a holistic approach to the preservation of the biotic community. Callicott holds that it is an absolute duty to protect the biotic community as a whole, and that the rights of individuals should always be subordinated to the welfare of the whole.<sup>61</sup> This would imply, therefore, that hunting for the purposes of culling 'excess numbers' of species would be allowed. There are challenges in relation to Callicott's approach, though, especially in light of the potential conflicts that might arise in looking at different ecosystems, species, etc., and the inevitable conflict between subjective judgements.

While the anti-anthropocentric view insists that human beings should not enjoy any special privilege, we have to concede that in fact humankind must have a special ability, which has enabled our species to have such a disproportionately significant impact on nature and the environment as it has. Thus, it could be argued that this disproportionate impact, resulting as it does from a superior ability, implies a greater responsibility to treat the rest of nature, of which humans are a part, with a special duty of care. This would bring them closer to the anthropocentric view which currently prevails in ethics and in policy environments, brought forward in the

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<sup>58</sup> Paul W. Taylor, 'The Ethics of Respect for Nature,' *Environmental Ethics* 3.3 (1981), 197–218.

<sup>59</sup> Arne Naess, 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecology Movement: A Summary,' *Inquiry* 16.1–4 (1973), 95–100.

<sup>60</sup> J. Baird Callicott, 'Non-Anthropocentric Value Theory and Environmental Ethics,' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21.4 (1984), 299–309.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

sustainable development agenda, which enjoys global support. Essentially, this argument, in acknowledging that the primary causes of all the damages and depredations inflicted upon the environment have been human action, places upon humans the responsibility for repair and future sustainable management. This notion is reflected in all major documents and agreements from the Brundtland Report<sup>62</sup> and has formed the foundation of many of the principles that have provided the basis for international policy in relation to environment and development ever since.

Accepting the Special Responsibility argument first means acknowledging a clear duty towards the environment, a deontological position. It depends upon a view of character which would support the acceptance of such a responsibility. And it also implies that it is up to humans to make the decisions as to what kinds of outcome would constitute the environmental optimum, how to think about such issues via the utilitarian calculus, etc. This leaves us with the same challenges that we encountered when trying to understand how the application of Bentham's Felicific Calculus could have any practical value in addressing ethics in relation to hunting.

There are at least two further sets of challenges in applying utilitarianism in developing normative environmental ethics, however. The first is in understanding what it is we seek to maximise—pleasure/happiness, preferences, or well-being. Related to this question, assuming we follow the generally accepted approach of seeking to maximise well-being, is that of what constitutes well-being in the context of the diverse array of natural participants (people, future people, animals, ecosystems, etc.) that we are dealing with.

The second, major challenge relates to the very different philosophical understandings of moral permissibility that exist among different human cultures. While accepting that the notion of relativism is hugely controversial in philosophical discourse, it seems, in the context of environmental ethics, intuitive that the variation in human experiences, situations, and cultural histories must have some impact on how moral reasoning in relation to the environment is developed.

#### A) Cultural Relativism

At its simplest, cultural relativism might reflect vastly different normative attitudes towards all sorts of activities. Records of the extent of these divergences can be traced back to the works of Herodotus, who noted the relativity of *mores* (νόμοι):

If anyone, no matter who, were given the opportunity of choosing from amongst all the nations in the world the set of beliefs which he thought best, he would inevitably—after careful considerations of their relative merits—choose that of his own country.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Our Common Future.

<sup>63</sup> Herodotus, *Histories*, trans. by Aubrey De Sélincourt (London: Penguin, 2003), §3.38.

This is not to deny that there are absolute dimensions to ethics—for example, all people might agree that the deliberate and unprovoked killing of another human being is wrong—but clearly not all concepts of right and wrong are universal. Cultural dimensions play a large role in understanding non-permissible actions, how those taboos are interpreted differently in different societies, how the origin of certain practices came about, and how it might be possible to develop universally accepted ethical approaches.

From a moral philosophical perspective, this might fall within the area of virtue ethics. If the moral permissibility of an action derives from the virtuous character of the actor, there is the possibility that the concept and the expression of virtue in two different actors—for example, the particular virtues they might display—might be different according to their perception of a virtuous character which in turn may be coloured by their culture. This could result in widely divergent views on the morality of actions, such as hunting, or decisions about the preservation of use of protected areas, etc. Similarly, deontological approaches might differ as these views translate differently into rules, and consequential approaches, too as they might differ in relation to desired outcomes.

This understanding is also laden with practical challenges, as pointed out by Airoboman.<sup>64</sup> He raises the problems of overlapping cultures and changes in cultures over time. If moral rules for behaviour change over time, how does one adapt to those changes while simultaneously arguing that morality is relative to a particular cultural standard?

Finally, there is the risk that absolute acceptance of cultural relativism naturally leads to debate ending with all parties merely 'agreeing to disagree.' This is clearly unsatisfactory in the context of our globalised society. It is universally acknowledged that our environmental challenges are interconnected across time, location, culture, and a host of other factors, which mean that solutions must be found that are able to reflect a level of universalism, while at the same time acknowledging that the interconnected nature of the challenges makes such universal solutions more difficult to reach. This is a particular challenge in the development of international policy.

## B) Reconciling Cultural Differences

Attempts have been made to overcome the difficulties inherent in bringing together the various moral philosophical approaches to environmental ethics by looking at, *inter alia*, different cultural philosophical bases, especially as they pertain to the African situation. We will now review two of these: 1) to explore what they might bring

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<sup>64</sup> Felix Ayemere Airoboman, 'Ethical Relativism, Environmental Ethics, and Global Environmental Care,' *KIU Journal of Social Sciences* 6.4 (2020), 143.

to the discussion on environmental ethics; 2) to discern how they might be applied to the issue of hunting; and 3) to see what practically applicable ethical guidance might be derived from them.

The first is the concept of African Relational Environmentalism, as developed by Kevin Behrens. Behrens has made an interesting attempt to address, *inter alia*, the issue of cultural relativism, to explain in philosophical terms the African approach to nature, and to explore what that might mean for environmental ethics.<sup>65</sup> First, he argues that African thought and philosophy extends beyond an anthropocentric view to include a strong sense of interdependence and interconnectedness throughout nature.<sup>66</sup> He then expands this view of nature on the part of humans to embody 'respect', meaning a value for harmonious relationships, and he argues that this enables a view that is at once holistic and individualist, effectively combining the best of both approaches. He puts forward the widely accepted African notion of 'ubuntu,' which may be easily expressed through the sentiment of 'I am because we are' as an expression of a moral theory which postulates that harmonious relationships are valued for their own sake, and then extrapolates this to incorporate a sense of solidarity between humanity and the natural environment. He then explains what might be meant by the pursuit of such a harmonious relationship and claims that it could be characterised by a concern for the welfare of others, caring for each other, and a sense of solidarity or community, bearing in mind that 'others' now includes nature. This is extended to include a sense of making sacrifices for others in the community; in other words, this would allow for some of the trade-offs which might be needed.

However, an interesting point that Behrens makes is that there is no sense of priority between the interests of individuals and the interests of communities,<sup>67</sup> and that the individual is only realised or fulfilled through the community. This poses some challenges in the first instance because of the rise of individualist thinking in post-colonial Africa. Behrens attempts to address this priority issue by suggesting that there is a possibility of relative status, and postulates that respect and consideration do not imply 'moral egalitarianism.' He explores a method for evaluating this relativity, referring to degrees of life force, or rather that such 'can be interpreted as granting greater moral status to entities with enhanced and more complex capabilities for experiencing life'.<sup>68</sup>

The implications for hunting in Behrens's approach are clear: as predation is part of the natural order, and humans are part of the natural order, one would assume that hunting would fall within the morally permissible realm, *provided* that it is carried out in such a way that would demonstrate respect for other members of the web of life.

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<sup>65</sup> Kevin Behrens, 'African Philosophy, Thought and Practice, and their Contribution to Environmental Ethics,' unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Johannesburg, 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Behrens, 'African Philosophy, Thought and Practice,' p. 47.

<sup>67</sup> Behrens, 'African Philosophy, Thought and Practice,' p. 74.

<sup>68</sup> Behrens, 'African Philosophy, Thought and Practice,' p. 161.

This paves the way for the development of hunting codes of conduct, and also for defining permissible contexts and prerequisites for hunting.

Another attempt to move beyond conventional Western philosophical understanding is the concept of eco-phenomenology, as explored by Adam Cruise.<sup>69</sup> Cruise suggests that eco-phenomenology provides a practical alternative to the clearly anthropocentric approach of sustainable development. He bases this idea on the concept of phenomenology as applied by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which, he says, 'facilitates an understanding of all living and even non-living entities, such as air, water and soil, as interconnected and interrelated within a broad biosphere'.<sup>70</sup> Cruise avers that all current philosophical approaches to environmental ethics are fundamentally anthropocentric, and that any anthropocentric approach, whether weak or strong, will not adequately protect or conserve the natural environment. He postulates a philosophical weakness which he refers to as the 'cataclysm of dualism',<sup>71</sup> a complete separation between humans and animals, which he argues presents an insuperable barrier to the proper consideration of nature/animals.

Cruise also argues that this explicit or hidden anthropocentrism underlies 'both unlimited exploitation of nature... [and serves as] a pretext for our violence and extirpation of animals',<sup>72</sup> implying a rejection of most existing environmental ethical approaches, whether deontological, utilitarian or virtue, as they all depend upon human judgement. He then turns to phenomenology to find a solution. He describes his own experience of wilderness in phenomenological terms, and it is clear that this closely approximates the experience of hunters. However, Cruise rejects all phenomenologists except Merleau-Ponty, whom he claims is the only philosopher to break free from the bounds of anthropocentrism, by focusing on the body as opposed to the consciousness of the mind, the body being primary and the mind being 'reconceptualized as a function of embodied life in the world'.<sup>73</sup>

The positive consequence of this approach is that it recognises a need for humans to connect with and interact as an intrinsic part of nature, and not as separate from it. This is interesting, as it correlates well with the often transcendental aesthetic experience of hunters, when they say (as so many do) that they feel at one with nature through the process of hunting.

Nonetheless, in its determined anti-anthropocentrism, at first glance Cruise's suggestion does not seem to provide a way to consider the necessary trade-offs and essential human engagement in the maintenance of wilderness in today's world. Furthermore, this approach is entirely concentrated on the living, and I would venture

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<sup>69</sup> Adam John Cruise, 'The Value of Being Wild: A Phenomenological Approach to Wildlife Conservation,' unpublished doctoral thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2019.

<sup>70</sup> Cruise, 'The Value of Being Wild,' p. 129.

<sup>71</sup> Cruise, 'The Value of Being Wild,' p. 80.

<sup>72</sup> Cruise, 'The Value of Being Wild,' p. 99.

<sup>73</sup> Cruise, 'The Value of Being Wild,' p. 124.

that this does not fully include all dimensions of nature, for example, ecosystems as a whole.

While Cruise's work clearly faces the same challenges as other approaches in its applicability at any level to normative environmental ethics, from a hunting perspective, there may be some positive elements to draw upon. For example, Cruise places great emphasis on 're-wilding'—a popular notion in conservation these days. He is careful to include humans in the process, calling for activities that 'would activate and concretise for humans their fleshy existence as part of the "flesh of the world"'.<sup>74</sup> Hunters take great care to characterise their activity as part of the natural process of ecological life, predation having always been essential to ecological balance and of course now frequently used to preserve conservation value. I am sure that Cruise did not mean to be interpreted in this way, but it would certainly seem that the view of hunting as a natural predatory activity, and moreover one that is frequently seen as a transcendental experience immersing and elevating the human view into the larger view of the natural world, could be argued as a positive ethical process.

These two approaches provide some valuable insights that might be of use to policy development, one being an understanding and potential acceptance of the responsibility of humans towards the rest of nature and of hunting as a natural human endeavour, and the other being the process by which hunting may, in the mind of the hunter, provide a transcendental experience, lifting the human being into a closer relationship with the nature towards which he/she has a special responsibility. We have already seen, in international policy, an acceptance, on an exception basis, of indigenous cultural hunting practices, for example with respect to whales in Iceland and Japan. It might therefore be possible to extend this thinking to a broader consideration of human endeavour in policymaking.

Given the close and complex relationship between hunting and the environment, this chapter has tried to understand how moral philosophical theory has informed approaches to environmental ethics. It has reviewed various environmental ethical approaches to understand how they interact with hunting, especially in the light of cultural differences.

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<sup>74</sup> Cruise, 'The Value of Being Wild,' p. 207.

## 4 Nature Red in Tooth and Claw: Exploring the Application of Ethical Theory as Relevant to Hunters, Their Prey, and Nature

This chapter examines the relationships between 'nature,' 'the hunter,' and 'the prey' by taking each one as a protagonist.

### 4.1 Nature

For Scruton, nature is embodied in the countryside, and hunting provides an awakening and realisation of the value not only of nature but of life itself. In this section we will discuss key attributes and understandings of nature, as they relate to the activity of hunting. We will look at wildness, hunting as a transcendental aesthetic experience of nature, and the relationship between hunting and nature conservation, within a cultural context and understanding of nature.

#### A) Concepts of Wildness

What is wilderness and what is wilderness in relation to nature? Typically, we would refer to 'nature' as the natural world, a complex ecosystem which would include the animate and the inanimate, insects, animals, and soil, as well as humans. Wilderness, however, is the term that is normally used to describe nature that has not been manipulated by human action. Duncan Brown delineates the three primary approaches to the distinction between wilderness and nature as a largely cultural construct: a utilitarian view which sees nature as a repository of goods for the purpose of meeting human needs; a preservationist approach which seeks to protect nature from human intervention; and an organic approach, which provides a view within which the 'natural world and the human world are integrated and inseparable'.<sup>75</sup> I would go further and suggest that the distinction within that statement is already artificial and would suggest that we view the natural world as consisting of a set of elements, including the human world, which are integrated and inseparable. However, we do need to also accept that to some degree, as discussed earlier, *nature* is a cultural construct, with all that implies for differences in preferences and different tolerances for levels of human intervention.

Furthermore, even if we wish to look at landscapes that do not include humans, over the last several decades we have had to accept that there are few, if any, truly 'untouched' parts of the world, and part of what we try to do in conservation is to restore nature to a semblance of that untouched state. Brown postulates that wilderness describes those places where the potential to be wild can be fully

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<sup>75</sup> Duncan Brown, *Wilder Lives: Humans and Our Environments* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2019), p. 11.

expressed.<sup>76</sup> This is an interesting approach, which lays open the field to discuss rewilding, or the re-creation or restoration of wilderness. This goes some way to addressing some of the blurring of the boundaries between the concepts of nature and wilderness.

Within this distinction, there may be room for differing levels of wildness. Leading from this question is the existence of a continuum of wildness. There are very few parts of the globe that are entirely untouched by human intervention, perhaps some parts of Antarctica, parts of Siberia, and perhaps even some limited parts of the Amazon basin. And of course, there is an inherent contradiction in that as soon as we engage in any way with an area in order to conserve it as wilderness, by definition we are influencing it and therefore it ceases to be true wilderness. This prompts the need for some compromise, where action can be taken to preserve an area, such that it continues to be wilderness in the eyes of those who regard it. But the wilderness must be regarded as wilderness by someone, so therefore we must ask, does an area of wilderness need to be observed by someone in order to be wilderness, and if so, do we need to have access to that area, and engage with it in some way? This also implies a range of perspectives from different stakeholders, which has implications for policymaking, such as we see in international agreements.

Current policies (at some local and national levels) to encourage 'rewilding' are relevant here, as are efforts to promote wildlife economies. Wildlife economies postulate that landscape restoration in biodiversity terms can result in positive conservation outcomes as well as offering economic opportunity and enhanced community well-being. This kind of approach may help to advance international sustainable development policy.

Hunting, in attempting to emulate the primordial process of predation, is generally considered to be the most authentic experience when carried out in an area which can most nearly be described as wilderness. As part of that inherently natural process, hunting itself can also be said to be part of 'wildness,' recreating and enhancing wilderness.

## B) Aesthetics and Transcendental Experience

From an aesthetic perspective, we can understand that for many people hunting is part of a transcendental experience of nature, awakening the hunter to his/her place and role in nature and wilderness. Aldo Leopold was considered one of the greatest modern thinkers on the subject of wilderness. His *A Sand County Almanac* became the first modern work to address coherently the tensions within recognising the aesthetic and cultural values of wilderness, the 'cultural harvest' it produces, and the need to use it sustainably. Writing in 1948, Leopold foresaw the development of ethics in relation to wilderness as a restriction of use thereof, and the need to

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<sup>76</sup> Brown, *Wilder Lives*, p. 18.

maintain the right of wilderness to exist, in what he termed a 'land ethic'. However, his understanding that use of nature, while needing to be sustainable, is an inevitable and natural consequence of the interaction between humans and nature (of which man is also part) is one of the formative thoughts about aesthetics and wilderness.

Nicole Hassoun, however, takes a different perspective and argues that *wild* nature provides a transformative aesthetic experience.<sup>77</sup> She argues that for an aesthetic experience to be transformative, it would contain both cognitive and sensory experience.<sup>78</sup> To maximise the sensory experience of wilderness, one might argue that one needs to be immersed in the sight, smells, and sounds of wilderness, to feel the prick of the thorns of the acacia tree, to walk in the red dust of the Maasai Mara, for example. One would need to feel that they are present, in the fullest sense, in the wilderness. In this the aesthetic transformative experience, we might say, is analogous to Scruton's experience of hunting, in which he said that he felt the countryside came alive through the process of hunting. That was his perception, and I would argue there is a similar transformative experience for many in feeling part of wilderness. In my own experience of my first visit to the Maasai Mara, I sat upon a bench on a hill and looked out for the first time across the vast vista of rolling hills that make up the Maasai Mara and was (most unusually for me) moved to tears. For the first time in my life, although I had had many wildlife experiences before then, I truly felt part of the essence of creation, that this was the source and essence of life, a true reality that connected me to what the essence of our globe is. What made this, among so many similar experiences, so transformative? Perhaps it was that I was not in a vehicle (the more usual mode of viewing wilderness/wildlife), there was no visible road or track, and that I was alone: there were no voices and the quality of stillness, the feeling of being undisturbed, was profound. This facilitated that feeling of connection, and would necessarily be replicated and indeed, enhanced, in hunting by a more active engagement. Hepburn echoes this: one is 'both actor and spectator, ingredient in the landscape and lingering upon the sensations of being thus ingredient, rejoicing in their multifariousness, playing actively with nature, and letting nature, as it were, play with one and one's sense of self.'<sup>79</sup>

### C) Conservation

The mutual dependence of the relationship between hunting and nature finds expression in nature conservation. Wilde unpacks the widely used concept of sustainable development in utilitarian terms,<sup>80</sup> which is where we still are in international policymaking terms, noting that although it is anthropocentric, it is also

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<sup>77</sup> Nicole Hassoun, 'Wilderness, the Wild, and Aesthetic Appreciation,' *Philosophy Faculty Scholarship* 19 (2016), <[https://orb.binghamton.edu/philosophy\\_fac/19](https://orb.binghamton.edu/philosophy_fac/19)>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ronald W. Hepburn, 'Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty,' in *British Analytical Philosophy*, ed. by Bernard Williams and Alan Montefiore (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1966), p. 295.

<sup>80</sup> Fred T. Wildes, 'Recent Themes in Conservation Philosophy and Policy in the United States,' *Environmental Conservation* 22.2 (1995), 143–50.

ecologically conservative. He derives this from the original motivations and views of colonisers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whose views were linked to a sense of dominion and use. Of course, indigenous peoples also had a culture of use of natural resources, which in some instances may be closely connected to a sense of dominion, and in others less so, as cultures varied.

However, this view was increasingly challenged from the middle of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the Transcendentalists, such as Emerson and Thoreau, who, in part inspired by the Romantic movement, espoused what was effectively a combination of deontological and aesthetic approaches, based upon a view of the oneness of creation, leading to a duty of preservation and non-use. These views and this dichotomous philosophy have been deeply influential throughout the evolution of conservation thinking, policy, and practice in the United States, influencing Leopold and Callicott, among others.

Wilde refers specifically to the history of conservation in the US, and this is of relevance as it has influenced conservation philosophy, policy, and practice globally, and indeed continues to do so through the influence of several large NGOs, including the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, etc. For example, the Nature Conservancy's income in 2020 amounted to more than \$1.23 billion, including a large range of projects, most of which focus on direct engagement with conservation on the ground, working closely with local communities and local, regional, and national governments. One can easily imagine the influence that this kind of budget has on the thinking of the communities where they work, however unintentional. They largely propound a protectionist stance. They also influence the approaches of projects on the ground, for example in 'Alternative livelihood projects' in resource-constrained areas. The result is that these communities are taught to shun hunting and other uses of natural resources, which, over the course of time, shifts their views of what may have been traditional cultural practices and attitudes to nature.

Sustainable hunting in some places does, and in other places has the potential to, contribute substantially to the economic welfare of a local community. Sustainable hunting, it is argued, as part of a more sustainable land use, contributes to the biodiversity status of the landscape and global sustainability more effectively than alternative land uses.<sup>81</sup> Bichel explores the case study of Botswana, where a complete ban on hunting in 2014 was (partially) lifted in 2019, with significant conservation and livelihood benefits.<sup>82</sup>

Macdonald et al. take a very clear but ambivalent approach. The authors accept without question a simplistic deontological perspective of hunting as morally reprehensible but argue powerfully that the consequential benefits of properly

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<sup>81</sup> Alastair S. Gunn, 'Environmental Ethics and Trophy Hunting,' *Ethics and the Environment* 6.1 (2001), 89.

<sup>82</sup> Nikolaj Bichel, 'Comprehending Trophy Hunting: Hunting, Hunters, Trophies and Antis,' unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Hong Kong, 2021, p. 300.

managed hunting to conservation far outweigh the costs.<sup>83</sup> While they do not engage with moral philosophical approaches in any depth, this policy position from Macdonald et al. (and indeed WildCRU as a whole) is very important. It is widely accepted that the work of WildCRU has made an enormous contribution to the field of conservation over the past almost 40 years, based on this consequential view. This sensation of internal conflict—that is, having some sympathy for a position opposing hunting, at the same time as promoting and realising the benefits to conservation and community well-being from hunting and a recognition of a different cultural perspective both on hunting and on nature—is shared by many conservation groups.

Similarly, some studies, such as that by Di Minin et al., also present a mixed picture.<sup>84</sup> Di Minin et al. provide 'an overview of the peer-reviewed literature on recreational hunting of terrestrial birds and mammals between 1953 and 2020'. While they found substantial information indicating that, in many cases, hunting can contribute to positive conservation outcomes, it seems as though further research would be needed to be assured of when and how it could do so, and even more so in the area of trying to ensure social and economic benefits to local communities.

## 4.2 Hunter

In this section we will turn our attention to the hunter and will centre the hunter in examining their relationship with nature, prey, and the hunting experience. We will also consider how the experience of hunting is informed by the hunter's mind and character, and what this means for the moral permissibility of hunting.

### A) The Hunting Experience

Perhaps the most evocative piece of writing on the subject of hunting is Roger Scruton's *On Hunting*. While this short piece exclusively deals with fox-hunting in England, it demonstrates and raises many issues that are common for hunting anywhere. Scruton saw fox-hunting as an embodiment of life in the countryside, and an expression of civilisation: the hunter simultaneously showed his close affinity to the animal, as well as, through his courage and skill, demonstrating penitence for killing it.<sup>85</sup> This romanticised account also powerfully illustrates and echoes the experiences of hunters in Africa. Scruton depicts the killing of the fox as a kind of sacrifice, wherein the animal 'dies on behalf of the species, and thereby re-consecrates the identity between species and tribe.'<sup>86</sup> This confers an almost religious duty upon man to hunt animals. Although this sounds somewhat far-

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<sup>83</sup> David W. Macdonald et al. 'Conservation or the Moral High Ground: Siding with Bentham or Kant,' *Conservation Letters* 9.4 (2016), 307–08.

<sup>84</sup> Enrico Di Minin et al. 'Consequences of Recreational Hunting for Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihoods,' *One Earth* 4.2 (2021), 244.

<sup>85</sup> Roger Scruton, *On Hunting* (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 1998), p. 68.

<sup>86</sup> Scruton, *On Hunting*, p. 75.

fetched, it does contribute to an understanding of the complex interrelationships between hunter and prey.

Scruton expresses vividly how these three elements—man, beast, and nature—are inextricably bound to each other in the larger context of life on this planet. Scruton's elegant exposition of the interconnectedness of these three elements, and the interconnectedness of the morality of dealing with them, is centred around the experience of the hunter and his/her relationship with the other, in a way that is common to all hunting.

Another seminal piece on hunting is José Ortega y Gasset's *Meditations on Hunting*.<sup>87</sup> Ortega, a leading philosopher of the twentieth century, held that life is essentially given to us as a blank page to be filled with our experience. As he famously wrote: 'I am I and my surroundings.' He then proceeds to understand hunting through the experience itself, and holds that the hunting and killing of animals is the essence of human behaviour or humanity. Ann S. Causey agrees, pointing out that the killing of animals, and the instinctive desire to do so, was not only inherent, but necessary, in palaeolithic man.<sup>88</sup> She argues further that this instinctive desire persists in humans today, and is what drives the appetite for hunting.

Ortega holds that hunting cannot be defined by either its utilitarian functions (for example for food, etc.) or through its value as a sporting endeavour.<sup>89</sup> In defining hunting, Ortega commences with the understanding that hunting occurs throughout the zoological spectrum—this is what he uses to establish a notion of its inherence in all life forms.<sup>90</sup> His definition, at its simplest, is that hunting is what one animal does, to take possession, dead or alive, of an animal from an inferior species. It is a series of instinctive actions, and this fact is what connects it so closely to the essence of life. The instinctive actions are on both sides, of course, and thus in some sense connected as the aggressive and defensive instincts confront each other.

Ortega speaks lyrically and powerfully about the sensations which arise during the process of hunting. 'If we want to enjoy that intense and pure happiness which is a return to Nature,' he says,

we have to seek the company of the surly beast, descend to his level, feel emulation towards him, pursue him. This subtle rite is the hunt. When one is hunting, the air has another, more exquisite feel as it glides over the skin or enters the lungs, the rocks acquire a more expressive physiognomy, and the vegetation becomes loaded with meaning.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting*, trans. by Howard B. Wescott (New York: Scribner's, 1972).

<sup>88</sup> Ann S. Causey, 'On the Morality of Hunting,' *Environmental Ethics* 11.4 (1989), 327–43.

<sup>89</sup> Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting*, p. 46.

<sup>90</sup> Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting*, p. 49.

<sup>91</sup> Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting*, p. 123.

This powerful language emphasises not only the value of hunting as an instinctive expression of being and being part of the greater glory of creation, so to speak, but also the enhanced experience of existence achieved through hunting, a transcendental experience. 'The hunter, while he advances or waits crouching, feels tied through the earth to the animal he pursues, whether the animal is in view, hidden, or absent.'<sup>92</sup>

Ortega is not alone in his presentation of hunting as a transcendental aesthetic experience. Many others, including, as already noted, Roger Scruton, present hunting as a process by which the hunter's aesthetic experience of nature is enhanced, and in many cases, as described above, it is this search for that intensity of aesthetic experience which leads them to hunt. Hunting permits them to enter more deeply into the aesthetic experience of nature than, for example, by merely viewing it through photography or other means of observation, which are dismissively described by Vitali as 'virtually voyeuristic'<sup>93</sup> in comparison with the more authentic aesthetic experience of hunting.

The argument is thus frequently made that the intense aesthetic experience of hunting leads to a deeper understanding of the value of nature in general, as well as appreciation for the animal specifically, and thus engenders a higher level of care, and sense of responsibility towards them. This places the hunter in a moral relationship with both the prey and nature as a whole, and posits hunting as an expression of a positive moral intention.

It is also clear, however, that not all hunters experience that same sense of unity with the prey, and primordial life fulfilment, through hunting. Many hunters simply desire to kill the animal that they wish to consume. And then, of course, there are many others, whose experiences and perspectives all differ. It is also relevant that hunters may belong to any of several stakeholder groups, they may be members of a local community, they may be professional hunters forming part of a conservation practice, they may be following a traditional practice, or they may be foreign tourists with any of a number of motivations. But these motivations drive different phenomenological experiences, and we have no way to assess which of them most accurately represents the relationship between humans and nature through hunting.

## B) The Hunter's Mind

Stephen Kellert was a well-known social ecologist and a professor at Yale, who helped to develop the concept of 'biophilia' (originally coined by Edward O. Wilson), which explores the nature of the relationship between humankind and the

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Theodore R. Vitali, 'The Dialectical Foundation of the Land Ethic,' in *Proceedings, Governor's Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage*, Montana State University, Bozeman, US, July 16–18 (1992), p. 203.

environment beyond the material, looking at the complex relationships embedded in cognition, spiritual meaning, and intellectual and aesthetic appreciation.<sup>94</sup>

Kellert undertook several studies to try to understand motives and purpose in hunting (focused on the United States) and developed a typology of hunters. For example, the Naturalistic Hunter—or Nature Hunter—constitutes an estimated 10–20% of American hunters.<sup>95</sup> He or she is characterised most of all by a desire to engage with nature as an active participant—as a predator in its natural element, trying to take down its prey.

Marti Kheel, the first great exponent of radical ecofeminist deep ecology, similarly developed a typology of hunters. Although from a critical perspective, her typology presents a coherent analysis of motives. She identifies, *inter alia*, hunters as Happy (hunting to fulfil a psychological need), Holist (hunting as part of an ecological/conservation process), or Holy (fulfilling a spiritual need).<sup>96</sup> Kheel's Holy hunter archetype is similar to Kellert's category of the Naturalistic Hunter, as feelings of an almost spiritual connection with nature are often part of this hunting attitude. These attitudes seemingly embody the desire to experience human nature, and indeed, nature at large, at its most fundamental evolutionary level. James Swan draws the analogy with martial arts, in which the player mentally merges him- or herself with their opponent, entering into their mind in order to conquer them, and explains that 'a good hunter must learn to link personal thoughts, actions and moods with the larger forces of nature'<sup>97</sup>—as well as, one assumes, the prey directly, in order to succeed. Young takes this process of simulation even further and describes it in religious terms—hunting 'leads us to remember and accept the violent nature of our condition, that every animal that eats will in turn one day be eaten,'<sup>98</sup> so that hunters are in effect living out a basic spiritual purpose.

These perspectives, whether they are pro or against hunting, share a reflection of a basic human desire for reaffirmation of basic relationships between humans and the natural world which have over time become estranged through industrial development. Hunting, from these naturalistic and spiritual perspectives, provides an awareness of man's hunting origins, as well as a reminder of the basic interflow of energy and materials involved in the interdependence of all living things.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson, *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993).

<sup>95</sup> Stephen R. Kellert, *The Value of Life: Biological Diversity and Human Society* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996), p. 71.

<sup>96</sup> Marti Kheel, 'The Killing Game: An Ecofeminist Critique of Hunting,' *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 23 (1996), 30–44.

<sup>97</sup> James A. Swan, *In Defense of Hunting* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995), pp. 32–33.

<sup>98</sup> Dudley Young, *Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 139.

<sup>99</sup> Stephen R. Kellert, 'Attitudes and Characteristics of Hunters and Antihunters,' in *Transactions of the Forty-Third North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, March 18–22 Phoenix, Arizona*, ed. by Kenneth Sabol (Washington, D.C.: Wildlife Management Institute, 1978), p. 423.

It is quite paradoxical that this expression of the desire to hunt as part of a deep primeval desire to participate in the primordial life (sic) processes of nature, connects closely to some of the deep ecological views, the anti-anthropocentric views of Cruise, for example, and many protectionists, who implacably oppose hunting. It is, however, also clear that hunting is most often driven by mixed motives. There is also a desire to enjoy an aesthetic experience, engage in a traditional cultural practice, derive personal intangible benefits of companionships, etc., derive 'natural' food, contribute to conservation/local economic benefits, etc. In addition, there are motives such as the eradication of invasive alien species, habitat conservation, exercise, and the pursuit of the physiological excitement of hunting.

Stephen Kellert's 1978 study, looking at motivations for hunting, found that three primary motivations pertained: demand for food/utilitarian hunters (44%); interaction with nature (18%); and sport/dominionistic hunters (38%).<sup>100</sup> Kellert went on to develop further categories and to continue to undertake in-depth interviews and surveys of a great number of hunters in the US. While all these motivations may continue to be valid, I believe the study misses a key factor, which is that most hunters engage in the sport for mixed motives, as I suggest above. The Kellert study also largely ignores cultural practice and the spiritual motivations explored by Kheel, Swan, Young, and others. However, understanding the multiplicity of motivations driving most hunters, incorporating at the very least all three of the motivations at the top of Kellert's list—food/utility, sport, and communing with nature—is key to understanding the ambiguities and tensions in the discussions of the morality of hunting.

### C) The Hunter's Character

Traditionally, hunting was viewed as the means by which young men attained virtues, as argued for example by Xenophon: 'the pleasure that young men take in hunting...makes them self-restrained and just, through education in true principle'.<sup>101</sup> This notion of the practice of hunting inculcating virtues has persisted even though it has evolved, as presented by Jensen, into more 'modern' conceptions of virtue such as respect, humility, and gratitude.<sup>102</sup>

On the other hand, many consider that the characteristics displayed or even inculcated by hunting are distinctly unvirtuous, if not downright evil. For example, Kheel baldly states that 'Hunting is an act of violence'<sup>103</sup>—implying that hunting is the expression of a character that is deliberately violent and vicious. Similarly, others describe hunters as stupid, cruel, selfish, or thoughtless, all distinctly unattractive attributes. There clearly is an enormous divergence between the way that hunters view themselves, and the way that some others perceive them.

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<sup>100</sup> Kellert, 'Attitudes and Characteristics.'

<sup>101</sup> Cited by Anderson, *Hunting in the Ancient World*, p. 18.

<sup>102</sup> Jensen, 'The Virtues of Hunting,' pp. 113–24.

<sup>103</sup> Kheel, 'The Killing Game,' p. 30.

However, none of this means that the behaviour of hunters cannot be judged to be immoral. Over the centuries hunters have developed sophisticated codes of conduct for hunting behaviours, which seek to minimise any negative consequences of hunting, for example, by ensuring as quick and painless a death for the animal as possible. Among hunters, as well as more broadly, there is a general disapprobation for those who hunt carelessly and cause undue suffering. And among the general public, as pointed out by Di Minin et al.,<sup>104</sup> public acceptance of any form of recreational hunting is declining, irrespective of the more acceptable motives that are included in the mix.

Henry Stephens Salt, in the latter days of the nineteenth century, was the first to vocally oppose hunting, and to uphold the rights of animals. In his *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, published in 1892, he claims:

Animals, as well as men, though, of course, to a far less extent than men, are possessed of a distinctive individuality, and, therefore, are in justice entitled to live their lives with a due measure of that 'restricted freedom' to which Herbert Spencer alludes.<sup>105</sup>

Salt vehemently opposed hunting specifically:

Now, on the very face of it, this amateur butchery is, in one sense, the most wanton and indefensible of all possible violations of the principle of animals' rights. If animals—or men for that matter—have of necessity to be killed, let them be killed accordingly; but to seek one's own amusement out of the death-pangs of other beings, this is saddening stupidity indeed!<sup>106</sup>

The very existence of these diametrically opposing views shows again just how complicated this issue is, and how it is impossible to determine any singular characteristics of a hunter.

### 4.3 Prey

Unarguably, the protagonist who has the most at stake, whose role as an individual in the exercise of hunting is entirely existential in that it is their life (as a sentient being, which we do not question), which is the objective of the whole exercise, is the prey. One could therefore argue that an ethical view concerning the prey should form the basis of any ethical view of the process of hunting as a whole. In this section, we will consider to what degree animals have rights, whether some animals have greater

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<sup>104</sup> Di Minin et al., 'Consequences of Recreational Hunting,' p. 239.

<sup>105</sup> Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p. 9.

<sup>106</sup> Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p. 68.

rights than others, and in the absence of inherent rights what the human duty of care to animals might be.

#### A) Moral Personhood and Moral Consideration

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the issue of whether animals might enjoy rights in themselves became widely debated, initially led by Stanley and Roslin Godlovitch with a set of essays, *Animals, Men and Morals: An Enquiry into the Treatment of Non-Humans*, in 1971.<sup>107</sup> They were followed by Richard Ryder, who, following the early lead of Bentham, argued that it is the capacity to feel pain that compels consideration, and that all beings who experience pain are therefore holders of rights. It was Ryder who famously coined the term 'speciesism' in 1971, arguing that species membership is a morally irrelevant characteristic, to decry those who argue that only humans enjoy moral personhood.<sup>108</sup> This perspective was picked up in deontological philosophical terms by Tom Regan, who uses the 'subject-of-a-life' notion, expanding the traditional Kantian position.<sup>109</sup> According to Kant,

...every rational being, exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will...Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on nature have, nevertheless, if they are not rational beings, only a relative value as means and are therefore called things. On the other hand, rational beings are called persons inasmuch as their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves.<sup>110</sup>

In addition,

The fact that the human being can have the representation 'I' raises him infinitely above all the other beings on earth. By this he is a person...that is, a being altogether different in rank and dignity from things, such as irrational animals, with which one may deal and dispose at one's discretion.<sup>111</sup>

Kant did, however, consider that humans have a duty to behave in a humane way to other species, arguing effectively that humanity itself is damaged through inhumane behaviour, irrespective of which species is so treated. Ryder and others take a broader view. Ryder argues that it is the capacity for suffering that binds sentient life forms, and thus it is this characteristic that defines what protection a species should be entitled to.<sup>112</sup> Christine Korsgaard takes that argument even further, arguing that

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<sup>107</sup> Stanley and Roslind Godlovitch, *Animals, Men and Morals: An Enquiry into the Treatment of Non-Humans* (London: Gollancz, 1971).

<sup>108</sup> Richard Ryder, *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Towards Speciesism* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

<sup>109</sup> Regan, 'The Case for Animal Rights.'

<sup>110</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans., and ed. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>111</sup> Immanuel Kant, 'Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (1798)', in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. and trans. by Robert Loudon and Gunter Zöller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 239.

<sup>112</sup> Ryder, *Animal Revolution*.

humans and non-humans share certain 'natural' capacities (as opposed to rational capacities which might be exclusive to humans), such as a desire to avoid suffering, which could then deem them worthy of moral consideration.<sup>113</sup>

Tom Regan mounts a passionate argument for the rights of animals, based on a criticism of contractarianism.<sup>114</sup> He accepts that according to the contractarian position, morality consists of a set of rules by which we, as a society, agree to abide, and that we collectively have the power to enforce. However, he argues that this is an entirely inadequate approach, since it ignores the rights, interests, or well-being of any person (or animal) who is not party to such a contract and therefore cannot adequately protect any being who is not party to the contract. He therefore retreats to a fundamental rights view, to argue that all individuals, human and animal, have inherent value as subjects-of-life, and therefore no individual can be treated negatively, not even in a good cause that benefits many others. It therefore goes without saying that he absolutely condemns animal husbandry. This is indeed a noble and lofty position, but I would argue that it lacks applicability in a policy or practical setting as it is most unlikely to elicit consensus, and avoids grappling with the trade-offs and necessary decisions inherent in application.

Another approach, espoused by Korsgaard, also bases the rights of animals on the notion of inherent value, incorporated in the concept of existence of animals and humans commonly as 'beings unto themselves.'<sup>115</sup> This then, in that thinking, obliges us to treat animals as if they were similar to humans. However, I would question whether this is a good argument, as it ignores the possibility of reciprocity that is the essence of the Golden Rule which underpins normative ethics and which Korsgaard herself seems to be evoking.

Both approaches define our obligation to animals quite specifically in the rights of animals. In this approach, rights imply their counterpart: obligations; and in that way they form the basis for relationships and moral duties towards animals. The relationship between beings that involves such reciprocity can only really be described as contractarian.

At this point, it might be useful to try to make some distinction between the notion of 'moral personhood' and 'moral consideration.' Moral consideration is a broader term which implies that such a being 'can be wronged,' as averred by Lori Gruen.<sup>116</sup> However, this is not the same thing as saying that such a being has and can exercise rights.

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<sup>113</sup> Christine Korsgaard, 'Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror,' *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* 16.1 (2007), 4-9.

<sup>114</sup> Regan, 'The Case for Animal Rights.'

<sup>115</sup> Korsgaard, 'A Kantian Case for Animal Rights.'

<sup>116</sup> Lori Gruen, 'The Moral Status of Animals,' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/moral-animal/>>.

Moral personhood is one such ground for eligibility to moral consideration (but it is not necessarily the only ground). I would argue that moral personhood implies the ability to enter into a moral 'contract', where there is an exchange of moral consideration, whereas moral consideration merely implies that there may be a duty on the part of humans to accord that being moral consideration, without there being any duty of reciprocity or engagement on the part of the being so considered. This allows for a duty to accord moral consideration to those who do not have the capacities required for moral personhood, to be so considered.

To understand eligibility for moral personhood, let us consider what might be the requisite characteristics to enable a being to enter such a moral contract, that is, the capacity to contract. A capacity to undertake a moral (or for that matter, legal) contract must depend on at least three attributes: first, a cognitive ability to comprehend and assent to the rights and obligations encompassed within that agreement; second, the ability to express clearly and unambiguously that assent; and third, the capacity to reciprocate, that is, to fulfil the role of counterparty to the contract. The first of these attributes is well explored by Scruton, who points out the cognitive limitations of animals, for example in lacking imagination, humour, aesthetic sense, or complex reasoning ability.<sup>117</sup> Secondly, animals lack a power of speech sufficient to express their moral will, even if they possessed such will, and the ability therefore to undertake negotiation, which is inherent in reaching agreement. These factors together render them incapable of participating in the exercise of moral law, which requires both morally competent participants, who can negotiate rationally, engage in dialogue, and accept rights and responsibilities which are inherent to a moral agreement.

The third element of eligibility must be the capacity to take up reciprocal or other counterparty duties required within the contract. Since it is difficult to argue against the claim that animals lack the cognitive ability to reach agreement in terms of a moral contract (as averred by Scruton and others), it follows that they are equally unable to reciprocate in terms of undertaking moral responsibilities. For example, if I went for a walk in the jungle and were confronted by a tiger, we would both be bound by the moral obligation not to kill each other, respecting each other's moral personhood. I might then be bound not to kill the tiger even as he lunged towards me, but would it be equally reasonable for the tiger to be expected not to make me his dinner? Obviously not.

For all of these reasons, I would argue then that animals, being unable to enter into a moral contract, cannot be held to have rights, and cannot be said to enjoy the protection of 'moral personhood'. This simply means that they do not fall within the narrower definition of moral personhood, whereas they might (and arguably do) merit moral consideration.

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<sup>117</sup> Roger Scruton, *Animal Rights and Wrongs* (London: Demos, 1996).

A possible argument against this approach might be to point out that we do, indeed, extend the moral contract to individuals who might not be able to fulfil all these criteria, for example in the case of infants, or those who suffer mental incapacity. In the case of infants, I would argue that those individuals are incipient moral individuals, who are growing into moral responsibility, and that their incapacity is therefore temporary, and therefore they should be treated as if morally capable. I would also argue that although we refer to moral individuals, effectively we contract as a society, and that therefore we should also extend that protection to the few unfortunate individuals who cannot fully engage in the moral contract, although it is important to point out that we still, as a society, place upon those individuals a level of responsibility. For example, although small children or mentally incapacitated adults are not held to be legally capable, morally we do not condone their injury to another human.

Let us therefore return to the distinction between moral personhood and moral consideration. We have already established that rights are exercised through moral contract, and that moral personhood is a prerequisite for entry into a moral contract, and that animals lack the fundamental attributes necessary for moral personhood, in terms of cognitive, communicative, and reciprocal abilities. This does not, however, necessarily mean that we do not owe any duties or responsibilities towards animals, either in terms of a moral contract between humans, or outside of it.

It is perfectly possible to have a contract, moral or legal, between two individuals, which includes a duty or an obligation to another. For example, if I contract with you to stable my horse for a fee, then although my horse is not party to the contract, you are nonetheless obliged (for a fee, presumably) to care for the horse. It simply means that the horse itself cannot enforce the obligation to care for him, but I can do so. This is the basis for much animal welfare legislation. Therefore, it is possible to conceive that society may, in terms of its moral contract, provide that we, as parties to the contract, have duties towards animals, specifically towards those animals who are worthy of 'moral consideration.'

This does leave us with the questions of what such duties might be, and whether, and if so how, we differentiate between different species or different categories of animals. There is also a challenge to universalism in this approach from cultural relativism. For example, different cultures have vastly different perspectives on animal welfare, and indeed the relations between humans and animals more generally. The nature of the relationship between different stakeholders and animals and the circumstances of their interactions also affect the nature of the duties that might be expected of humans in relation to animals at any time. In addition, there are cultural differences in terms of how different species are perceived, for example, dogs or snakes might be viewed as pets or vermin respectively, or as food, depending on the cultural perspective.

## B) Speciesism

The issue of moral differentiation between species has been highly contested over the last few decades. For some people, such as Jains, there should be no distinction. However, this is obviously not the case in general terms. For example, if we accept that 'moral consideration' should extend across all animals, and that there is no basis for denying a moral responsibility towards any species, this implies that all species have to be treated identically. However, this is patently not the case in generally accepted moral terms. For example, the mosquito which flies into my room and the cat that lives in my house as my pet and the rat that strays into the kitchen all use the same area or live in the same space, but we would not argue that they each deserve the protection of moral consideration. It seems that we need some way of thinking about how to make the distinction of moral consideration across different species. Contemporary Kantian views on the matter converge around two approaches, affording moral consideration to animals as having the capacity to value their own lives, or as possessing the capacity to suffer. Ryder tends more towards the former, and Korsgaard makes a strong argument for the latter. She refers to the human capacity to recognise suffering in an animal, and to respond to it,<sup>118</sup> in exactly the same way in which humans respond to suffering in another human. She argues therefore that this commonality of suffering binds us to the obligation of moral consideration of animals. There remains, however, some awkwardness around the point of distinction, in that the moral basis remains somewhat unclear in many cases. Let us review a few possible distinctions.

There is the issue of different categories of animals, individually or by group. For example, we seem inclined to treat pets differently from wildlife. Our pets are constrained, often forcibly so, to remain indoors for long periods, their behaviour is regulated, and they may be subjected to punishments for actions which merely emanate from innate animal behaviour. We would not accept such constraints on the behaviour of wildlife. Similarly, we have different perceptions of different species of wildlife. For example, the killing of certain species is more readily accepted than that of other species.

One might postulate other bases which might imply different levels of moral consideration. A possibility might be related to our 'ownership' of them—in that case the cat that I 'own' I am morally bound to care for and not to kill, but I may kill the ant or the mosquito or the rat who strays into the kitchen.

Alternatively, we might draw these lines between species on other bases. But on what moral basis could we aver that an elephant, because it appears to be more sentient, is more deserving of moral consideration than a mouse or an ant? The argument is often made on the grounds of 'human exceptionalism,' that is, that there

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<sup>118</sup> Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 153.

are some species that demonstrate sufficiently human characteristics to classify them as moral persons. While it has been well demonstrated that many species, to a greater or lesser degree, evince humanoid characteristics such as the display of emotion, it does not seem logical that this somehow should qualify them for a human-like moral consideration.

Beyond these real humanoid characteristics, wild animals have always been anthropomorphised in literature—from Aesop's Fables through to Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, and throughout children's literature and cinema, this process has until recently been confined to the realms of fiction. Over the last few decades, we have even seen an anthropomorphism of real wild animals. This was initiated by Jane Goodall, a world-renowned primatologist, who famously relocated to Gomba Stream National Park back in 1960 and spent the following 60 years engaged in the study of human-like behaviour of chimpanzees. This led her to bestow human names on the animals and her powerful advocacy sparked a major shift towards a more human-like view of wild animals. In zoos, for example, for several decades now it has been commonplace to name animals, and this practice has culminated in the naming of scientifically tracked wild animals such as Cecil the lion who was hunted a few years ago.

Together with this practice of naming animals and the wide publicity around any research on the intelligence and human-like qualities of larger mammals, we have seen the evolution of a significant level of empathy towards such 'charismatic' species, such as elephants, dolphins, etc. This has contributed to a growing distaste for hunting in Western culture. Interestingly, however, this empathy is not shared by less 'cuddly' but equally intelligent species such as rats or jackals. One might therefore infer that this empathy is not based on the animals' intelligence or any other quality espoused by the arguments above, but rather by the appearance of the animals.

Utilitarian approaches largely avoid considerations of intelligence or appearance and instead head straight to the perception of suffering to be avoided. Bentham famously epitomised this utilitarian view of moral worth, arguing that the question is not 'can they reason?', but 'can they suffer?'<sup>119</sup> Ahmad passionately attacks hunting on the grounds of suffering caused to the animal, by the very essence of denying the animal any agency at all as a living being.<sup>120</sup> He speaks of the moral turpitude of reducing the life of the animal to an economic calculation. However, this is the fundamental premise of the farming of animals, and thus undermines a position that accepts animal husbandry—especially under 'humane' conditions—but not hunting.

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<sup>119</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: Payne, 1789), Ch. 17, para 6.

<sup>120</sup> Aejaz Ahmad, 'The Trophy Hunting Debate: A Case for Ethics,' *Economics and Political Weekly* 51.26–27 (2016).

Peter Singer is held to be the strongest proponent of the view that animals should be accorded the same treatment as humans.<sup>121</sup> At its core, his argument is that similar to differences in race or any other human characteristic having no basis for differential treatment, so difference of species should have no basis for differential treatment. Fundamentally, he follows Bentham's argument that it is the capacity for suffering that calls for equal consideration and that is the vital and most important characteristic.

However, Singer's approach to the killing of animals is more ambivalent and has changed over the past four decades since the publication of his first book *Animal Liberation* in 1975. There, he implies that humans are irreplaceable, and animals are not. His views have evolved and 40 years later, in his Afterword to *The Ethics of Killing Animals*, he offers a more textured argument, arguing for example that replaceability of animals may be more palatable if the process of killing them does not terrify or distress other animals.<sup>122</sup> In a sense this distinguishes hunting from other forms of animal execution (such as in abattoirs) as hunting is normally conducted in such a way as to avoid such distress. Singer does not directly address the issue of hunting and whether a death of an animal by such means is any different in moral terms from any other. I simply extrapolate that this might mean that in fact hunting might be more morally acceptable than conventional farming modes of animal slaughter. As Garner points out in the same publication, the sentience position does not demand that animals have rights to life or liberty, merely that they have the right not to suffer, echoing Bentham.<sup>123</sup>

### C) Duty of Care

This right not to suffer may easily be inverted into a duty of care on the part of the humans inflicting death upon animals, or even in their general treatment of them, to ensure the absence of animals' suffering, or at least, in the face of trade-offs between human and animal suffering, to minimise suffering caused to animals. In this, Singer's argument is that equal consideration should be given to equal suffering.<sup>124</sup> He does not deny that it is likely that animals may suffer the same trauma to a lesser degree than humans, partly because they have less understanding of that suffering (in having less memory and fewer anticipatory capacities). The implications of this thinking in the context of hunting can be found within codes of practice for hunting, which stress the proper treatment of animals being hunted, the requirement for a 'clean shot,' etc. It may also give room for the development of a combination of national-level legislation and industry-wide standards to such effect, and even possibly some regional or international policy, such as EU animal welfare standards.

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<sup>121</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>122</sup> Peter Singer, 'Afterword,' in *The Ethics of Killing Animals*, ed. by Tatjana Višak and Robert Garner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 233–35.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Garner, 'Welfare, Rights, and Non-ideal Theory,' in *The Ethics of Killing Animals*, ed. Višak and Garner, p. 226.

<sup>124</sup> Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 2nd edition, p. 50.

#### 4.4 Conclusions

The primary conclusions that can be drawn from the examination in this chapter may be summarised as follows:

- There is a close relationship between a positive interaction between humans and nature and hunting, and a clear possibility for hunting to contribute to the quality and well-being of nature/wilderness;
- Hunting can serve the hunter, by providing pleasure, and by connecting them to nature and providing fulfilment; and
- While it is questionable whether animals are entitled to moral personhood, they do warrant moral consideration, specifically to minimise their suffering.

### 5 Evolution of Policy

There have probably been as many views on whether philosophy is useful for policymaking or a mere distraction as there are philosophical views on what is right or wrong about hunting! Many writers have highlighted the tendency among philosophers to focus on differences rather than agreement, and an excess of theory over practical understanding,<sup>125</sup> as barriers to the use of philosophy in policymaking. However, others have argued that an analytical philosophical approach, grounded in questioning and understanding moral principles as applied in real-life situations, can provide a valuable input to discussion and agreement in policy.

Wolff proposes that, in addition to a philosophical understanding of the moral views of all relevant parties on the matter at stake, a series of empirical investigations are necessary for philosophy to provide valuable input, for example by ascertaining a full picture of current practice, and the current regulatory environment as it pertains to the problem, the history of how the current practice and regulations arose, and a realistic understanding of the difficulties of resolving disagreement.<sup>126</sup> In this way discussions can be conducted that, although they might not directly or immediately lead to a clear policy outcome, at least pave the way for enhanced common understanding and the development of building blocks towards a comprehensive resolution.

So far in this thesis, the history and evolution of attitudes to hunting and of regulation of hunting has been explored, as well as moral philosophical underpinnings of attitudes to hunting. Given the complex interrelationship between hunting and the

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<sup>125</sup> Jonathan Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 2nd edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), p. 261.

<sup>126</sup> Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 163.

environment, moral philosophical attitudes to environmental ethics and what that might mean for hunting have also been explored. And, finally, a more in-depth analysis of moral perspectives on the relationships between each of the protagonists in hunting—nature, the hunter, and the animal—has been provided.

This chapter will now look at policy opportunities for resolving this dilemma. It will examine the process of developing international policy on the prospects for success there, given the divergent and different interests of the various stakeholders in the process. Accepting the low likelihood of finding immediate agreement on international policy in this area, given the conclusions reached throughout this thesis, I will review other means by which agreement and policy can be advanced, through industry-level or national codes of conduct and regulation.

## 5.1 International Policymaking

The development of multilateral policy and/or agreement typically can only be advanced if it is based on not only common understanding of the problem, and common purpose as to a resolution, but also shared understanding of the perspectives of the various stakeholders and shared values which would underpin potential policy outcomes. Even with those prerequisites in place, it is a lengthy and iterative discussion process, which needs to build consensus over time. In the case of hunting, the matter still faces several challenges, which will now be discussed.

### A) Stakeholders and Their Interests

In recent times, hunting has become an increasingly divisive and complex subject, with a wide array of invested parties (stakeholders). A major factor in this has been globalisation, which has meant that people and constituencies throughout the globe, and particularly in Europe and North America, feel as equally concerned and engaged with the moral rights or wrongs of hunting as people and constituencies who live in the areas concerned. However, there is a vast difference of experience between these various stakeholders. It may be possible to view this as a series of concentric circles of engagement. At the very centre there is the hunter him- or herself, the single person (and their entourage) who immerse themselves and enter into an intimate relationship with the prey. This informs their perspective, as we will explore later. At the next level, in many cases there is a local community, whose lives are also intimately connected with wildlife. They may also have an aesthetic sense, but primarily their view is utilitarian, often because some wildlife may pose a significant threat to their persons or livelihoods, but more often, they have a vested interest in hunting which represents a combination of a conservation practice and a source of economic benefit. They, thus, feel the need to protect themselves and their livelihoods.

At the next level, but most often with similar perspectives, is the broader population of the country or region in which the hunting takes place, who also often take a

largely anthropocentric utilitarian perspective. Although that country or region as a whole may attach some emotional importance to the continued existence of the animal populations and indeed the ecosystems within its boundaries, for them there is also the overwhelming expectation that the wildlife and ecosystems within their borders will provide sustainable employment, revenue sources, and perhaps enjoyment that contribute to their general well-being, through domestic tourism, for present and future generations of their population.

We then, find, however, a significant divergence with the outermost level, that of the international stakeholders. By definition, they cannot have a direct stake: their lives and livelihoods are patently not at risk. They feel, apparently, that they have a responsibility towards the life and welfare of the individual animal or species, or indeed that they stand in proxy for the animal in opposing attacks upon its life. This leads us to another consideration—that is, that one could argue that the strength of the claim of these more distant stakeholders should be weaker than the claim of the more proximate stakeholders, since they have less at stake. Ideally, an international policy discussion could be adapted to incorporate the differences in strength of claims by these stakeholders, which would require some self-restraint on the part of the more distant stakeholders. However, this is not typically the case. In fact, conversely, we often see wealthier countries use offers of development funds and other forms of influence to advance their positions.

An important complication is that these more distant stakeholder groups have a disproportionate influence on the views and practices of those who live in closer proximity to the animals, through their greater financial muscle and larger capacity for influence through social media, etc. This was dramatically evident in the news and social media responses to 'Cecilgate.' These more distant stakeholders having a disproportionate influence on the development of policy in turn poses a moral quandary for the desirability of international policy, as it may be subject to this undue influence and not truly reflect the interests and views of the parties most closely concerned.

Furthermore, an increase in anthropomorphism among the more distant stakeholders (in Western culture), particularly in relation to the more charismatic mammals, has contributed to a greater concern in terms of both animal welfare and the rights of animals as such. Part of the hype around the hunting of Cecil is precisely because he was a named individual animal, a practice which is largely incomprehensible to the proximate stakeholders. This difference in attitudes to wildlife is well described by Mkono.<sup>127</sup>

Altogether, these factors increase the complexity of the issue, reflecting the different views and modes of engagement by different stakeholders. In addition, there is high

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<sup>127</sup> Muchazondida Mkono, 'The Age of Digital Activism in Tourism: Evaluating the Legacy and Limitations of the Cecil Anti-Trophy Hunting Movement,' *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 26.9 (2018), 1618.

emotional engagement by many stakeholders, with very strongly held and divergent views. There is also a high level of intransigence, with the result that discussion appears to entrench the views held by participants instead of winning over participants to the other side.

## B) Divergence in Perceptions of the Moral Permissibility of Hunting

Chapter 4 has, in its analysis of the roles of the key protagonists and their relationships with the other, revealed the sharp divergence in attitudes to hunting. Those who see hunting as morally permissible hold one or more of the following views. For some, the transcendental aesthetic hunting experience is a revelation of the fundamental role of man within nature, a fulfilment of the connection between humans and nature and an expression of innate humanity. To some, this is connected to a sense of the virtuous person, who point to virtues made evident through hunting, such as respect, courage, humility, and gratitude. Others perceive a net positive consequence to hunting, a net gain of well-being through enhanced conservation, economic opportunity for communities, and social well-being.

On the other hand, there are those to whom hunting itself is abhorrent. This is typically based on two perspectives, the first of which is a view that ascribes intrinsic value to animals which requires us to view animal life in the same way as human life. The second perspective is a virtue ethical perspective which claims that hunting provides evidence of negative and disgusting traits, that is, the absence of virtue. For example, Theodore Vitali describes it as 'a disgusting sport that recalls and rehearses the worst in human behaviour.'<sup>128</sup> One could, however, question whether this is a valid argument for finding against the moral permissibility of hunting. Sports frequently provide what is essentially a 'moral licence' to undertake activities that in other contexts would be seen as reprehensible. Examples are sports such as boxing and other martial arts. In those instances, the intention to engage in sport is what makes the behaviour acceptable.

Ann Causey also looks at the instinctive or emotional (as opposed to rational) drivers that are core to hunting.<sup>129</sup> Reason is surely at the heart of ethical deliberation, and yet has no role as the primary driver for hunting—all its positive utilitarian outcomes, Causey argues, could be more efficiently obtained by other means than hunting. While this may represent a rather narrow interpretation of utilitarian outcomes, it is true that many of the perspectives around hunting are emotional rather than reasoned. This, according to Causey, implies that hunting itself cannot be the subject of moral reasoning.<sup>130</sup> Crippen and Salevurakis, however, argue in another direction, effectively that a utilitarian approach looks at the outcome simply from a causal perspective and that, since hunting effectively places value on wildlife and habitats,

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<sup>128</sup> Cited by Gunn, 'Environmental Ethics and Trophy Hunting,' p. 70.

<sup>129</sup> Causey, 'On the Morality of Hunting.'

<sup>130</sup> Causey, 'On the Morality of Hunting,' p. 338.

that suffices for its acceptability in principle.<sup>131</sup> These examples demonstrate that there seems to be a tendency for people first to make up their minds as to whether they think hunting is morally permissible, and then to apply philosophical theory in order to support their position, having interpreted such theory accordingly.

It has become clear that, generally speaking, attitudes to hunting are not the consequence of a rational exploration. Aspects of emotion and instinct play a large role in decisions to hunt as well as the attitudes of the observers (those who do not hunt). Many philosophers have claimed that 'feelings and sentiments' or instincts and sentiments determine moral judgements.<sup>132</sup> In addition, these judgements may be affected by cultural contexts and traditions. While we clearly have no shared view of hunting and its moral status right now, it does seem as though further philosophical exploration and analysis could add value in further discussions, potentially to progress towards agreement.

### C) Hunting and Environmental Ethics

The review of Environmental Ethics in Chapter 3 brought into focus a divergence of perspectives as to whether nature has intrinsic value in itself, or whether it has only instrumental value in terms of human well-being. While this disagreement has relevance in itself for the moral permissibility of hunting, the matter is further complicated by the variety of views, cultural and philosophical, as to what exactly nature and wilderness are, and what that might mean for whether and how hunting might be practised. At the very least, however, there is a shared view of the duty to conserve nature, and this shared view provides the basis of current international policy on conservation.

There is a significant body of international environmental policy law already in existence. This is either at the more general policy level, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, or increasingly specific, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, all the way through to CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), and many others, as well as environmental provisions in other bodies of international law. The duty to conserve nature is clearly reflected in these agreements, for example through Goals 13, 14 and 15 of the Sustainable Development Goals. None of these, however, makes specific reference to hunting.

The challenge is that the more general agreements, which enjoy a high level of consensus, lack specificity, and on the other end, more specific agreements, such as CITES, are beset with differences of opinion between parties. In part the

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<sup>131</sup> Matthew Crippen and John Salevurakis, 'Debating Public Policy: Ethics, Politics and Economics of Wildlife Management in Southern Africa,' in *The Bioethics of the Crazy Ape*, ed. by Oguz Kelemen and Gergely Tari (Budapest: Trivent, 2019), pp. 187–95.

<sup>132</sup> Seth Vannatta, 'The Aesthetic Dimensions of Moral Experience,' in *Conservatism and Pragmatism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 145.

disagreements around CITES reflect the divergent perspectives on hunting, dealing as it does with fundamental views on sustainable use.

Finally, an examination of moral philosophical understanding across the three primary protagonists in the process of hunting—nature, the hunter, and the hunted—has revealed some of the fault lines in attitudes to hunting which appear to present insuperable barriers to reaching any kind of agreement.

The current legislative process in the UK, which seeks to ban the importation of hunting trophies into the UK, demonstrates this kind of barrier. This legislation is scheduled to be tabled for a second reading at Westminster in 2022, and seems likely to be approved. On the other hand, a plethora of conservation agencies have opposed the bill, pointing out that it will have negative consequences for wildlife, conservation in general, and livelihoods.

The conclusion thus far is that some action is both necessary and desirable, but that an international policy solution is at this moment not likely to be achievable.

## 5.2 Applying Ethics

In the light of the difficulties anticipated above in reaching internationally agreed policy, this thesis now tries to apply some of the ethical thinking developed above to the practicalities of hunting. It considers whether it might be possible to conceive of a code of behaviour for hunters which might, if adopted, go some way to addressing the various concerns of stakeholders and provide a moral basis for the practice of hunting; effectively using the definition of Glock 'to use philosophical reflection to tackle specific problems.'<sup>133</sup>

Such application of ethics has its roots in the political and social upheavals of the 1960s and the 1970s, as well as the increasing pace of technological advancement, which called into question much of the ethos of professions such as medicine, and increasing ecological concern. This propelled philosophers such as Peter Singer, to look not at single cases, but at 'categories' of endeavour (such as abortion, or vivisection, or euthanasia), and evaluate their moral significance. Typically, a utilitarian way of thinking is used, and an attempt is made to find a balance between moral theories and moral judgements about specific issues or cases.

As we have seen above, this kind of approach may equally be applied to the debates about hunting. If the fundamental yes/no question is set aside, there may yet be sufficient issues upon which agreement could be found, particularly through a sharing of the 'softer' values and aesthetic appreciations. These could be used to build upon some commonly held beliefs, ethics, and maybe also existing policy, for example, in relation to animal welfare, among significant numbers of participants in

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<sup>133</sup> Hans-Johann Glock, 'Doing Good by Splitting Hairs? Analytic Philosophy and Applied Ethics,' *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 28.3 (2011), 225–40.

the policymaking process. Therefore, while we are unlikely to achieve consensus as to whether hunting should be allowed or forbidden, it may well be possible to achieve sufficient convergence on some of the views such as those mentioned above, which might allow for a set of standards which, if complied with, provide moral permissibility for hunting in certain circumstances.

This is a common outcome in international policy and is often criticised as a 'lowest common denominator' outcome, but from a more positive perspective, it can be the basis for further strengthening over time. Examples of this can be found in international employment standards (the prohibitions against child labour, for example), and health and safety standards for internationally traded goods.

On the other hand, could such a hunting ethic carry sufficient moral 'weight,' that is, could it be sufficiently morally significant, in order to be used as a normative guideline? There is some divergence of view on this. Maurice Wade argues not. He avers that, for such an ethic to be morally significant, the practice it is looking at must in itself enjoy moral allowance, else there is no ethical basis for looking into the application details of the practice.<sup>134</sup> Secondly, he argues that by focusing on the behaviour of hunters within the process of hunting, such a hunting ethic might well be consistent with a practice that we would broadly hold to be completely unacceptable and morally abhorrent, such as the hunting of humans.<sup>135</sup> Charles List opposes Wade's first argument. According to List, when one accepts codes as a part of the moral tradition of virtue ethics, one must accept the moral significance of a hunting code.<sup>136</sup>

Wade's second argument may, I believe, be dismissed by pointing out that hunting exists to replicate the natural process of predation, which typically does not consist of a species hunting within itself, and therefore it does not follow that hunting other animals would be inherently morally consistent with humans hunting each other.

List goes further and proposes a set of criteria which could demonstrate that such a code does indeed have moral significance.<sup>137</sup> He argues that there should be four conditions for moral significance of a hunting ethic: 1) it must promote some good for humans; 2) such good must not be obtainable by any other activity; 3) the good produced by hunting must be biotic (i.e. have a positive conservation outcome); and 4) the ethic must not allow for any morally abhorrent behaviour (e.g. such as human hunting).

Three of these are evidently consistent with general moral precepts, so there is no need to explore them. However, his second requirement that the good cannot be

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<sup>134</sup> Maurice Wade, 'Animal Liberalism, Ecocentrism, and the Morality of Sport Hunting,' *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 17 (1990), 16.

<sup>135</sup> Wade, 'Animal Liberalism,' p. 17.

<sup>136</sup> Charles T. List, 'On the Moral Significance of a Hunting Ethic,' *Ethics and the Environment* 3.2 (1998), 157-60.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

obtained by other means is a little more puzzling. List makes a good argument in terms of the application of this requirement, primarily with reference to Ortega, who so powerfully describes the very particular transcendental nature of the hunting experience in terms of an essential immersion into and connection with nature, which is unique to hunting, and cannot be replicated by observation, or the 'beatific farce' as he refers to it. It is arguable that hunting might offer a unique intrinsic good to the individual hunter through this unique experience. However, it does not follow that it is therefore a prerequisite for a hunting code of practice.

### Codes of Conduct

Various codes of conduct have been developed for hunting over the last century and are widely applied. A preliminary review of a few of them reveals some clear common themes, most clearly and concisely expressed by CHASA (the Confederation of Hunting Associations of South Africa), which puts forward the following set of principles:

Ethical Hunting can be summarised as hunting conduct that

- obeys legislation,
- complies with the principles of fair chase,
- causes minimal suffering for the hunted animal, and
- conforms to broadly accepted norms of respect for nature and fellow man.<sup>138</sup>

Broadly speaking, the injunction to 'obey legislation' is to ensure, *inter alia*, that the envisaged hunt will not compromise the conservation status of the area in which the hunt takes place, or the conservation status of the species concerned. This may be taken as an expression of a duty of care towards nature, and also as an injunction of respect towards a policy or regulation. Finally, it implies a virtue, that is, respect for the rules of society that are expressed through such legislation.

Compliance with the principles of fair chase, however, opens a different set of considerations. In the first instance, it serves to connect the hunter with the aesthetic experience of nature. For some hunters, this is a transcendental experience, helping them to connect with all of created nature and with the natural processes of nature, including life and death. For others, or perhaps for the same, it occupies the space of an epiphany, in their experience. In some way, therefore, it serves to connect aesthetic experience with ethics, and inculcates in the hunter the feelings of doing the right thing, or the importance of doing it in the right way. Other philosophers have also explored this connection between aesthetic experience and ethics; for example, Vannatta claims that 'aesthetic experience, which transcends the merely useful and enhances meaning, is a necessary condition to achieve wisdom and intelligent social

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<[http://www.chasa.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=12&Itemid=164&lang=en](http://www.chasa.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12&Itemid=164&lang=en)>  
CHASA – Ethics Policy, accessed 8 October 2021.

life'.<sup>139</sup> Fair chase also is an expression of respect as a virtue, as Jensen puts it, a virtue that is at once a feature of 'good' hunting, and one that is developed through hunting.

The prescription to minimise the prey's suffering is an obvious expression of a duty towards animals, which is increasingly accepted globally these days, and has greater chances of achieving the requirement of universality.

The final injunction—to show respect both to nature and to one's fellow man—demonstrates, as the earlier elements do, the virtuous nature of the ethical hunter. However, it also incorporates utilitarian elements, implying the balancing of well-being of nature and humans, and a notion of a duty to nature.

These elements are common to most Codes. The Code of Sport Hunting Conduct for Africa, signed in 1997,<sup>140</sup> follows a similar route, including, *inter alia*, the commitment to abide by the principles of fair chase, to ensure human practices in the utilisation of wildlife, etc. The Code was signed by representatives from a wide range of Eastern and Southern African countries, including Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi, Tanzania, and South Africa, which demonstrates that these ethical ideas and commitments were, and continue to be, common across several 'range state' countries.

These Codes clearly incorporate a number of ethical concepts, but, as we have seen in our earlier discussion, these could be seen in different ways. For example, there is the question of whether the pursuit of 'fair chase' helps to develop character and positive virtues. In a sense, one could argue that hunting, once one has accepted that they are undertaking a process that provides net environmental and/or economic benefit (i.e., satisfied the utilitarian calculus), does inculcate some valuable virtues, including a commitment to 'justice' (within the terms prescribed), respect, and polite behaviour. Similarly, a deontological perspective is also revealed to go both ways. Some view the act of hunting as a demonstration of respect to and support of the maintenance of nature and wilderness, ascribing that as a fulfilment of duty towards nature or wilderness, whereas others see it as a dereliction of duty towards animals, these having opposing views of intrinsic value, duty, etc. And thirdly, some utilitarians will see hunting as a way of maximising well-being of societies, whereas others, such as Singer, see things differently, ascribing a need to consider the lives of animals within the well-being calculus. It is clear, therefore, that more work could be done to explore the moral significance of such codes and how it could be further developed.

These provide an interesting insight into self-imposed codes of behaviour for hunters, and as such, they provide an interesting input to the discussion on policy with respect to hunting, but clearly this is neither sufficient in itself, as it does not provide an internationally (across supply-side and demand-side countries)

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<sup>139</sup> Vannatta, 'Aesthetic Dimensions of Moral Experience,' p. 158.

<sup>140</sup> The African Board and Desgeorges Andre, *Code of Ethical Sport Hunting Conduct for Africa* (1999).

acceptable approach to hunting for all the stakeholders concerned, nor an adequate basis for policy in terms of broad agreement across different countries and constituencies.

### 5.3 What Has This Thesis Achieved?

This thesis has not reached a clear conclusion on the moral permissibility of hunting as a practice nor, in fact, has it attempted to do so. It is hoped, however, that the philosophical practice of questioning, based on moral philosophical approaches, has at least resulted in some clarity regarding the premises of the divergent views, and the complex interrelationships between hunting and the environment.

The limits, however, of framing the questions in terms of Western moral approaches, for example to environmental ethics, have become clear: it did not seem possible to use those constructs fully to understand the complex and different relationships between humans and the rest of nature in different cultures and circumstances. It would be interesting to undertake more work to explore the different philosophical understandings of humans and nature to try to identify some common ground, providing the basis for further policy discussion.

The limits of applying Western philosophical thought became apparent in terms of an inability to transcend not only the philosophical understanding, but also the different physical and cultural circumstances of different stakeholders, such as a wealthy urban society in contrast to a rural community where persons and livestock are threatened by wildlife or where livelihoods are dependent on revenues derived from hunting. These issues go beyond the challenges of cultural relativism to a utilitarian calculus; they also point to a deep divide in terms of a growing Western deontological opposition to hunting versus a fundamentally utilitarian approach that is based upon a different moral philosophical relationship with nature. While this presents significant challenges to a global normative approach, it makes this approach not only desirable, but necessary if international collaboration on these matters is to continue in the future.

The thesis has accepted that while international policy might be desirable, it is not likely to be feasible in the near future. It has therefore gone on to explore how hunting might be conducted in a morally acceptable way, adopting an applied ethical approach. In that regard it has found that significant further research and discussion is needed in order to arrive at a satisfactory moral basis for any codes or policies, and to develop consensus across different stakeholder groups. There is clearly room for research on how moral philosophical principles can address some of the contradictions within and between different approaches to environmental ethics, and between environmental ethics and hunting.

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#### Informal Consultations

Hayley Clements, Centre for Complex Transitions, Stellenbosch University  
Mansal Denton, Sacred Hunting  
Leigh-Ann Kant, Nelson Mandela University  
Robbie Kroger, Covington Civil and Environmental  
Garry Marvin, University of Roehampton  
Victor Muposhi, African Leadership University  
Peter Murray, University of Buckingham