

*The Last Man**

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I. First Moves

I examine the basic logical character of ‘*the last man* example’, as well as the logical character of one of its more important variants. Although it has one striking *antecedent* in recent philosophy – of which more later – it’s fair to regard it as an example first presented to a contemporary audience by Richard Routley in his **1973** paper, ‘Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?’.¹ I want to determine exactly how the example goes and what it shows. I want to determine what it does *not* show. One reason

*From the Managing Editor: The use of the sexist language is not condoned by the editors of this Journal. “The Last Man” is used because this is, at least in part, a historical piece and the historical figure that is the subject of the paper – Richard Routley/Sylvan – used it.

¹An early version of the paper was originally “presented at the New Zealand Philosophy Conference, Hamilton 1973” (*vide* Val Routley, ‘Critical Notice’ of Passmore’s *Man’s Responsibility for Nature*, *AJP* 53, No. 2 (August, **1975**), fn. 1); then a “shortened version” delivered at the World Congress of Philosophy in Bulgaria in September, 1973, and subsequently published in the not very accessible *Proceedings of the XV World Congress of Philosophy* No. 1, Varna, Bulgaria, **1973**, pp. 205-210. The latter version has subsequently been reprinted as the lead article in Michael E. Zimmerman’s widely accessible anthology of philosophical and environmental writings, *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Prentice Hall (1993), pp. 12-21. It is this pagination that I will employ in what follows. In ‘A Very Brief History of the Origins of Environmental Ethics for the Novice’, web-published by the Center for Environmental Philosophy at the University of North Texas (presently the home of the journal *Environmental Ethics*) at <http://www.cep.unt.edu/novice.html>, Routley’s article is mentioned as, chronologically, the sixth piece since the ‘60s which helped to inspire environmental ethics, behind Aldo Leopold’s ‘The Land Ethic’ in his *Sand County Almanac* (1949), Lynn White’s ‘The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis’ (1967), Garrett Hardin’s ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ (1968), Pete Gunter’s ‘The Big Thicket: A Case Study in Attitudes Toward the Environment’ (1972, published 1974), and John Cobb’s *Is It Too Late? A Theology of Ecology* (1972).

for engaging in this exercise is the striking and engaging character of *the last man* example itself. Another is that a large number of environmental philosophers have since *referred to the last man* but have drawn different, sometimes contrary, lessons from it – though we won’t have time here to visit any but the earliest of these responses. It seems to me time to patiently revisit the example and time to attempt a conclusive understanding of its significance.

A second, and broader, purpose I have is to describe the meta-ethical views it led Routley to adopt – or *manufacture!* – in an attempt to philosophically position his normative stance within a more fundamental, explanatory, framework.

What I will do first is cite its original statement:

LM “The *last man* example. The last man (or person) surviving the collapse of the world system lays about him, eliminating, as far as he can, every living thing, animal or plant (but painlessly if you like, as at the best abattoirs).” (p. 16)²

Richard thinks of this as a “counter example” (16) to the principle that:

FP “ ‘...one should be able to do what he wishes, providing (1) that he does not harm others and (2) that he is not likely to harm himself irreparably.’ ”³

²It is possible to substitute other less extensive classes for the very broad class picked out by “every living thing, animal or plant”, and yet remain aligned with the valuational intuitions guiding *the last man* example. Thus one could, as Routley himself does in the so-called “*last people* example”, suppose that what gets exterminated is “every wild animal and...the fish of the seas” whilst “all arable land [is put] under intensive cultivation, and all remaining forests disappear in favor of quarries or plantations”. [Routley, *ibid.*, p. 17]

³*Ibid.*, p. 15. Here Routley has quoted Barkley and Seckler’s, *Economic Growth and Environmental Decay: The Solution Becomes the Problem* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972, p. 58), at a point where these authors are describing a principle they take to characterize “the liberal philosophy of the Western world”. Compare their formulation of the principle with an *even less* restrictive principle which H.L.A. Hart prefers: “...any adult human...capable of choice is at liberty to do (i.e., is under no obligation to abstain from) any action which is not one coercing or restraining or designed to injure other persons”. [H.L.A. Hart, ‘Are There Any Natural Rights?’ reprinted in A. Quinton, ed., *Political Philosophy*, OUP (1967); and cited by Routley, *ibid.*, p. 19.]

In the later ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’ (1980), the Routleys correctly note (p. 117) that “It appears...that Mill would have rejected the principle on account of clause (2)” citing the following *less* restrictive passage from *On Liberty*:

“[The permanent interests of man as a progressive being] authorise the subjection of individual spontaneity to external control, *only* in respect of those

This principle of individual liberty he calls the “*freedom principle*”, and *the last man* is a counter example to it because: *firstly*, the last man in his last willful but “eliminating” acts *satisfies* the twin *permissibility conditions* for voluntary acts set out in the Freedom Principle – of (a) *not* harming others (at least where “others” refers only to other human beings; or if it extends to *all* sentient creatures, then where “harm” to the non-humans among them is understood as requiring the *suffering*⁴ of non-humans harmed), and (b) not harming himself; and *secondly*, *contrary* to the liberal Freedom Principle, the last man *should not*, so Routley claims, ‘be able’ to do this. Such a person would be behaving “in a *morally impermissible way*” (18). Here, clearly, *the last man* features in a *moral claim*, and this appearance is crucial to any *argument* (suiting Richard’s purpose) in which *the last man* can figure.

The cultural and philosophical significance for Routley of *the last man’s* counter-exemplary status with respect to the Freedom Principle follows from his identification of the Freedom Principle *as* a “*core principle embedded in Western [ethical] systems*” (15), themselves a “*family of ethical systems*” (13) ‘clustered under’ a “*Western super ethic*” (15) to which the core principle “*belongs*” (15). He calls the Freedom Principle, so understood, by the additional name of “*basic (human) chauvinism*” (15). *Basic human chauvinism* is, accordingly, embedded in a family of *Western ethical systems*; and is therefore a part of a prevailing *Western super ethic*.⁵ Summing, in producing

actions of each, which concern the interest of *other people*.” [*On Liberty*, Chapter 1, para. 11.]

⁴This aligns with Routley’s parenthetical remark, “...but *painlessly*, if you like, as at the best abattoirs”.

⁵It is perhaps illustrative of this point to quote at this juncture a passage from John Passmore’s nearly contemporary book, *Man’s Responsibility for Nature* (1974):

“The traditional moral teaching of the West, Christian or utilitarian, has always taught men. . . that they ought not so to act as to injure their neighbors. And we have now discovered that the disposal of wastes into sea or air, the destruction of ecosystems, the procreation of large families, the depletion of resources, constitute injury to our fellow-men, present and future. To that extent, conventional morality, without any supplementation whatsoever, suffices to justify our ecological concern, our demand for action against the polluter, the depleter of natural resources, the destroyer of species and wildernesses.

One of my colleagues, an ardent preservationist, condemns me as a ‘human chauvinist’. What he means is that in my ethical arguments, I treat human interests as paramount. I do not apologize for that fact; an ‘ethic dealing with man’s relation to land and the plants and animals growing on it’ would not only be about the behaviour of human beings, as is sufficiently obvious,

an example which he takes to be a counter example to the Freedom Principle (*i.e.*, basic human chauvinism), he takes himself to have produced a counter example to a *core* or “fundamental” (13) principle embedded in (presumably at least most) Western ethical systems, and therefore a counter example to the prevailing Western *super* ethic.

So described, the work of *the last man* example is, thus far, merely negative: there is an identifiable core principle embedded in Western ethical systems, and *the last man* example shows it up as an *unacceptable* principle. As the identity of ethical systems is a matter of the identity of their core principles⁶, to find a reason to *reject* a core principle of any system is to find a reason to reject *the system itself*, as well as a reason to reject any *family of such* systems – *i.e.*, any super ethic – to which the core principle “belongs”.

Still, such negative work is only the beginning. If the “Western super ethic” – defined at least in part by the Freedom Principle’s ‘belonging’ to it – is to be rejected because of the work of *the last man*, then what *the last man* has *also* done in the same logical breath is demonstrate the “need for a *new...ethic*”, one precisely *not* incorporating the Freedom Principle – at least not in its present formulation.

Thirdly, it is important to note that *the last man* works, to the degree that it does, because what the last man, *himself*, does is *evidently* wrong; and this “on environmental grounds”. Richard writes:

“What [the last man] does is quite permissible according to basic chauvinism, but on environmental grounds what he does is wrong.”⁷

but *would have to be justified by reference to human interests*. The land which a bad farmer allows to slip into a river did not have a ‘right’ to stay where it was.” (pp. 186-187).

The odd thing about Passmore’s utterance of the last sentence is that he had himself earlier acknowledged that having moral obligations with respect to *x* does not imply *x*’s having rights:

“...in Hart’s words, ‘moral rules impose *obligations* and withdraw certain areas of conduct from the free option of the individual to do as he likes’. (H.L.A. Hart: *The Concept of Law* (Oxford, 1961, p. 7.) But that men have lost rights over them does nothing to convert animals into bearers of rights, any more than we give rights to a river by withdrawing somebody’s right to pollute it.” (pp. 115-6)

⁶See Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 16.

It follows that we know of the new⁸ ethic: that a need for it has been demonstrated; that it will *not* include the Freedom Principle, at least not as thus far enunciated; and that it offers (or will offer) “environmental grounds” for *morally* assessing action.

However, as far as the way *the last man* itself works, that is *all* we know of the new ethic. It is true that in the same article Routley urges, additionally, that such an ethic “does *not* commit one to the view that natural objects such as trees *have rights*”⁹, but he urges this on grounds which are extraneous to the way *the last man* example need work.¹⁰

⁸That it is *new* is not established if any part of ‘traditional ethics’ is not bound to ‘basic chauvinism’. There have been discussions which urge that the tradition of *ideal utilitarianism* is not so bound. Chief and earliest among ideal utilitarians was G. E. Moore, about whom more shortly.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 19. Here the quarrel is with Passmore (see fn. 5). Routley writes:

“An environmental ethic does not commit one to the view that natural objects such as trees have rights. ... That it would be wrong to mutilate a given tree or piece of property does not entail that the tree or piece of property has a correlative right not to be mutilated.” (19)

¹⁰Val Routley is perhaps marginally clearer than Richard on this matter, referring to:

“... the deontic distinction between recognising obligations *concerning* or *with respect to* an item, as opposed to recognising obligations *toward* an item, which are often coupled with correlative rights.” (Val Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 174)

On this matter, she writes that “This traditional distinction is explained in H. J. McCloskey: ‘Rights’, *Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1965), pp. 115-27”. In that article, at his own footnote 11 (p. 122), McCloskey writes:

“The notion of *a duty to* needs examination. We often speak of duties to when we really mean duties concerning, involving, etc., as in talk about duties to oneself. However, we do have duties which are properly described as duties to – e.g. a duty of gratitude to our benefactor, a duty to our creditor, a duty of fidelity to one’s spouse, a duty of loyalty to one’s country. However, it is difficult to see what the principle is that leads us to speak of such duties as “duties to”. With things, and even with animals, we seem to speak of duties as involving them, rather than as being to them. If institutions such as the State and the Church may be objects of duties to, why not things and animals? Yet the duty to preserve a great painting (even if the duty of the last person in the universe) is not a duty *to* the painting. Similarly with animals. If I don’t feed my cat, I can be reproached as not having done what I ought and as having no right to treat it as I did, but we should be disinclined to speak of my duty to my cat, or to justify such remarks by talk about its right to a square meal a day. Rather, we should speak of duties not to be cruel, etc.; by contrast, if parents neglected their offspring, allusions to their duties *to* their children would be made quickly and naturally.”

It's important to realize, then, that there is *nothing* in this early presentation of *the last man* which *explicitly* calls for a theoretical commitment from within the new ethic to the *intrinsic* (*i.e.*, non-instrumental, or 'final') value of living things, whether that value be objectively, or subjectively, sourced – or something else again. All the same, given the idealized nature of the example, it's *not possible* to ground the wrongness of the last man's last, and biocidal, acts in terms of their destruction of things having actual *non-intrinsic* – *i.e.*, *instrumental* – value, *for present or future humans*.¹¹

Still, Richard offers one "tentative" (18) suggestion as to how the Freedom Principle might be re-enunciated, indeed, made more restrictive, which does utilize the notion of instrumental value. Instead of allowing one to do what one wishes unless (i) it harms others, or (ii) harms oneself irreparably, the Freedom Principle might be modified so as to allow one to do what one wishes unless (i) or (ii) – as before – or (iii) *would harm* others "*were they placed in the environment*"¹². Here the instrumental value appealed to is not *actual* instrumental value but *subjunctively possible* instrumental value. This suggestion is offered tentatively, and Routley thinks it's "none too adequate" (18). The only further remark which goes to the matter of the suggestion's *inadequacy* is this one: "It may be preferable, in view of the way the Freedom Principle sets the onus of proof, simply to scrap it altogether, and instead to specify classes of rights and permissible conduct, as in a bill of rights." (18).

Still, if it should be altogether scrapped, then the character of the 'new ethic' is left completely undetermined, except that: (a) a need for it has been demonstrated; (b) it will *not* contain the freedom principle, not even the more restrictive version just contemplated; and (c) it will offer "environmental grounds" for morally assessing action. What the character of such grounds will be is, at this early point, left entirely undetermined.

¹¹For the simple reason that their destruction may be thought of as *following* the last man's own death.

¹²The full passage is:

"But how to reformulate basic chauvinism as a satisfactory freedom principle is a...difficult matter. A tentative, but none too adequate beginning might be made by extending (2) to include harm to or interference with others who *would* be so affected by the action in question *were they placed in the environment* and (3) to exclude specicide." [Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 18.]

II. G. E. Moore, intrinsic value, and the method of isolation

Before pursuing early discussions, and further elaborations, of *the last man*, I wish to turn to the “one striking antecedent in recent philosophy” alluded to earlier. It’s from G. E. Moore, specifically from section 50 of *Principia Ethica*:

“50. ... ‘No one,’ says Prof. Sidgwick, ‘would consider it rational to aim at the production of beauty in external nature, apart from any possible contemplation of it by human beings.’¹³ Well, I may say at once, that I, for one, do consider this rational; and let us see if I cannot get any one to agree with me. Consider what this admission really means. It entitles us to put the following case. Let us imagine one world exceedingly beautiful. Imagine it as beautiful as you can; put into it whatever on this earth you most admire – mountains, rivers, the sea; trees, and sunsets, stars and moon. Imagine these all combined in the most exquisite proportions, so that no one thing jars against another, but each contributes to increase the beauty of the whole. And then imagine the ugliest world you can possibly conceive. Imagine it simply one heap of filth, containing everything that is most disgusting to us, for whatever reason, and the whole, as far as may be, without one redeeming feature. Such a pair of worlds we are entitled to compare: they fall within Prof. Sidgwick’s meaning, and the comparison is highly relevant to it. The only thing we are not entitled to imagine is that any human being ever has or ever, by any possibility, *can*, live in either, can ever see and enjoy the beauty of the one or hate the foulness of the other. Well, even so, supposing them quite apart from any possible contemplation by human beings; still, is it irrational to hold that it is better that the beautiful world should exist, than the one which is ugly?

¹³The extract is from Sidgwick’s *The Methods of Ethics*, Macmillan, London (1901). The full passage is:

“I think that if we consider carefully such permanent results as are commonly judged to be good, other than qualities of human beings, we can find nothing that, on reflection, appears to possess this quality of goodness out of relation to human existence, or at least to some consciousness or feeling. For example, we commonly judge some inanimate objects, scenes, etc. to be good as possessing beauty, and others bad from ugliness: still no one would consider it rational to aim at the production of beauty in external nature, apart from any possible contemplation of it by human beings.” (pp. 113-4)

Would it not be well, in any case, to do what we could to produce it rather than the other? Certainly I cannot help thinking that it would....”¹⁴

I won’t dwell on specific points of similarity between Moore’s example and Routley’s, although they’re striking, and considerable.¹⁵ I want instead to say something about the use to which Moore put his example. This use is detailed by him later in *Principia Ethica*. First of all, what does Moore *think* he has done?

“I have myself urged in section 50 that the mere existence of what is beautiful does appear to have some *intrinsic* value....”¹⁶

¹⁴G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press (1903), sect. 50, pp. 83-84. Italics his.

¹⁵Somehow, I *do* find it amusing to think of such disparate characters, Routley and Moore, as having anything of importance in common. Nevertheless, it *is quite regrettable* that in spite of the manifest similarity between Moore and Routley in the case of their examples, Richard never alluded – so far as I can determine – to Moore’s own example. Indeed, in one place the Routleys write that:

“Moore’s chauvinistic account... appears open to familiar objections – e.g. those based on... beautiful worlds lacking conscious beings – which help show that beauty is what counts...” [R. & V. Routley, ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’ (1980), p. 167, fn. 81.]

But, as we have just seen ‘beautiful worlds lacking conscious beings’ are precisely what figure in Moore’s example from Sect. 50. It *is* true that Moore goes on to say

“I regard it as indubitable that... [the] mere existence of what is beautiful has value, {so small as to be negligible, in comparison with that which attaches to the *consciousness* of beauty}.” [G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Sect. 113, p. 189]

The Routleys cite the text within the curly brackets (in their fn. 81, p. 167), and dwell upon this aspect of Moore’s views rather than their ground-breaking character.

¹⁶Moore, *op. cit.*, sect. 113, p. 189. My emphasis. As inspection of the longer passage from section 50 will demonstrate, Moore takes himself to be urging in that passage that it *is* rational “to aim at the production of beauty in external nature, apart from any possible contemplation of it by human beings”. His explanation for *why* it is rational so to do is in terms of the apparent intrinsic value of that which is beautiful.

Moore, however, was to give up the view that “the mere existence of what is beautiful” has intrinsic value, in favour of the view that any whole possessing intrinsic value must contain an element of feeling, consciousness, appreciation, or pleasure. Thus in the later (1912) *Ethics*, he wrote:

“...it does seem as if nothing can be an intrinsic good unless it contains *both* some feeling and *also* some other form of consciousness; and, as we have said before, it seems possible that amongst the feelings contained must always be some amount of pleasure”. (p. 249)

Still later, in 1942, he writes in his ‘Reply to My Critics’ that

By “intrinsic value”, Moore refers to a form of value which contrasts with “value as a means”¹⁷. He does *not* use the term ‘intrinsic value’ to refer to the *source* of value, e.g., to value as ‘objective’ (or *cosmogenic*).¹⁸ Now, Moore thinks he has shown that the mere existence of what is beautiful appears to have some *intrinsic* value and, moreover, it’s fair to conclude that he also thinks he’s shown that the mere existence of what is beautiful appears to have *more* intrinsic value than the mere existence of that which is ugly. Thus, he asks rhetorically,

“Well, even so, supposing them quite apart from any possible contemplation by human beings; still, is it irrational to hold that it is better that the beautiful world should exist, than the one which is ugly?”¹⁹

What is his *method* of showing this? Moore proposes what he calls ‘the method of isolation’ as the proper method for demonstrating what things have intrinsic value.

“The method which must be employed in order to decide the

“I agree...now, as I did *not* when I wrote *Principia*, that the existence of some *experience* is a proposition which does follow from the hypothesis that there exists a state of affairs which is good: I think now that no state of affairs can be good, unless its existence entails the proposition that somebody is having some *experience*.” [*The Philosophy of G. E. Moore*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, Tudor Publishing Company, 2nd edition, **1952**, pp. 617-618.]

¹⁷See Moore, *Principia Ethica*, section 15, p. 21, where he *explicitly* distinguishes ‘intrinsic value’ from ‘value as a means’. Again, in section 18, p. 27, where he refers to “the confusion of intrinsic value with mere ‘goodness as a means’”. Similarly, in the concluding portion of section 50 (pp. 84-5), he writes of that which is good ‘*in itself*’, that if:

“...Prof. Sidgwick’s principle has broken down[. . .]then we shall have to include in our ultimate *end* something beyond the limits of human existence. I admit, of course, that our beautiful world would be better still, if there were human beings in it to contemplate and enjoy its beauty. But that admission makes nothing against my point. If it be once admitted that the beautiful world *in itself is better* than the ugly, then it follows, that however many beings may enjoy it, and however much better their enjoyment may be than it is itself, yet its mere existence adds *something* to the goodness of the whole: it is *not only a means to our end*, but also itself *a part thereof*.”

It is made plain in this passage that he regards that which is good *in itself* as that which is good *as an end*.

¹⁸Of course, there is no doubting that Moore *is* an ‘objectivist’ when it comes to the matter of the source of intrinsic goodness. See his reference to “the *objective* question whether the whole in question is or is not truly good” (sect. 121, p. 201).

¹⁹*Ibid.*, sect. 50, p. 84.

question ‘What things have intrinsic value, and in what degrees?’ has already been explained in Chap. III (sects. 55, 57). In order to arrive at a correct decision on the first part of this question, it is necessary to consider what things are such that, if they existed *by themselves*, in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good; and, in order to decide upon the relative *degrees* of value of different things, we must similarly consider what comparative value seems to attach to the isolated existence of each.”²⁰

It’s clear Moore is following the second application of this ‘method of isolation’ in his example of the two worlds. It’s equally clear that in Routley’s example, we are asked to *isolate* two possible worlds, not both of which can be actualised. As with Moore, Routley requires these domains to be *isolated* from all “possible contemplation...by human beings”²¹, *i.e.*, no one will ever live in either, see either, enjoy or hate either. In Routley, though not in Moore, this is done by the simple expedient of making sure, *ex hypothesi*, that – upon the performance of the last act – there are *no more* human beings. Such isolation – in both Moore and Routley – keeps valuational waters unclouded by *any* instrumental value otherwise attributable to items left behind. Moore’s explicit conclusion is that, necessarily, any items *of value* will be *intrinsically* valuable; and that the degree of intrinsic value of two such isolated worlds may be compared.

Such august precedent may give us some *historical cause* for inspecting Routley’s *last man* and immediately concluding that what we have withal is something which may show *of the new ethic* (which, remember, will be offering “environmental *grounds*” for morally assessing action) that it must include reference to the *intrinsic value* of some kinds of world²² and, indeed,

²⁰*Ibid.*, sect. 112, p. 187. Compare his remarks in the later *Ethics* (Williams and Norgate, London, **1912**), p. 58:

“In order to discover whether any one thing is *intrinsically* better than another, we have always thus to consider whether it would be better that the one should exist *quite alone* than that the other should exist *quite alone*. No one thing or set of things, A, ever can be *intrinsically* better than another, B, unless it would be better that A should exist quite alone than that B should exist quite alone.”

²¹Of course, given that not both of them can be actualised, they are isolated from each other as well.

²²Indeed, by **1978**, Robert Elliot in a brief discussion of *the last people* example, of which more later, effectively *defines* the new ethic as one making use of the notion of the *intrinsic* value of the continued existence of species:

the *greater intrinsic value* of some kinds of world over others.

However, as we've seen, Richard, himself, does *not* draw this conclusion *anywhere* in his earliest presentation (**1973**) of *the last man*, mentioning only the possibility of including a further restrained freedom principle.

III. The possibility of acting *badly*, even though there is good *instrumental* reason so to do: *the 'last people' example*

To return to *the last man* example, it may seem to some of the more deontologically-inclined amongst us that what the last man does is wrong but that this is because his *motives* for “eliminating, as far as he can, every living thing, animal or plant” are suspect. It may seem, so far as the case is specified anyway, that he is doing it ‘just for the hell of it’. (16) Routley, however, is of the view that even if he had “the best of reasons”, what he does is wrong. This view is both manifested and urged in his second example, the one he calls “the *last people* example”.

LP “The *last people* example. The last man example can be broadened to the last people example. We can assume that they know they are the last people, e.g. because they are aware that radiation effects have blocked any chance of reproduction. ... Let us assume that the last people are *very numerous*. They humanely exterminate *every wild animal* and they eliminate *the fish of the seas*, they put all arable land under intensive cultivation, and *all remaining forests* disappear in favor of quarries or plantations, and so on. They may give various familiar *reasons* for this, e.g., they *believe* it is the way to salvation or to perfection, or they are simply satisfying reasonable needs, or even that it is needed to keep the last people employed or occupied so that they do not worry too much about their impending extinction. On an

“...th[e] example of speciescide does seem to be wrong. The question to ask then is whether the wrongness of the act can be explained without invoking an *ecological ethic*; that is without assigning some *intrinsic* value to the continued existence of the species.” [Robert Elliot, ‘Why Preserve Species?’, p. 22. Details of this article at fn. 48 below.]

Three years earlier (**1975**), Val Routley – in her excellent ‘Critical Notice’ of Passmore’s *Man’s Responsibility for Nature* (1974) – had criticized Passmore for not seriously discussing the intrinsic value hypothesis as part of the ‘new ethic’ (even though this hypothesis, so contextualized, had not thus far been aired in publication by either of the Routleys). [*AJP*, Vol. 53, No.2; August 1975, pp. 181-2] Clearly, however, it was ‘in the air’; it was coming.

environmental ethic the last people have behaved badly; they have simplified and largely destroyed all the natural ecosystems, and with their demise the world will soon be an ugly and largely wrecked place. But this conduct may conform with the basic chauvinist principle, and as well with the principles enjoined by the lesser traditions.” (16-17)

Routley goes on to say that

“Indeed the main point of elaborating this example is because, as *the last man* example reveals, basic chauvinism may conflict with stewardship or co-operation principles.²³ The conflict may be removed it seems by conjoining a further proviso to the basic principle, [to] the effect (3) that he does not willfully²⁴ destroy natural resources. But as the last people do not destroy resources willfully, but perhaps ‘for the best of reasons’, the variant is still environmentally inadequate.” (17)

But elaborating this example has another utility, I believe. Suppose *the*

²³These (“the stewardship position, with man as *custodian*”, and “the co-operative position with man as *perfecter*” (13)) are two “lesser” traditions, according to Routley. (Passmore was, concurrently, characterizing these traditions at some length in *Man’s Responsibility to Nature* (1974).) Routley is of the view that both lesser traditions

“... imply policies of *complete interference*, whereas on an environmental ethic some worthwhile parts of the earth’s surface should be preserved from substantial human interference...” (14)

What this (especially “imply”) seems to mean (minimally) is that: according to the lesser traditions, complete interference is morally **p**ermissible – *i.e.*, **PE**(complete interference); but according to an environmental ethic, \sim **PE**(complete interference) – where “**PE**” =df. “it is morally **p**ermissible that”. Routley continues:

“According to the co-operative position man’s proper role is to develop, cultivate and perfect nature – *all nature eventually* – by bringing out its potentialities, the test of perfection being primarily usefulness for human purposes; while on the stewardship view man’s role, like that of a farm manager, is to make nature productive by his efforts though not by means that will deliberately degrade its resources. Although these positions both depart from the dominant position in a way which enables the incorporation of some evaluations of an environmental ethic, e.g. some of those concerning the irresponsible farmer, they do not go far enough: for in the present situation of expanding populations confined to finite natural areas, they will lead to, and enjoin, the perfecting, farming and utilizing of *all natural areas*. Indeed these lesser traditions lead to, what a thoroughgoing environmental ethic would reject, a principle of total use, implying that every natural area should be cultivated or otherwise used for human ends, ‘humanized.’” (14)

²⁴In the sense given by the *OED*: “governed by will without regard to reason”.

last man does show the kind of thing Moore might have been willing to conclude from it (but which Routley, himself, had *not yet* concluded), *viz.*, that it is rational (or even rationally required) to hold that living things, as such, have some intrinsic value, and that one kind of world – in fact, the Earth, still containing living things but nevertheless bereft of the possibility of any further human contemplation – would be a better world than the Earth, made dead, and similarly bereft. Comparing such worlds in respect of their value does *not* permit comparisons *between values of mixed kinds*, *i.e.*, between intrinsic and instrumental value.

And that, to my way of regard, is something which is importantly *new* in *the last people* example. Agreeing that it is possible for *the last people* to act badly if they act in the way Routley describes them, and, further, employing the intrinsic/instrumental value distinction to elaborate such a conclusion, one might be inclined to judge that the *intrinsic* value of some things (say, every wild animal, the fish of the seas, and all remaining forests, taken collectively) could well outweigh *the admitted instrumental value* which would *temporarily* obtain²⁵ from a process requiring their permanent destruction. But, of course, thus far, Routley (1973), himself, has not mentioned intrinsic value.

IV. Four Early Reactions: Benn, Mannison, Callicott, & Elliot

(A) First reactions were local, and remained so until 1979 (six years later).²⁶ After all, ‘Is There A Need...?’ had been published in the relatively inaccessible proceedings of a world congress and was thus largely *unknown, except* locally. And the jointly authored (with Valerie Routley), yet to be published, ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’²⁷ (1980) – which “considerably elaborates ... ‘Is There a need for a new, an environmental, ethic?’”²⁸ had only been “read in 1974 at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, at Notre Dame University, and at ... the University of Victoria, Canada”²⁸. Otherwise, it too was unknown – except, again, locally.

1974: Hereabouts, however, *the last man* was much discussed in these

²⁵Remember, these *are* the last people.

²⁶With the publication of J. Baird Callicott’s discussion paper, ‘Elements of an Environmental Ethic: Moral Considerability and the Biotic Community’, in Volume 1, Number 1 of the new journal, *Environmental Ethics*.

²⁷By Richard and Val Routley, published in *Environmental Philosophy*, edited by D. Mannison, M.A. McRobbie, and R. Routley, Monograph Series, No. 2, Dept. of Philosophy, RSSH, A.N.U. (1980), pp. 96-189. Of which, more later.

²⁸*Ibid.* The quotation is from p. 96, at footnote * of the article in question.

early days, as *e.g.*, by Routley’s ANU colleague, **Stanley Benn**, in his Presidential Address to the Australasian Association of Philosophy in **1974**. In that address (a version of which was published in 1977)²⁹, Benn favourably explored the application of a version of it to works of art:

“...part of our concern for the safety and condition of works of art is on account of the pleasure they give to human beings, and I cannot show conclusively that is not the whole of it. But it is at least plausible to claim that, if the entire human species, together with such other persons as there may be, were doomed to certain destruction next Christmas Day, then, for anyone who cared about works of art the simultaneous destruction of some outstanding pieces would be a cause for additional regret, not the matter of indifference it would be were this concern wholly anthropocentric.”³⁰

The potential intuition, *not* – I think – widely shared, whose pumping was being attempted here was that: perhaps not *all* the value to be found in “outstanding pieces” can be accounted for instrumentally – that is, by reference to its *actual and potential* causal effects, particularly hedonic effects, on people.

1975: Don Mannison, a philosopher from the University of Queensland, journeyed down to ANU in 1975 to present his own rather more critical³¹ views (subsequently published in 1980).³²

“Benn in ‘Personal Freedom and Environmental Ethics’, a paper in which he was explicitly defending human chauvinism, accepts for works of art what the Routleys have called ‘the last man argument’. Briefly, the Last Man Argument is the allegation that it would be morally impermissible to destroy, say, a forest, even if one knew that one was the last person alive, and that one was going to die in a moment. Now, Benn believes that this argument,

²⁹Stanley Benn, ‘Personal Freedom and Environmental Ethics: The Moral Inequality of Species’ in *Equality and Freedom: International and Comparative Jurisprudence*, Vol.2, pp. 401-424. Sijthoff, Leiden, 1977.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 413.

³¹“I am”, said Don, “for the time being, a human chauvinist.” (p. 53) And then, “I commit myself to the view that a world *sans* valuers is *eo ipso* a world *sans* values.” (p. 62) [See the following footnote for the full reference.]

³²Don Mannison, ‘A Critique of a Proposal for an “Environmental Ethic”: Just Why is it “Bad” to Live in a “Concrete Jungle”?’ in *Environmental Philosophy*, Monograph Series, No. 2; Department of Philosophy, RISS, ANU (**1980**), pp. 52-64.

when applied to works of art, shows that even a fundamentally person-oriented ethic is not ‘wholly anthropocentric’.

But exactly what is the force of and basis for such an argument? It is – and I think it would be conceded to be – an appeal to one’s ‘intuitions’; *i.e.* to the ‘feel’ of such possible situations. What would – or could – be said to someone, or to a large group of people, who did not share the intuition? Following the moral intuitionism of A.C. Ewing, would we say that they are ‘morally immature’? But, what apart from their ‘coming to see’ what we ‘see’ would or could count as being morally mature? ...

What has to be shown, I think, is not that a survey shows that people will tend to answer one way rather than another, but that one response rather than another is the *right* one. This is particularly, and inescapably, true for anyone who, like the Routleys, {wants to defend a *realist* theory of values; *i.e.*, a theory of values that accounts for the truth of ‘x has value’ with no ineliminable reference to the interests and concerns of the evaluating group.}³³ (56-7)

Actually, Routley (1973) does not refer to *the last man* itself as an ‘argument’, but as a ‘counter example’.³⁴ Yet – assuming that normative statements can

³³The Routleys (in 1980, p. 154, fn. 63) *directly cite* the passage marked by “{...}”, and *reject* the charge of ‘realism’. More of all that later.

³⁴However, in the later ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’ (1980), the Routleys do refer to “the last man *argument*”, p. 128 of *Environmental Ethics*, eds. Mannison, McRobbie, Routley. Much later – in ‘On the Value Core of Deep-Green Theory’ in *Justice, Ethics, and New Zealand Society*, eds. G. Oddie and R. Perrett, OUP (1992), p. 223 – Richard refers to it as a “*thought-experiment*”. It is all of these things. Still later, in *The Greening of Ethics* (1994), speaking about “ways into greener ethics”, he writes:

“One is from deep moral attitudes, drawn out (or awakened, even ‘remembered’ in Socrates’ terms) by decisive examples, such as that of the Last Person.” (34)

be either true³⁵ or false (or some analogue thereof) – it is fair enough to regard it as being an embedded *ingredient* in an argument of *modus tollens* form:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{FP} \rightarrow \mathbf{PE}(LM)^{36} \\ & \sim \mathbf{PE}(LM) \\ & \therefore \sim \text{FP} \end{aligned}$$

Mannison accepts the first premise, but finds himself unconvinced of the second. He suggests that being *convinced* of it may be at least in part a matter of *feeling* (“the ‘feel’ of such possible situations”), and this too is perhaps fair-ish to Richard, since he had written (1973) with regret that:

“... men do not feel morally ashamed if they interfere with a wilderness, if they maltreat the land, extract from it whatever it will yield, and then move on; and such conduct... does not rouse the moral indignation of others.”³⁷ (13)

But, in any event, Routley (1973) is not much interested in such dallying by such convictional or epistemological way-sides. Instead, he is ready to move on to determining the outlines of “*a meta-ethic adequate for an environmental ethic.*” (18)

1979: So far as I am aware, the first *overseas* discussion³⁸ of *the last man*

³⁵As the Routleys (1980) seem to assume (*op. cit.*, p. 155; p. 164, fn. 78), thus making them something like ‘moral realists’ in the sense of that notion as advocated by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, ed., *Essays on Moral Realism* (Cornell U. Pr., 1988), p. 5:

“[R]ealism involves embracing just two theses: (1) the claims in question, when literally construed, are literally true or false (cognitivism), and (2) some are literally true. Nothing more. (Of course, a great deal is built into these two theses.)”

But only ‘something like’, since – for reasons to be advanced later in this paper - they do not ultimately regard themselves as ‘cognitivists’ with respect to claims of intrinsic value.

³⁶Where, as before, “**PE**” stands for “it is morally **permissible** that”.

³⁷There will be more to say about this aspect of Routley’s environmental perspective when we come to discuss the jointly authored ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’ (1980). In the meantime, *cp.* Leopold’s early remark: “No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, *affections*, and convictions.” And this one as well: “It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without *love, respect, and admiration* for land...” (*A Sand County Almanac*, OUP 1949, pp. 209-10, and p. 223.)

³⁸Apart from an extensive one presented by Richard and Val Routley themselves *in the U.S. and Canada* in 1974 (and again in Australia in 1977), and finally published in 1980 – of which more later.

example *as originally provided* (in **1973**) by Richard is to be found six years later in the very first issue of the new journal *Environmental Ethics*. Its author is **J. Baird Callicott**.³⁹

“...Routley presents some ingenious limiting case paradigms, involving situations so construed as to eliminate consideration of other people, but not of trees, whales, rivers, or other nonhuman natural entities. For example, Routley asks us to consider the ‘last man’ (‘who lays about him eliminating, as far as he can, every living thing, animal or plant’) or ‘the last people’. Suppose that after the proliferation of nuclear power plants it is discovered that radiation side effects have blocked any chance of human reproduction. In bitterness, the last generation of people set about systematically destroying all life on the planet. Since future persons, posterity, are in principle removed from consideration, Routley argues that *according to dominant Western ethical traditions*, what the last people do to the natural environment is not wrong or morally censurable.”⁴⁰

We have already seen that part of this understanding of *the last people* example must be rejected. For there is no mention of a motivating bitterness on the part of the last people, and quite deliberately so, for according to Routley:

“...the main point of elaborating this example is because, as the last man example reveals, basic chauvinism may conflict with stewardship or co-operation principles. The conflict may be removed it seems by conjoining a further proviso to the basic principle, [to] the effect (3) that he does not willfully destroy natural resources. But as the last people do not destroy resources willfully, but perhaps ‘for the best of reasons’, the variant is still environmentally inadequate.”⁴¹

As we have seen, Routley’s *last people* case, which allows that the last people

³⁹The last time I looked (admittedly, a while back), all of Callicott’s then 60 publications registered in the *Philosopher’s Index* were in environmental philosophy. It is a tribute to Richard Routley that his ‘Is There a Need...?’-piece operated as an original stimulus on the thinking and productivity of one of the very most productive, and most discussed, of American environmental philosophers.

⁴⁰J. Baird Callicott, ‘Elements of an Environmental Ethic: Moral Considerability and the Biotic Community’, *Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring, **1979**), pp. 71-72. Italics in the original.

⁴¹Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

“are simply satisfying reasonable needs”, thereby *allows* a limited kind of comparison between values of mixed kinds, *i.e.*, between intrinsic⁴² and instrumental values. Restructuring the case in the way Callicott casually does – such that the motives of the last people turn out to be simple bitterness – would not allow such a comparison, for such a motive would seem to count as merely ‘willful’.

In spite of this false start, Callicott accepts what I have earlier called ‘the negative work’ of *the last man* example.⁴³ He remarks:

“...it is a challenge, which I have been unable to meet, to find a major European ethical system, classical or modern, which meets the test of Routley’s limiting case paradigms. In every system it is at best other persons, and often only the agent’s own self, which count for something, while nonhuman natural entities are included in moral reckoning only in relation to persons as property or as being involved in a general and vague conception of the quality of (human) life.”⁴⁴

Callicott then takes up the question of the character of the new environmental ethic⁴⁵ which, it seems, is required in order to theorize the newly recognised impermissibilities with respect to the environment which Routley claims to be tracking. In the course of doing this, he does proffer one quite interesting remark:

“If an environmental ethic is to be an ethic proper, not a com-

⁴²Although, thus far, Routley (1973), himself, has not mentioned intrinsic values.

⁴³I wrote:

“...the work of *the last man* example is, thus far, merely negative: there is an identifiable core principle embedded in Western ethical systems, and *the last man* example shows it up as an *unacceptable* principle. But as the identity of ethical systems must be a matter of the identity of their core principles, to find a reason to reject a core principle of any system is to find a reason to reject the system itself.”

⁴⁴Callicott, *op. cit.*, p. 72, fn. 3. In support of this view, he cites the concurrence of Holmes Rolston III: “Our ethical heritage largely attaches values and rights to persons, and if nonpersonal realms enter, they enter only as tributary to the personal.” (‘Is There An Ecological Ethics?’, *Ethics* 85 (1975): 101). But *cp.* Maimonides (1135-1204): “It should not be believed that all beings exist for the sake of the existence of man. On the contrary, all the other beings, too, have been intended for their own sakes and not for the sake of something else.” (*The Guide for the Perplexed*, I:72) -And then there is the less ambitious Mr. Bentham.

⁴⁵“...let us ask what such an ethics might be like.” (*Ibid.*, p. 72)

plication of familiar prudential considerations..., it has to be *internally* articulated⁴⁶ in such a way as to confer more than mere instrumental value upon nonhuman natural entities.”⁴⁷

The “internal articulation” of the new environmental ethic, says Callicott, must refer to a value of nonhuman natural entities which is *not merely instrumental*. The obvious alterity here is *intrinsic* value, the sort of value Moore thought the method of isolation revealed.

(B) In **1978**, **Robert Elliot** commented upon *the last people* example. This he did in a paper entitled, ‘Why Preserve Species?’.⁴⁸ In it, he cites⁴⁹ a *slightly different (and presumably later) version* of the example, a version apparently *intended* for inclusion in Richard and Val Routley’s (**1979**) ‘Against the Inevitability of Human Chauvinism’⁵⁰:

“I [Elliot] want now to consider some arguments proposed by Richard and Val Routley which...describe a range of possible situations where our intuitions tell us one thing but traditional ethics allegedly tell us another. I want to consider...the ‘last people’ example. A group of people know themselves to be the last people who will inhabit the earth. They proceed to act in the following way.

‘They humanely exterminate every wild animal and they eliminate the fish of the seas, they put all arable land under intensive cultivation, and all remaining forests disappear in favour of pastures or plantations ... On an environmental ethic the last people have behaved *very* badly; they have *done what is impermissible and*

⁴⁶Is he referring here to the need for a particular *kind* of meta-ethic (*e.g.* one making reference to intrinsic value)?

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴⁸Presented to a relatively early Environmental Philosophy Conference held at the Australian National University in October, **1978**, and published in its edited proceedings two years later: *Environmental Philosophy*, edited by D. Mannison, M.A. McRobbie, and R. Routley, Monograph Series, No. 2, Dept. of Philosophy, RISSS, A.N.U. (**1980**), pp. 8-29. The first such conference in Australia was held at the University of Queensland in **1977**. The first in the U.S. was held at the University of Georgia in **1971**.

⁴⁹On page 23 of his article.

⁵⁰Published in *Ethics and Problems of the 21st Century*, eds. K. E. Goodpaster and K. M. Sayre, University of Notre Dame Pr., **1979**, pp. 36-59 (reprinted in *Environmental Ethics*, ed. Robert Elliot, OUP (1995), pp. 104-128). *Intended* the version may have been but, ultimately, it was *not* included in this article. There is no mention of *the last people* in the Routleys’ article in Goodpaster and Sayre, eds. (**1979**).

destroyed much of value; for they have simplified and largely destroyed all the natural eco-systems, and with their demise the world will soon be an ugly and largely wrecked place."⁵¹ (23)

Unlike Callicott, Elliot is *unconvinced* that the example succeeds in its negative employment of finding a reason to reject all traditional ethics. As he puts it:

"Whether the Routleys' remarks are fair to traditional ethics is doubtful; for instance various utilitarian theories would seem to deliver the right judgement in [this] case."⁵²

Elliot appears to have *preference utilitarianism* in mind. As he had put matters a few pages earlier,

"For the preference utilitarian states of affairs have value if they objectively satisfy the desires of individuals: whether any subjective or felt satisfaction is derived is beside the point. Thus if Richard Routley desires, in 1978, that substantial stands of mountain ash remain in 2078, then that is a reason⁵³ for assigning value to those states of affairs which include the existence, in 2078, of stands of mountain ash. On a classical utilitarian theory there is no reason for assigning value to that state of affairs unless it produces subjective or felt satisfaction."⁵⁴

Preference utilitarianism, while not 'classical', may nevertheless be regarded as 'traditional'; and therefore *not* 'new'. And, yet, in spite of its being some part of 'the tradition', we see it in this instance producing the environmentally correct result.

Such rescue of tradition appears, however, to forget *the sense* of 'the new' which Routley has deployed. According to that sense, an ethic will be appropriately 'new', provided – as we have seen – that it does *not* accept the *freedom principle*, in other words, does *not* accept *basic human chauvinism*.

⁵¹The differences between this later version, and the original **1973** version are indicated in italics. They are additions. This version is, however, *nearly* identical to that version which was to appear in 'Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics' (**1980**) – of which more later. (There were copies of early versions of the 1980 article floating around Australian departments of philosophy at this time, *viz.*, 1978.)

⁵²Elliot, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁵³Richard could not agree that this, by itself, was a reason. Much as he might like it to be. To agree would be to succumb to a form of subjectivism.

⁵⁴Elliot, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

But whether or not preference utilitarianism accepts the freedom principle depends *entirely* on the content of preferences. If current preferences are – as it largely happens – unrestricted by anything other than the very liberal ‘freedom principle’, then the preference utilitarian must, at least for the time being, in effect, *credit* that principle. There is thus no refuge in ‘preference’ utilitarianism from the ravages of basic human chauvinism. This is a point which Routley (1973) made, so I believe, when he wrote:

“...it would just be a happy accident, it seems, if collective demand (horizontally summed from individual demand) for a state of the economy with blue whales as a mixed good, were to succeed in outweighing private whaling demands; for if no one in the base class happened to know that blue whales exist or cared a jot that they do then ‘rational’ economic decision-making would do nothing to prevent their extinction. Whether the blue whale survives should not have to depend on what humans know or what they see on television. Human interests and preferences are far too parochial to provide a satisfactory basis for deciding on what is environmentally desirable.”⁵⁵

His point, which is perfectly well-taken at least from the general point of view likely to be sponsored by an environmental ethic, nevertheless suggests difficult questions of a meta-ethical kind. Thus, following what I take to be Richard’s lead here: Suppose (1) that preference utilitarianism is to be rejected as unhelpfully ‘old’ just because it is *compatible* with the freedom principle (*i.e.*, just because it *subscribes* to the freedom principle *if* people actually prefer a world in which the freedom principle is a governing principle⁵⁶); and suppose (2) that the value of wilderness, say, is therefore *not* to be decided *on the preferences*. That is, the relational ground that the continued existence of wilderness objectively satisfies preferences (if that is the case) is *not* to be thought of as *adequate* in establishing the value of wilderness, because the availability of such preferences and therefore of such a foundation is utterly contingent on such things as what people “see on television”. But if preferences, themselves subjective phenomena, are *not* decisive in the establishment of value – because, being decisive, there *might*

⁵⁵Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 20. The passage was deemed important enough to be largely preserved in R. & V. Routley (1980): 184.

⁵⁶Remember, even though the last man need not live to be pleased by it (provided we construct the example aright: let him therefore have arranged that the elimination of all things should commence shortly *after* his death), *his* preferences are *objectively satisfied* by the destruction of all living things.

be a resultant subscription to the freedom principle (or worse!) – one is tempted to wonder whether such an environmental ethic can avoid embracing some kind of objectivism.⁵⁷

However, let us *assume*, for the moment at least, that it can. In that case it seems its subjectivism must take a particular form. Elliot addresses the matter of the particular form a subjectivism must take in order to satisfy the demands of an environmental ethic which is, itself, sensitive to the demands of *the last man* and *the last people* examples.

“A subjectivist account of value...links⁵⁸ value with *the existence*⁵⁹ of individuals capable of valuing. The idea is that value *only* comes into the world *if* such individuals exist *and if* they place value on certain kinds of things.⁶⁰ ... There is one point that needs stressing. Given the account I have offered of value it does not follow that if X has value at t_1 there is an individual who either values X or is disposed to value X at t_1 .⁶¹ All that is

⁵⁷It may not be entirely clear what this has to do with the *last man* and *last people* examples. Here is how the argument has gone – in a nutshell.

The last man and *last people* example (allegedly) show up the freedom principle as inadequate; they thereby similarly show ‘basic human chauvinism’ to be inadequate. But preference utilitarianism is compatible with the freedom principle. So preference utilitarianism is to be given up: *i.e.*, even the ‘objective satisfaction’ of preference is not *determinative* of value. Therefore, preferences themselves, it would seem, can play no *determinative* role in the establishment of value from the point of view of an environmental ethic that is *well-defended*. But if this is so, how is one – as a well-defended environmental ethicist – to avoid giving up ‘subjectivism’ (*anthropogenesis*) and embracing ‘objectivism’ (*cosmogenesis*), with respect to value.

⁵⁸This, of course, is vague. Links how? In saying what he says *here*, Elliot is not requiring of subjectivist accounts of value that they ‘reduce’ value to evaluations. Elsewhere, however, he does.

“...the subjectivist view makes the valuer the sole determinant of a thing’s value; whether X is valuable is determined by whether it is valued.” (Elliot, *op. cit.*, p. 19)

⁵⁹*This* (“existence”) will be a point of difference between Elliot (1978) and the Routleys (1980).

⁶⁰Elliot’s meaning is slightly unclear here. However, I take “only...if” to be governing both appearances of “if” (so that we have two necessary conditions presented).

⁶¹At this point, Elliot writes ambiguously. On one natural reading, supposing you are the last person and that, *contra* Routley’s last man, you value there being wilderness *after* you are gone, then, *ex hypothesi*, you value X at t_1 even though your evaluative act takes place *prior* to t_1 . Thus, an English version not so easy to misread would be: “...it does not follow that if X has value at t_1 , then *at t_1* there is an individual who either values X or is disposed to value X at t_1 ”. Still, the following context makes his meaning clear enough.

required is that at some time or other there exists an individual who values X. It does not matter whether that individual predates or postdates X: it does not matter whether or not X and whatever values X have temporal-parts which overlap. ... The strength of this kind of subjectivism over and above the more restricted kind is that it allows that certain states of affairs have intrinsic value even though valuers are absent from them. Thus this account of value provides *some kind* of support for Routley's last man argument...."⁶²

I think it is clear that Elliot *is correct* in thinking that any subjectivism seeking *application* as the correct meta-ethic for an environmental ethic which is itself responsive to the lessons of *the last man* example *must be* of this less restricted kind. Otherwise, if the evaluating subject is required to be evaluating the object at the same time that it is of value, then given there will be no evaluators after the death of the last man, the impoverished landscape he leaves behind will have no relative *disvalue* (compared to the biologically rich and varied landscape he might have left behind), and consequently the last man (or last people) will have done no wrong. Similarly, for an 'environmentally *friendly*' last man: if the evaluating subject is required to be evaluating the object at the same time that it is of value, then given that there will be no evaluators after the death of the environmentally *friendly* last man, the rich, wild landscape *this* last man leaves in place will have no relative *value* compared to the impoverished one he might have left behind, and the environmentally friendly last man will have acted no better in his final moment than the king of disaster.

⁶²Elliot, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20. But the support it provides is not support the Routleys (1980) wish to make use of, since they reject 'subjectivism':

"Values...are features objects may have or lack; they are *not* subjective, they are not features which *reduce* to states or conditions of subjects or valuers." [R. & V. Routley (1980), p. 154]

The view that subjectivism is a *reductionist* thesis is, I think, a correct one; and can provide an understandable motive for its abandonment. Neither, however, do the Routleys (1980) regard values as objective features of objects. They take it that a false dichotomy ('subjectivism or else objectivism') has been forced upon such discussions. One reason for rejecting objectivism is "Objectivism forces intuitionism". [R. & V. Routley (1980): 154.] More of this matter, and their *tertium quid*, *nonjectivism*, later.

V. Meanwhile back at the station

Both Richard and Val Routley had, since Richard's six page address to the world congress in 1973, been elaborating 'Is There a Need...' – at considerable length, as it turned out. In **1974**, a draft of the new paper was read at Indiana, Notre Dame, and University of Victoria, Canada; and then – “sizeable additions [having] been made, with a view to increasing the intelligibility and enlarging the scope of the original draft, and meeting some of the many objections”⁶³ – the completed and lengthy (94 pages) paper, ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’, was published in **1980**.⁶⁴

The “liberal” freedom principle (**FP**) appears once again, exactly as before, with only its name changed:

“(D) ‘...one should be able to do what he wishes, providing (1) that he does not harm others {and (2) that he is not likely to harm himself irreparably}.’ ”⁶⁵

Again, it is said to be one of the “core principles of Western ethical systems, [these being] principles that will accordingly belong to the super-ethic”.⁶⁶ However, instead of calling this principle *basic human chauvinism* (as before), it is now said to “*incorporate* fundamental features of (human or person) chauvinism” (117), where the latter is newly identified in the following way:

“*Human* chauvinism is class chauvinism where the class is humans.... Class chauvinism...is *substantially* differential, discriminatory and inferior treatment (by sufficiently many members of the class) for items outside the class, for which there is not *sufficient* justification.”⁶⁷

⁶³ Vide R. & V. Routley (1980). The quotation is from the opening footnote on p. 96.

⁶⁴R. & V. Routley (1980), ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’, in *Environmental Philosophy*, edited by D. Mannison, M.A. McRobbie, and R. Routley, Monograph Series, No. 2, Department of Philosophy, RSSH, A.N.U. (1980), pp. 96-189.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 117. The second clause is put in curly brackets by the Routleys, to mark the fact that Mill rejected it, and its deletion “does not affect the general argument” (p. 117, fn. 21) to come – which is deployed against (D).

⁶⁶A passage which appears in both ‘Is There a Need...’ (15), and ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’ (116).

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 96. On the same page, they also refer to human chauvinism as ‘anthropocentrism’. Other statements of relevance in the article as to the nature of human chauvinism include:

(1) “The basic assumption [of Western human chauvinism] is that *value* attaches essentially only to humans or to what serves or bears on human interests, or derivatively, to items which derive from human skill, ingenuity or labour. Since

But this change does not seem to make any appreciable difference in lessons to be drawn.

Now, **(D)** is a *deontic* principle specifying the class of permissible actions. It has the form: “Anything goes, except...”. But there is also⁶⁸ an equally fundamental (or core) “*axiological* principle *corresponding* to **(D)**” (119), *viz.*,

(A) “Only those objects which are of use or concern to humans (or persons), or which are the product of human (or person) labour or ingenuity, are of value; thus these are all that need to be taken into account in determining best choice or best course of action, what is good, etc.”⁶⁹

And, at this point, the Routleys now reproduce *the last man* and *the last people* examples as counter examples to the fundamental *deontic* principle **(D)** and, as well, against the equally fundamental and corresponding *axiological* principle **(A)**.⁷⁰

(i) “The *last man* example. The last man (or woman or person) surviving the collapse of the world system sets to work eliminating, as far as he can, every living thing, animal or plant (but painlessly if you like, as at the best abattoirs). What he does is quite permissible according to principle **(D)** but on environmental

natural items have no *other* value, there is no restriction on the way they are treated insofar as this does not interfere with others; as far as *isolated* natural things are concerned anything is permissible.” [R. & V. Routley (1980), p. 109.]

The use of “isolated” triggers memories of Moore and, along with the use of “other”, prefigures a move to intrinsic value. More on that later.

(2) “...the strong thesis of human chauvinism, according to which items outside the privileged human class have no *value* except one as *instrumental* value.” [R. & V. Routley (1980), p. 115.]

⁶⁸And this is new, *i.e.*, it was not in Routley (1973).

⁶⁹*Op. cit.*, p. 119. **(A)** is very familiar. Compare **(A)** with Mill:

“...all desirable *things*...are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain.”
Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 2, Para. 2/25.

There is no question that Mill is using “desirable things” in this passage to *include* ‘valuable things’, or ‘objects of value’ as *per* principle **(A)**. It is also useful to compare **(A)** with passages (1) and (2) in footnote 67.

⁷⁰“The counterexamples to **(D)** and **(A)** presented depend largely on designing situations different from the actual where there are either too few or too many humans or persons.” (*Ibid.*, 121)

grounds what he does is wrong.”⁷¹

Once again, what the last man, himself, has done is wrong, and this is *simply because*, according to the Routleys, he has destroyed “things of *value*”. (121)

As can be seen, this presentation of *the last man* (pp. 121-2) is nearly identical to that appearing in **1973**, except that there is this additional note:

“The usual vandalism charge does not apply against Mr. Last Man since he does no damage to others.” (122)

Indeed, if one thinks of *vandalism* as *wrongful destruction*, then given some thought about the limited sense of wrongfulness *implicit in principles (D)* and *(A)*, it becomes clear that the charge of vandalism – were it (somewhat peculiarly and out of confusion about the limited implications of one’s own principles) to proceed from adherents to the tradition represented by *(D)* and *(A)* – could not stick to the last man.⁷²

The subsection on the *last people* reads as follows – with additions and other changes (relative to the **1973** text) appearing in curly brackets:

(ii) “The *last people* example. The last man example can be {extended} to the last people example. We can assume that they know they are the last people, *e.g.*, because they are aware that radiation effects have blocked any chance of reproduction. One considers the last people in order to rule out the possibility that

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²Bentham’s understanding of *wrongful destruction* – a traditional understanding – is instructive in this matter insofar as he regards it as an offence, first of all, against *property* and, in particular, as an offence against the property of *another*:

“When any object which you have had the physical occupation or enjoyment of, ceases, in any degree, in consequence of the act of *another* man, and without any change made in so much of that power as depends upon the intrinsic physical condition of your person, to be subject to that power; this cessation is either owing to change in the *intrinsic* condition of the thing itself, or in its exterior situation with respect to you, that is, to its being situated out of your reach. In the former case, the nature of the change is either such as to put it out of your power to make any use of it at all, in which case the thing is said to be *destroyed*, and the offence whereby it is so treated may be termed *wrongful destruction*: or such only as to render the uses it is capable of being put to of less value than before, in which case it is said to be damaged, or to have sustained damage, and the offence may be termed *wrongful endamagement*.” [Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Ch. 16 (‘Division of Offences’), Sec. 35, para 2/6. My italics.]

what these people do harms or somehow physically interferes with later people. Otherwise one could as well consider science fiction cases where people arrive at a new planet and destroy its ecosystems, whether with good intentions such as perfecting the planet for their ends and making it more fruitful or, forgetting the lesser traditions, just for the {sheer enjoyment} of it.

Let us assume that the last people are very numerous. They humanely exterminate every wild animal and they eliminate the fish of the seas, they put all arable land under intensive cultivation, and all remaining natural forests disappear in favour of {pastures} or plantations, and so on. They may give various familiar reasons for this, e.g. they believe it is the way to salvation or to perfection, or they are simply satisfying reasonable needs, or even that it is needed to keep the last people employed or occupied so that they do not worry too much about their impending extinction. On an environmental ethics the last people have behaved badly; {they have done what is impermissible and destroyed much of value; for} they have simplified and largely destroyed all the natural ecosystems, and with their demise the world will soon be an ugly and largely wrecked place. But this conduct may conform with {the core principles (D) and (A)}, and as well with the principles enjoined by the lesser traditions {under more obvious construals of these principles}. Indeed the main point of elaborating this {extension of the last man} example is because {principles (D) and (A)} may, {as they stand, appear to} conflict with stewardship, cooperation {and perfection positions}, as the last man example reveals. The {apparent} conflict {between these positions and principle (D)} may be {definitively} removed, it seems, by conjoining a further proviso to the principle, [to] the effect (3) that he does not wilfully destroy natural resources. But as the last people {who are not vandals} do not destroy resources wilfully, but perhaps ‘for the best of reasons’, the variant is still environmentally inadequate.”⁷³

⁷³Richard and Val Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 122. That which is in curly brackets is additional to the version in R. Routley (1973), or replaces other similar content. The Routleys discuss other examples (“The *great entrepreneur* example” in which the “last man is an industrialist” (123), “The *vanishing species* example” (123-4), “The *factory farm* example”(124-5), and “The *wilderness* example” (125). The last of these is said to

“... require variation, e.g. to a wilderness devoid of sentient individuals, if it is to counter clearly such extensions of Western ethics as those of animal

As can be seen, the subsection on *the last people* contains no substantive changes to the material presented in **1973**. All changes (additions/replacements) made are in the service of *clarification*.

And the upshot is that – as the Routleys (**1980**) see things – lessons previously drawn from *the last man* and *the last people* were correctly drawn. Thus,

“...what the examples show is that core axiological and deontic assumptions⁷⁴ of the Western super-ethic are environmentally inadequate; and accordingly Western ethics should be superseded by a more environmentally adequate ethic. ...”⁷⁵

In other words, and much as before, it follows (courtesy of these examples) that we know of the new ethic that (i) a need for it has been demonstrated, that (ii) it will not contain the freedom principle (**D**) nor (iii) its corresponding axiological principle (**A**), and that (iv) it offers (or will offer) “environmental grounds” for morally assessing action. But, to this point in the article, the contentful and justificatory character of the new ethic is so far unspecified.⁷⁶

Earlier, I noted that Richard had not, in his original (**1973**) discussion of *the last man* and *last people* examples, deployed the notion of the *intrinsic* value of, *e.g.*, “living things”. Instead, the possible meta-content of the new environmental ethic was left entirely unspecified apart from a very tentative suggestion as to how the freedom principle might be further restricted utilizing the notion of subjunctively possible instrumental value. Routley was not happy with this manoeuvre, “in view of the way the freedom principle sets the onus of proof” (18). This concern constituted a kind of pragmatic or even political justification for his subsequent proposal (**1973**) that it might be better, simply, “to scrap it⁷⁷ altogether” (18) rather than trying to further hedge it in.⁷⁸

liberationist. For this sort of reason we do not want to overstate or overrate the role of *particular* examples – as distinct from variations upon such examples.” (125)

In fact, this caution will take on an importance later (see ‘**(N)**’ – the statement of ‘nonjectivism’ – below, and the attendant fn. 115).

⁷⁴Namely, (**A**) and (**D**) respectively.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁷⁶But the rest of the paragraph begins to change this lack of specification, as we shall shortly see.

⁷⁷The freedom principle (**FP**).

⁷⁸On the other hand, by **1980**, he and Val are, it seems, much inclined to regard the early proposal that wilderness has an *instrumental* value for “purely hypothetical experiencers

But, now, in the concluding sentence of the paragraph just quoted – about lessons previously drawn from *the last man* and *the last people* being correctly drawn, there is this novelty:

“The class of permissible actions that rebound on the environment is more narrowly circumscribed on such an environmental ethic than it is in the Western superethic, and the class of noninstrumentally valuable objects is correspondingly wider than it is on the Western super-ethic.”⁷⁹

This is the first instance – now some 7 years after the publication of ‘Is There A Need...?’ – that there is an explicit reference from Richard to *noninstrumental value*, although as noticed earlier (see footnote 22), Val Routley in her excellent ‘Critical Notice’ of Passmore’s *Man’s Responsibility for Nature* (1974) had criticized Passmore for not seriously discussing the *intrinsic value hypothesis* as part of the ‘new ethic’ (even though this hypothesis, so contextualized, had not thus far been aired in publication by either of the Routleys). And, of course, as we have seen, others – in their discussions of the implications of *the last man* – had been remarking upon the need for its introduction, in particular, Elliot (1978)⁸⁰ and Callicott (1979)⁸¹.

(who may vanish into counterfactuals)” – i.e., has a ‘subjunctively possible instrumental value’, as I put it – as “a *disguised* intrinsic value position”, and thus, apart from the *disguise*, on the right track. [R. & V. Routley (1980): 137] The ‘scrapped’ position seems to be very similar, possibly identical, to Rescher’s:

“...the unseen sunset has aesthetic value because of the potential benefits it affords ... [i.e.] *if* someone *were* placed on to such a world, he *would* be able to appreciate and enjoy this sunset.” [N. Rescher, *Introduction to Value Theory*, Prentice Hill, 1969, pp. 136-7; as cited by R. & V. Routley (1980): 156.]

I think, however, that such a suggestion is not at all a disguised intrinsic value theory; rather, it *extends* human chauvinism into the domain of possible worlds. What the last man would be required to save by an environmental ethic hostage to the further hypothesis of subjunctively possible *instrumental* value might still not be *nearly as extensive* as what he would be required to save on an environmental ethic based on intrinsic value.

⁷⁹R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

⁸⁰Elliot, commenting upon the unrestricted form of subjectivism he favored, had written:

“The strength of this kind of subjectivism over and above the more restricted kind is that it allows that certain states of affairs have intrinsic value even though valuers are absent from them. Thus this account of value provides some kind of support for Routley’s last man argument.” (Elliot, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.)

⁸¹Callicott:

Now, seven years on, Richard and Val, working together, are ready to undisguisedly ‘go for’ intrinsic value in order to flesh out the character of the new, and necessary, environmental ethic. Intrinsic value is brought into their discussion, *explicitly*, for the first time, in a series of *real world examples* said to show the

“...very great differences in the practical valuations and behaviour of those who believe that natural items can have value and create obligations not reducible (in any way) to human interests and those who do not.... (129)

Example 1. ... C. Stone...notes⁸² the practical legal differences between taking the damage to a polluted river as affecting its intrinsic value, and taking it as just affecting human river users. In the one case one will see adequate compensation as restoring the original state of the river ...and in the other as compensating those present (or future) humans who will suffer from its pollution. As Stone points out, the sum adequate to compensate the latter may well be much less than that required to restore the river to its unpolluted state, thus making it economic, and in terms of the human chauvinist theory, fair and reasonable, to compensate those damaged and continue pollution of the river. In the first case, of course, adequate compensation or restoration for the harm done would have to consist in restoring the river to its unpolluted condition and will not just be paid to the people affected. ... In the case of a natural item damage may be compensated by payment to a trust set up to protect and restore it. (129-30)

Example 2. The believer in intrinsic values may avoid making unnecessary and excessive noise in the forest, out of respect for the forest and its nonhuman inhabitants. She will do this even when it is certain that there is no other human around to know the difference. For one to whom the forest and its inhabitants are merely another conventional utility, however, there will be no such constraint. He may avoid unnecessary noise if he thinks

“If an environmental ethic is to be an ethic proper, not a complication of familiar *prudential* considerations..., it has to be internally articulated in such a way as to confer more than mere instrumental value upon nonhuman natural entities.” [*Op. cit.*, p. 78]

⁸²In *Should Trees Have Standing? Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects*, Avon Books, New York, 1975.

it will disturb other humans, but if he is certain none are about to hear him he will feel at liberty to make as much and as loud a noise as he chooses, and this will affect his behaviour. ... To claim that the making of noise in such circumstances is a matter of no importance, and therefore there is no important difference in behaviour, is of course to assess the matter through human chauvinist eyes. So such a claim is question-begging. From the intrinsic viewpoint it *would* make a difference, and be reflected in practical behavioural difference. (130)

Example 3. Consider an aboriginal tribe which holds a particular place to be sacred, and where this sanctity and intrinsic valuableness and beauty is celebrated by a number of beautiful cave paintings. A typically ‘progressive’ instrumentalist Western view would hold the cave (and perhaps place) to be worth preservation because of its value to the aboriginal people, and because of the artistic merit of the human artifacts, the cave paintings the cave contained. To the ‘enlightened’ Westerner, if the tribe should cease to exist, and the paintings be destroyed, it would be permissible to destroy the place if this should be in what is judged to be the best interests of human kind, e.g. to get at the uranium underneath. To the aboriginal...the obligation to the place would not die [merely] because the tribe disappeared or declined. Similarly no ordinary sum of money would be able to compensate for the loss of such a place, in the way that it might for something conceived of as a utility or convenience, as having value only because of the benefits it confers on the ‘users’ of it.” (130-31)

The Routleys conclude:

“There is an enormous *felt* or *emotive* difference between feeling that a place should be valued or respected for itself, for its perceived beauty and character, and feeling that it should not be defaced because it is valued by one’s fellow humans, and provides pleasurable sensations or money or convenience for them. ... These differences in *emotional presentation*⁸³ are accompanied by or expressed by an enormous range of behavioural differences,

⁸³The idea of *emotional presentation* – borrowed from Meinong – played an important role in Richard’s later thought about how values are determined by valuers. We will come to this – see section VIII.

of which the examples given represent only a very small sample. The sort of behaviour *warranted* by each viewpoint and thought *admissible* by it, the concept of what one is free to do, for example, will normally be very different. It is certainly no coincidence that cultures holding to the intrinsic view have normally been far less destructive of nature than the dominant Western human chauvinist culture.”⁸⁴

From all this, it becomes clear that any initial hesitation (or seven year itch) – on Richard’s part in thinking of the new, environmental ethic as one which, if adequate, will deploy the concept of the *intrinsic value* of things in nature – has been left behind (or finally scratched), and that *the last man* and *last people* examples have *eventually* driven him, as ‘the method of isolation’ did the early G. E. Moore, to the view that the natural world, or at least portions of it,⁸⁵ possess intrinsic value. Moreover, as the previous lengthy passage also shows, the Routleys offer reason to think that a recognition of the intrinsic value of portions of the natural world (or even a *belief* that portions of the natural world are intrinsically valuable) must normally be expected to result in many differences in practise towards them – owing to the differences in behavioural patterns *warranted* or *found admissible* by such a view, differences revealed when compared to behaviour patterns warranted or found admissible by an alternative view which takes those portions of nature to have a merely instrumental kind of value.

Minimally, *the last man* and *last people* examples *are* effective ‘intuition pumps’ in revealing to many that, at bottom, they simply do *intrinsically value* portions of the natural world. This fact may come as a surprise to some of those to whom it is so revealed, but an intuition pump worth its salt can do that.⁸⁶ Moreover, for many, even examples 1, 2, & 3 (above) may – each of them, or else some one of them – serve much the same purpose. The particularly interesting thing about the *third* of these examples, especially at that point where the Routleys write,

⁸⁴R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 129-131. The underlinings are theirs.

⁸⁵I suspect even the most ardent of environmentalists will find it a peculiar notion to think of those vast regions of molten rock in the interior of the earth as possessing intrinsic value – even though there is clearly no denying their natural status (nor of course their enormous instrumental value).

⁸⁶Much later, Richard Sylvan and David Bennett suggested that a “way into greener ethics...is from deep moral attitudes, *drawn out* (or *awakened*, even ‘remembered’ in Socrates’ terms) by decisive examples, such as that of the Last Person”. [Sylvan and Bennett (1994), p. 34.]

“...to the aboriginal...the obligation to the place would not die because the tribe disappeared or declined” (131)

is that it is working very much along the lines of a *last people* example – except that this version plays upon our *empathy*, rather than upon our *antipathy* as does the original *last people* example.

Stories drawn from possible worlds specifically *designed* to function as intuition pumps, as well as the more prosaic examples of real differences in behaviour which real differences in belief might be expected to make, can each reveal *to us*, minimally, the content *and character* of our *own* evaluations.

On a subjectivist theory of value, specifically, a theory which has it that:

(S₁) Things in the world really *are of value, if* and only if they *are valued* by some evaluator,

it turns out (minimally) that wilderness, say, *is* really valuable if someone values it, and nobody disvalues it; and is really *intrinsically* valuable if someone values it *intrinsically* and nobody assigns it a *negative* intrinsic value. That’s the clear case.

The situation *may seem* somewhat more problematic if (as is probably the case) some intrinsically value it, while others assign it a *negative* intrinsic value. What does the logic of value assignment, *i.e.*, the logic of subjectively-sourced value, tell us at this point? Do such oppositional assignments cancel one another out, so that – provided the number and intensity of assignments on both sides together sum to an equal, but opposite, weight – the net value of the object is *neither* positive nor negative? Are value assignments additive (and subtractive) in this way? Clearly, taking principle (S₁) as our guide to the machinery of subjectivism, there will be no such arithmetic on offer.

Instead, on an *absolutist* account of value, the subjectivist logic of value assignment will tell us that the object, in such a case, is *both* valuable *and* vile.⁸⁷ Alternatively, on a *relativist* account of value⁸⁸, the subjectivist will simply say that ‘X is valuable *for* A, but vile *for* B’.

Now the phenomenon of value assignment fosters the general question of the relationship between assignments of intrinsic value to X, and the giving

⁸⁷The lurid difficulty of this sort of outcome is no doubt the principal reason subjectivists are usually not absolutists.

⁸⁸*Not* the same thing as a subjectivist account, of course. Nor are all relativist accounts subjectivist. To appreciate the possibility of this, consider – as an analogy – the possibility of local physical law.

of reasons for doing so.⁸⁹ Clearly, in assigning an instrumental value to X, it is possible to offer assessable reasons for doing so. Such reasons will, almost always, refer to some Y, *taken* to be good in itself, *i.e.*, *intrinsically* good, such that X is believed to play a role in the procurement of Y. That is ultimately what warrants an assignment of instrumental value to X. This style of reason-giving will not be available in the case of defending, or attempting to defend, an assignment of *intrinsic* value to Y. And the question then is whether there is some *other* pattern of reason-giving, which is available for the defense of assignments of intrinsic value.

At one point, the Routleys write:

“A theory of intrinsic value which assigns intrinsic value to wilderness and species of free animals, for good reasons, can be entirely naturalistic....”⁹⁰

⁸⁹Such assignments of value may be thought of, by the objectivist assigner, to be cases of *value-recognition*. Still, such a person subsequent to, and consequent upon, the alleged recognition, now publicly or privately assigns that value to X which he or she thinks it deserves. Such assignment is a speech act or an act of private judgement, and the propositional content of the act may elicit calls for its justification; just as the propositional content of my assignment of the colour brown to my coffee cup may elicit calls for its justification.

⁹⁰R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 139. Notice, firstly, the use of “*assigns* intrinsic value *to*” in this passage, which is characteristic of the Routleys – as opposed to more objectivist locutions such as ‘perceives the intrinsic value in’ or ‘apprehends the intrinsic value in’, *etc.* However, in a later article solely authored by Richard, entitled ‘On the Value Core of Deep-Green Theory’ (1992) (and repeated *verbatim* in his *The Greening of Ethics* (1994) on p. 145), there is this interesting passage embedded in a discussion of ‘emotional presentation’:

“As a perceiver perceives shapes, so a valuer *feels* raw value and disvalue. The basis of perception is sensation, the basis of valuation is emotion. Apprehension of value is seated in emotional, and especially visceral, presentation; but what is apprehended is not to be confused with its apprehension any more than what is perceived. All the warnings about sensation as an information source have to be repeated, with heavy emphasis, in respect of emotional presentation. For example, reliability cannot be guaranteed. Interference with presentation through drugs, alcohol, temporary excitement, or other inputs may render it dubious or unacceptable; or conditioning may have occurred, including substantial cultural conditioning (e.g. so that a person is terrified by harmless spiders but not sickened by bloody massacres of dolphins or seals). As with perception, there are checks on emotional presentation, such as constancy over time and after reflection.” [In G. Oddie & R. Perrett (eds.), *Justice, Ethics, and New Zealand Society* (1992); Auckland: OUP, pp. 225-226.]

Secondly, in the passage in which this statement is to be found, the Routleys (1980) elaborate on the naturalistic character they seek, saying that a theory of intrinsic value *need not*

But what, in any particular case, apart from being ‘naturalistic’, would such reasons be like? How would such reason-giving proceed?

That instrumental evaluation ultimately requires intrinsic evaluation, and hence that instrumental value ultimately *requires* intrinsic value, was a point approximately recognized by Aristotle.⁹¹ The Routleys also accept it:

“Of the many accounts of *value* that can be adopted on an environmental ethic, the following has much to recommend it:- Some values are instrumental, i.e. a means or an instrument to something else that has value, and some are not, but are non-instrumental or intrinsic. Some values at least must be intrinsic, some objects valuable in themselves and not as a means to other ends.”⁹²

But, presuming this to be so, that can only be a justification for the proposition that something *or other* must be of intrinsic value if anything is of instrumental value (and for the proposition that something *or other* must be intrinsically valued if anything is instrumentally valued). In the case of any *particular* assignment of *intrinsic* value, it appears to tell us very little about how to go about justifying such an assignment, presuming this can actually be done, nor does it inform us of the ground of the possibility (the *how*) of adequate justification in such a case.

Such matters must be addressed if claims are going to be made that some assignments of intrinsic value, say, to wilderness, are made “for good reasons” (139), particularly if such claims, themselves, are going to be made good. The Routleys are aware of this:

“...adopt a *religious* backdrop such as...‘Good Stewardship’...or even a semi-religious framework such as a *mystical* or superstitious one with taboos and *sacred* places as symbolic and ritual elements.” (139)

⁹¹Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 994b9-15. W.D. Ross, tr.

“Further, the *final* cause is an end, and that sort of end which is *not for the sake of something else*, but for whose sake everything else is; so that if there is to be a last term of this sort, the process will not be infinite; but if there is no such term there will be no final cause. But those who maintain the infinite series destroy *the good* without knowing it. Yet *no one would try to do anything* if he were not going to come to a limit. Nor would there be reason in the world; the reasonable man, at least, always acts for a purpose; and this is a limit, for the end is a limit.”

⁹²R. & V. Routley, op cit., p. 152. Italics theirs.

“...the issues of what sort of items have or carry noninstrumental value, and how they obtain it, cannot be escaped indefinitely. Without the assignment of (intrinsic) value to some items independent of the states and conditions of humans, an ethic would remain within the confines of human chauvinism. But how...is such an assignment possible, or rational?”⁹³

And the answer? Well...

“Almost anything can be an object of value, but by no means everything is. Value is distributed unevenly throughout the universe in something [like] the way that electrical charge is.... [T]he distribution of values (and especially of intrinsic values) is much more theory (system, or viewpoint) relative⁹⁴ than the distribution of charges. For example, on an environmental view, many of the plants Mr Last Man eliminates have (intrinsic) value, whereas on animal liberation (usual animal chauvinist) views the plants have no value if no animals remain: there would be no similar disagreement about whether the plants were electrically charged. Evaluative features such as worth, merit, beauty are features which...do not have a hard observational basis but are decidedly theory-dependent, though the theories involved are evaluative in character and not empirical.”⁹⁵

It begins to look, then, as if any “good reasons” which might be offered for some particular X’s being of intrinsic value will take the form of being good reasons offered for *a theory* (presumably, a theory about what, generally speaking, is valuable, and why; so a *normative* theory), *within which* X, being of the appropriate kind, must be assigned intrinsic-value status. This business of offering and assessing reasons for a theory is, of course, something we are used to. I will return to the issue of “good reasons” in Section VII (‘What Sort of Items Have Intrinsic Value?’).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ The relativism subscribed to here includes cultural relativism. See p. 156 where he refers approvingly to the (thesis of the) “cultural *relativity* of values”. This commitment may be thought to pose *prima facie* difficulties for any potential comparison of his views about value to usual (*i.e.*, non-relativistic) views about colour.

⁹⁵ *Op.cit.*, p. 153.

VI. The *Meta* of Value

The Routleys' thoughts – still in 'Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics' – now turn to *the ontology of values*.⁹⁶ In following this discussion, I want to determine whether and, if so, to what extent, any of the positions taken are themselves logically forced, or in some way guided, by *the last man*.

First of all, like properties and relations (as argued in Richard's *Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond*, 1979), values do not *exist* (even though they are "distributed unevenly throughout the universe"). In that earlier very lengthy work, we read that:

"None but particulars exist, and by no means all of these do. Particulars, i.e., particular items, accordingly divide into entities, those which exist at some time, and non-entities, those which do not exist at any time...."⁹⁷

Similarly, in 'Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics' (1980), we read – with some significant additional elaboration – that:

"To assert that value or redness or remoteness is distributed through the universe is not to imply that these features, value or redness or remoteness, exist, or are to be found in the universe. [*fn.* 61] The position is that for properties and relations argued in R. Routley, *Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond*...1979. Such objects⁹⁸ do not exist, but they have important *theoretical, explanatory*, and other roles." (153-54)

That values are not entities, and therefore *do not exist* (or are not to be found *in* the universe) is a point which he thinks:

"...undermines much criticism of nonsubjective values; for example, Mackie's empiricist case is premised on the false assumption that the existence of values is necessary to objectivism, which he does not distinguish from nonsubjectivism. Mackie's 'argument from queerness' is similarly broken at the outset: since values are not entities at all, they are not strange sorts of entities. To see

⁹⁶A discussion which had been brewing since Mannison's early charge of *realism*.

⁹⁷R. Routley, *Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond* (1979), p. 7. Underlinings present in original.

⁹⁸Here, a technical term – including, as indicated, 'features' such as value, redness, and remoteness.

how unpersuasive Mackie's argument should be, replace '(objective) values' throughout by e.g., 'transfinite ordinals'.⁹⁹ They too would be 'utterly different from' anything in Mackie's universe; but that does not show that there are no transfinite ordinals. Thus too, since values are not entities, the account of value being developed is *not a realist* one (in the ordinary sense).¹⁰⁰

Some time spent with that passage will show it to be a rather busy one, with much going on.

But just because there is *ineffective* criticism out there of *nonsubjective* values, that is no reason to defend subjectivism.

"Values, of one sort or another, are features objects may have or lack; they are not subjective, they are not features which reduce to states or conditions of subjects or valuers."¹⁰¹

So, thus far, the theory to be developed is not realist (in Richard's technical sense of that term, i.e., values are not particulars which exist at some time), nor subjectivist. Nor, it turns out, is it to be an 'objectivist' one.

"But no more are they objective features...features entirely detached from valuers."¹⁰²

The fact is that

"A largely unquestioned false dichotomy between subjective and objective ethical theories has served to rule out important options."¹⁰³

That's the initial layout of the ontological terrain: so far, expressed mostly in the negative.¹⁰⁴ Values are neither this, nor that. And the usual available

⁹⁹Transfinite ordinals would, presumably, be particulars which were not entities.

¹⁰⁰*Op cit.*, p. 154. However, Mannison was not charging the Routleys with *realism* in the sense given here, but rather with a form of (what the Routleys would, I believe, recognize as) *objectivism*, "*i.e.*, a theory of values that accounts for the truth of 'x has value' with no ineliminable reference to the interests and concerns of the evaluating group" (Mannison, *ENP*, 57).

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³*Ibid.* (Compare: "The dichotomy between objective and subjective, commonly used as a weapon against environmental value theories, is . . . a false dichotomy." *Meinong's Jungle*, p. 680.)

¹⁰⁴Except for the statement that "Values . . . are features objects may have or lack".

distinctions are not all that ought to be available. (But, as we shall soon see, a more fine-grained map is being readied.)

Meanwhile, about objectivism in respect of values, well,

“In simplest terms, an objective account of value has values ‘located’ in objects entirely independently of valuers, in the way that (inertial) mass is located in physical objects independently of observers; ...objects have values and masses irrespective of valuers or observers.”¹⁰⁵

But objectivism in value theory is beset with problems, both epistemological and non-epistemological, according to the Routleys. For example,

“Objectivism forces intuitionism, when it is inquired how values are apprehended or known; thus a fuller objective theory is always accompanied by an account, so far always unsatisfactory, characteristically modelled on sense perception, of the way in which values are intuited or apprehended.¹⁰⁶ It is also regularly assumed on objective accounts that values exist, in the world.”¹⁰⁷

On the other hand,

“...a subjective account finds values in, or not independent of, actual subjects, and commonly as linked with the psychological states of valuers. ... [S]ubjectivism...always require[s] that where an item is valued¹⁰⁸ there exists, at sometime or other¹⁰⁹, a valuer who values it: ‘no values without a valuer’ holds, in a strong, an excessively strong, implausible and erroneous, form; namely, a world without existing valuers in it is, by that very fact, a world without values.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵R. & V. Routley (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁶Or, as they later put it, according to objectivism,

“... values are a... set of mysterious independent items somehow *perceived* by valuers through a special (even mystical and non-rational) moral sense.” *Ibid.*, pp. 162-3.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 154-5. So, it looks as if – according to this taxonomy of sins – some objectivisms are realisms (and vice versa, of course), but not all. According to an objectivism that was not *realistic*, objects would have values irrespective of valuers, but the values, not being *entities*, would *not exist*.

¹⁰⁸I think “valued” is to be understood as “valuable”, otherwise the claim borders on the vacuous.

¹⁰⁹Note that Elliot’s ‘less restricted’ subjectivist proposal satisfies this requirement.

¹¹⁰R. & V. Routley (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 155.

Summing, a subjective account finds that,

(**S₂**): A world without valuers *in it* is, by that very fact, a world without values.¹¹¹

Equivalently,

S₂*: Things in [a] world really *are of value*, only if they *are valued* by some evaluator in *that* world.

But, clearly, the proposition thought to be supported by *last man*-type examples is that (**S₂**) is incorrect.¹¹² Instead, the correct position is:

(**N**)¹¹³ “Although values in a world (more precisely, that items in that world *a* have evaluative features) always depend upon a valuer existing in *some* world, the valuer may not¹¹⁴ exist in the world of the values (i.e. the valuer may not exist in *a*). For example, our claim that a certain world without valuers, e.g. a pure plant world of botanically rich form¹¹⁵, is a fine world,

¹¹¹The difference between **S₁** and **S₂** is that **S₂** features only the necessary condition (of the necessary *and sufficient* condition found in **S₁**), and explicitly restricts the location of the valuer to the world in which the value is located. Preserving much of the linguistic form of **S₁** but retaining the logical form and the content of **S₂**, we would have **S₂***: Things in [a] world really *are of value*, only if they *are valued* by some evaluator in *that* world.

¹¹²For the last man in another possible world (hopefully, Routley’s story is not true of *this* world! – remember, *the last man* is a *story*) apparently does *not* intrinsically value the biosphere. Perhaps none of his fellows ever really did either. And, of course, it no longer has any instrumental value. But what he does is – all the same – wrong.

¹¹³“(N)” is my name for this passage – standing for its “nonjectivism” with respect to intrinsic value.

¹¹⁴That is, “need not”.

¹¹⁵This is a world the Routleys had alluded to earlier, when writing, for instance, that: “the example requires variation, e.g. to a wilderness devoid of sentient individuals, if it is to counter clearly such extensions of Western ethics as those of animal liberationists.” (p. 125)

Cp. “those utilitarians who extend consideration just to sentient creatures are obliged to reject *versions of the last man argument where no sentient creatures are affected*”. (p. 128)

Cp. “Against positions which do not extend the class of objects of moral concern and candidates for value to include all objects, variants of the counterexamples to the Western super-ethic can be directed. Consider, for instance, the positions (of usual animal liberationists) which extend the moral boundaries just to include sentient creatures (or e.g. preference-havers). Adapt the Last Man and Last People examples, the Wilderness example, etc., by removing all (inessential) animals from the examples, e.g. the wilderness contains no animals, in the Last People situation there are no other animals than the last people themselves. Then the counterexamples apply as before against the liberation positions.” (pp. 140-1)

depends on our existing in this world (in order to make the claim, in fact); but it does not demand in order to ‘make sense’ (of course the claim is significant) or to be true¹¹⁶, what is ex hypothesis ruled out, the existence of valuers in the pure plant world. That the world is a fine one, is dependent on a valuer in some¹¹⁷ world (and that valuer’s assessments of value and ... theory or overview of what is valuable and not); by contrast, that the world contains only plants of this or that leaf type, biomass or colour, does not depend upon a perceiver. Since values are not entirely independent of a valuer in the way that empirical properties are independent of an observer, the resulting account is not objective. An important corollary is that transworld evaluation does not require objectivism, nor (as we shall see) intuitionism. Call the resulting account, which is neither objective nor, as is evident, subjective, *nonjective* (short for, neither objective nor subjective: the term is ugly but memorable).¹¹⁸

Actually, there need be no *last man* case alluded to here (for the world at

¹¹⁶According to the Routleys (1980), some value judgements *are true*, though not absolutely so.

“Ethical judgements, both axiological and deontic, have truth values, relative to their context of occurrence. By use of context, objections, e.g. from relativity, to the attribution of truth-values to such judgements can be straightforwardly avoided.” [R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 164, fn. 78.]

That axiological judgements have truth values means that there are axiological *facts*, special *value facts*. They are special for several reasons. First of all they are *relativised* to some kind of context; and secondly, the traditional fact/value “division” (however that may have to be characterised) obtains. What was accepted by the Routleys in 1980, is maintained by Richard in 1986; thus:

“According to the way between [cognitivism and noncognitivism], to nonivism if you like, value judgements are correctly said to be true or false, known or not, etc., to conform to a cognitive vocabulary – only, in the semantical assessments, a systemic relativisation of some sort is always tacitly presupposed, in the end. Without this sort of relativisation, cognitive assignments do not determinately apply. Of course absolutist positions assume there is a uniquely determined background system. But as the blatant situation of competing (environmental) paradigms helps show, the uniqueness assumption is mistaken. While there may be some evaluations shared by almost all cultures, perhaps even a small common core, there is no uniquely determined correct value system. There are various overlapping systems.” [Richard Sylvan, ‘The Way of Values’, (1986), pp. 12-13. The underlinings are his.]

¹¹⁷In *some* world, but not necessarily the actual world.

¹¹⁸R. & V. Routley (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 155.

issue need *never* contain men at all); but *there is isolation*. In this example, it need only be the kind of *inter-worldly isolation*¹¹⁹ figuring in Moore's case. And Moore's kind of case, effectively *reproduced* here by the Routleys, shows that subjectivism (in particular, **S₂**) must be given up. 'True', say the Routleys, 'that a world W_1 is a fine one *is dependent* on there being a valuer is *some* world assessing W_1 '.¹²⁰ *But a world of value need itself contain no valuers*: that is the anti-subjectivist lesson of Moore's method of worldly isolation, at least as applied here by the Routleys¹²¹, and is as well the anti-subjectivist lesson of the Routleys' *last man* and *last people* examples.¹²²

Let's pause to consider these 'lessons'. It's one thing for an existing valuer in the actual world to positively evaluate some *possible but non-actual* world itself forever bereft of valuers, thereby – other requisite conditions being met – yielding value in that possible world, as *per* Moore's case (or, as we might take Routley's original case: one thing for an existing valuer in an actual time-slice to negatively evaluate some *possible but non-actual* time-slice itself bereft of valuers, thereby – other requisite conditions being met – yielding disvalue in that possible time-slice).

But suppose the world as it was billions of years ago had subsequently – with the passage of those billions of years – developed *without* evaluators anywhere within. *Could* it still have been a valuable world? The Routleys are determinedly answering this question affirmatively. Yes, an evaluator is required, but *not one in the world being assessed*. Yet the world being assessed, of course, is *just another* non-actual possible world. Nothing new here. Move along, folks.¹²³

¹¹⁹“Absolute isolation”, as Moore refers to it in sect. 112 of *Principia Ethica*.

¹²⁰That is one reason we can confidently say the Routleys really are *not objectivists* in the matter of value. And it is why we can say that Mannison got it wrong (or, to be fair, mis-anticipated) when he presumed the Routleys to be '*realists*' (meaning 'objectivists') with respect to value.

¹²¹And, as Moore, himself, was an objectivist with respect to value, he would not resist the anti-subjectivist lesson.

¹²²The fifth lesson. To rehearse, the first three are that a new ethic is required, that it will not contain the freedom principle, and that it offers (or will offer) “environmental grounds” for morally assessing action. The fourth is that some things are intrinsically valuable. The fifth, here, is that subjectivism must be rejected.

¹²³Compare Elliot's similar, *but existentially restricted*, discussion in *Faking Nature*, Routledge (1997):

“Had the course of evolution gone differently, resulting in no conscious organisms but some biological complexity, the world would have had intrinsic value.” (27)

What about valuers *themselves*? Do they need to be *actual* valuers? Or can some *possible* but non-actual valuers fill the required role in the Routleys' generative axiological metaphysics?¹²⁴ The answer is 'Yes': *some* of them can. *Modally*, all that is required with respect to valuers is that there be a valuer in *some possible* (it needn't be the actual) world valuing items in his or her own world, *or* valuing items in another possible world, *or even!* valuing items in the *actual* world. That is all. Value *depends* on *possible* valuers, but *not actual* ones.¹²⁵ I think this is undoubtedly their (1980) view. Thus, they write:

“The valuer...need not exist; it is only required...that it exist in some world.”¹²⁶

One question someone might wish to pursue is whether this meta-ethical view is a view clearly forced upon us by *the last man* or *last people* examples,

This is because

“The thought that there could be values even if no valuers had existed is, according to the subjectivist, just the thought that there are possible worlds which contain no valuers, but which are valued (by me) from the perspective of the actual world.” (30)

¹²⁴Or, equivalently, their (meta-ethical) theory of value.

¹²⁵Note, additionally, and importantly, that to say that value depends on evaluators (more fully: that value depends upon the evaluations of evaluators), is *not* to say that it depends upon nothing else. That value *depends upon* the evaluations of evaluators

“...guarantees...that where a state of affairs *has a value* then *there is* a certain valuer...who assigns *that* value to that state”. [R. & V. Routley (1980): 157]

In particular, that value *depends upon* the evaluations of evaluators, does *not* give the result that,

“...any state of affairs, however environmentally appalling, is valuable because we can find *a* valuer, e.g. a spokesman for your local development association, who would account it valuable.” [*Ibid.*]

The ‘nonjectivist’ theory offered here is, after all, a theory of *intrinsic* value – not instrumental value (as, for example, investment value).

Contrast such views with Elliot’s subjectivist account of intrinsic value:

“...the subjectivist view makes the valuer the *sole* determinant of a thing’s value.” [Elliot (1978): 19]

¹²⁶R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 156, their fn. 67. It continues to be Richard’s view as late as *The Greening of Ethics* (1994), where he writes:

“Many natural items...are valuable in their own right – irrespective of whether they are interesting or useful, indeed whether or not any valuers *exist*.” (142)

or by Moore's kind of case.¹²⁷

After all, each of those examples ultimately involves *actual* people, us – evaluating, say, the last man's actions or the prospect of creating a forever unseen garbage world as opposed to a forever unseen beautiful one. We actual evaluators are to be observed in the act of evaluating possibilities. Of course, a conclusion which *is*, admittedly, *forced* upon us – if anything is – is that a possible world *without* evaluators *can* be evaluated, and found to have value, by *actual* evaluators. So, if subjectivism is (at least in part) the view that any world of value must have evaluators *in it* positively evaluating it (as *per* the requirements of \mathbf{S}_2 , or \mathbf{S}_2^*), then subjectivism is false¹²⁸, and *the last man* and *the last people* and Moore's own example all show this. Still, suppose someone – wanting to think of themselves as 'subjectivists' in *some* robust sense – were to reply that in all of these cases (the *last man*, the *last people*, and Moore's case),

‘there are *actual* evaluators – Routley, you, me, & G. E. Moore – who are being *relied upon* to perform appropriate evaluative acts in order that there be positive or negative value resident in a possible but non-actual world'. [RL]

So, it might well seem that such a person is *not* forced to give up *this kind* of subjectivism, *viz.*,

(\mathbf{S}_3) Things in any world really are of value, only if there is some time at which they are actually valued by some evaluator at \mathbf{W}_a ,¹²⁹

¹²⁷That it might be “clearly forced” may be doubted *at the outset*, since meta-ethical views are *not* typically forced by the very normative views, the fundamental nature of whose elements they theorize.

¹²⁸For, according to \mathbf{S}_2 , in the case of anything of value in any possible world, that thing is evaluated by some evaluator in *that* very world.

¹²⁹What kind of subjectivism is *this kind*? I think it is a kind entailed by Elliot's account of his preferred brand of subjectivism, as expressed in this passage (already cited above):

“A subjectivist account of value...links value with *the existence* of individuals capable of valuing. The idea is that value *only* comes into the world *if* such individuals exist *and if* they place value on certain kinds of things. ... There is one point that needs stressing. Given the account I have offered of value it does not follow that if X has value at t_1 there is an individual who either values X or is disposed to value X at t_1 . All that is required is that at some time or other there exists an individual who values X. It does not matter whether that individual predates or postdates X: it does not matter whether or not X and whatever values X have temporal-parts which overlap. ... The strength of this kind of subjectivism over and above the more restricted kind is that it

that is, not forced to give it – *viz.*, (**S₃**) – up by the Routleys’ cases, nor by Moore’s cases either. For as the Routleys claim in (**N**) above, the *truth* of the proposition that

“...a...world without valuers, *e.g.* a pure plant world of botanically rich form, is a fine world...”

itself depends *not* upon the existence of evaluators in *that* world (which, anyway, is ruled out *ex hypothesi*). *Instead*, in their words,

“...our claim that a certain world without valuers, *e.g.* a pure plant world of botanically rich form, is a fine world, depends on our existing in this world...”.

And which world does “*this* world” refer to? It refers to the *actual* world. So, it might *seem* that what we *are* driven to by the force of the Routleys’, and Moore’s, examples is that the *truth* of the proposition that

a world without valuers, e.g., a pure plant world of botanically rich form, is a fine world

depends not on the existence of evaluators in *that* world *but instead apparently depends* on our existing in the *actual* world. Accordingly, what the Routleys might appear to have done is to generalize, possibly illegitimately, on this. On such a view, it would be as if they had concluded,

‘Here we have one possible world, W_1 , which is botanically rich but evaluator poor, and another possible world, W_2 , containing evaluators who judge W_1 to be a fine world. And this is all that is required as far as the requirement for evaluation goes’,

without mentioning the identity, *as found in the examples*, between W_2 and W_a . For what they *conclude*, or anyhow come to, following their consideration of *the last man* and *last people* examples is:

“That the world is a fine one, is dependent on a valuer in some world.”¹³⁰

allows that certain states of affairs have intrinsic value even though valuers are absent from them. Thus this account of value provides *some kind* of support for Routley’s last man argument.” [Elliot, ‘Why Preserve Species?’, in *ENP*, pp. 19-20]

¹³⁰R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

The generalizing move, *if* that is what it is¹³¹, back from ‘*this* world’ to ‘*some* world’ – *i.e.*, just *any possible* world – might strike one as illegitimate. Whether or not illegitimacy is suspected, that an evaluation is *actual* – which is an implicit feature of all the examples – may well be crucial for value to come into worlds. That it *is* crucial is a meta-ethical view held by Robert Elliot, a philosopher wholly sympathetic to the *normative* outlook intentionally sponsored by the woeful behaviour of Richard’s last man.¹³²

Nevertheless, it is not the meta-ethical option taken up by the Routleys. In spite of the fact that **S₃** *is* closely tailored to the *last man* and *last people* examples (as well as Moore’s earlier example), the Routleys preferred a looser – but compatible – fit.¹³³ The (more general, less restrictive) meta-ethical lesson to be taken from the examples, as they see things, is that *evaluators need not be members of the world being evaluated*.¹³⁴ It is true that

“There are no values which are entirely independent of a valuer...”
135

But, importantly,

“The valuer...need not exist; it is only required...that it exist in some world.”¹³⁶

One consequence of this meta-ethical preference is the significant principle that some things may be intrinsically valuable even though no one has ever *actually* valued them (or, for that matter, ever *actually* will). This is seen as a great benefit. For one thing, and bluntly,

“Whether the blue whale survives should not have to depend on

¹³¹There is, of course, no evidence that this is something the Routleys were guilty of. And no evidence, either, that they thought their preferred theory of value was entailed by their preferred normative theory.

¹³²We have already seen his support of the meta-ethical **S₃** as expressed in his 1978 paper ‘Why Preserve Species’, and that support continued through to his 1992 paper in the *Monist*, ‘Intrinsic Value, Environmental Obligation and Naturalness’ (*cf.* pp. 143-144), and even further.

¹³³As they suggest,

“A meta-ethic does not have to be precisely tailored to a given ethic: the same (sort of) metalogic may work satisfactorily for many different logics.”
[R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 166.]

¹³⁴This, of course, is a principle that **S₃** satisfies.

¹³⁵R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 156, their fn. 67.

what humans know or what they see on television. Human interests and preferences are far too parochial to provide a satisfactory basis for deciding on what is environmentally desirable.”¹³⁷

On the other hand, the view being developed

“...still affords the requisite semantical connections between values and valuers [which] subjectivists have been at pains to maintain, still allows for the requisite theory dependence and cultural relativity of values, and still avoids the extravagances of objectivism.”¹³⁸

But what about this valuer in some possible world? Are any constraints to be put upon him/her/it? Well, the valuer cannot be

“... an arbitrarily chosen valuer”¹³⁹

nor

“...some valuer or other (you choose)”¹⁴⁰

No, indeed. Instead, *and crucially!*

“...the determination of [the] valuer [is] *dependent upon* the values concerned”.¹⁴¹

That is,

“...where a state of affairs has a value then there is a certain valuer...who assigns that value to that state”.¹⁴²

And what of items whose value is so assigned? Well,

¹³⁷Richard Routley (1973), p. 20. As pointed out earlier, this passage was deemed important enough to be largely preserved in R. & V. Routley (1980): p. 184.

¹³⁸R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁴¹*Ibid.* The emphasis is the Routleys' own.

¹⁴²*Ibid.* This thought, and the previous one, seem to place sufficiency with the states of affairs having value, not on the valuer. There is no “if and only if” here. If something is intrinsically valuable, then *it is possible* that there is a valuer who appreciates that fact (*i.e.*, *it is possible that the value be recognized and appropriately theorized*). But possible valuers do not similarly guarantee value. Valuables rule, possible valuers follow. Valuables wear the pants here. And this is one reason, *I speculate*, why Richard in 1994 was not having it that value should be thought a response-dependent property, *given the equivalence conditions* which tend to dominate the way particular response dependent properties are analysed in the respective literature. See section IX for elaboration on this theme.

“They have what value they have partly in virtue of features of their own.”¹⁴³

The similarities between the Routleys’ *nonjectivist* views about intrinsic value as expressed in this **1980** paper, and what later came to be known as *response-dependency*¹⁴⁴ theories (or *dispositional* theories) of value – are, so far, striking. Nor am I anything like the first to notice them. William Grey (2000), for example writes:

“I am...sympathetic to the suggestion, defended by both Sylvan and Meinong, that there are systematic parallels between secondary qualities¹⁴⁵ and values.¹⁴⁶ An analysis of values that may provide a way of articulating this conception is the response-dependent approach...”¹⁴⁷

Response-dependency theories¹⁴⁸ do not begin to appear in any obvious way, however, until five years later with the publication in 1985 of McDowell’s ‘Values and secondary qualities’.¹⁴⁹ Consider this recent overview of *response-dependent* properties:

“Response-dependent properties do not depend for their instantiation on the existence of a single conscious entity in the whole

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁴⁴The phrase was introduced in 1989 by Mark Johnston, in his "Dispositional Theories of Value", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 63, pp. 139-74.

¹⁴⁵The notion famously introduced by Locke, as follows:

“...such qualities which in truth are nothing in the objects themselves, but *powers* to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities, i.e. by the bulk, *figure*, texture, and motion of their insensible parts, as *colours*, sounds, tastes, &c. these I call secondary qualities.” [*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk 2, Ch 8, Sec 10]

Being powers in objects, there is every reason to expect that such powers persist even when all the referents of “us” in this passage are non-existent, *just as* intrinsic value – according to the Routleys – also persists in similar circumstances.

¹⁴⁶I am so far unconvinced that Sylvan does defend the idea that there are systematic parallels between secondary qualities and values. Instead, there are several passages in which he expresses an antagonism to the idea – as we shall see.

¹⁴⁷William Grey, ‘A Critique of Deep Green Theory’ in *Beneath the Surface*, eds. Eric Katz, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg, MIT Press (**2000**), p. 56, fn. 20.

¹⁴⁸...if one sets aside the very early work of Roderick Firth on *ideal observer theory* (1952), which is meta-ethically absolutist (not relativistic, as in the case of the Routleys’ views)... And how many other response-dependent theories advertise themselves as ‘relativistic’, and *is* this a problem for any comparison between the Routleys’ views of intrinsic value and response dependent views of the properties they target? I am unsure.

¹⁴⁹In *Morality and Objectivity*, Ted Honderich, ed., London: Routledge (1985), pp. 110-29.

universe; what they depend upon is the presence of a disposition. Just as a vase may remain fragile in virtue of having a disposition to break (in *C*) even if it never has been, and never will be, broken, so too the disposition to produce a *R* in *S* in *C* may be instantiated even if no token of *R* ever occurs (past, present or future), no token of *S* ever exists (past, present or future), and no token of *C* ever obtains (past, present or future).¹⁵⁰

Intrinsic value satisfies – according to the Routleys’ explicit account of *that satisfaction* – the particular condition of being a response-dependent property which requires that such properties “not depend for their instantiation on the *existence* of a single conscious entity in the whole universe”. The satisfaction of *this* condition steers their account clear of subjectivism.

But neither is the Routleys’ account objectivist. As we have seen,

“Values...are features objects may have or lack; they are not subjective.... But no more are they objective features...features entirely detached from valuers.”¹⁵¹

For,

“...values in a world (more precisely, that items in that world *a* have evaluative features) always depend upon a valuer existing in *some* world... That the world is a fine one, is dependent on a valuer in *some* world (and that valuer’s assessments of value and...theory or overview of what is valuable and not)...”¹⁵²

As Richard Joyce summarizes the response-dependency style of analysis,

“...although analyzing morality in a response-dependent manner without doubt makes morality *existentially* mind-independent, it with equal certainty renders it *conceptually* mind-dependent.”¹⁵³

And being “conceptually mind-dependent” (as intrinsic value is with the Routleys), the rock of objectivism is also avoided.

¹⁵⁰Joyce, Richard, ‘Moral Anti-Realism’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2009 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/moral-anti-realism/>>.

¹⁵¹R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 155. The crucial role of *theory* in such assessment is addressed further in Section VIII in the discussion on “emotional presentation”.

¹⁵³Joyce, *op. cit.*

But the comparison of *values*, as Richard understood them, to ‘*secondary qualities*’ – understood, of course, in a broadly Lockean fashion, ultimately founders. For one thing, as we have already seen, the Routleys (1980) write:

“That the world is a fine one, is dependent on a valuer in some world (and that valuer’s assessments of value and...theory or overview of what is valuable and not); by contrast, that the world contains only plants of this or that leaf type, biomass or colour, does not depend upon a perceiver.”¹⁵⁴

The inclusion of “colour” here is, perhaps, surprising (even, in Alice’s words, “curiouser and curiouser”) – especially if one is initially attracted to analogies of intrinsic-value-as-theorized-by-the-Routleys, with secondary qualities given a broadly Lockean reading (which, featuring as it does the notion of *powers*, would appear not to require *existing* percipients). Maybe, one thinks, the inclusion of *colour* (as ‘*not* depending upon a perceiver’) was just a moment of careless writing. Is there more? Well, consider this inconvenient morsel from Richard (now Sylvan), writing in (1992):

“As there can be shapes without any shape-perceivers, so there can be values without valuers.”¹⁵⁵

Of course, there is nothing deeply troubling about the comparison between shapes and values with respect to the possibility of *there being both* in the absence of percipients/valuers. For values could still, consistently, and overall, best be compared with colour, construed as a secondary quality. Consequently, just as we might consider the first passage careless, so we might consider this one merely inconvenient. ‘Got anything else?’ -How about this third passage?

“Values are not *apart* from the actual world, something ‘projected’ or imposed on it...something colouring...the otherwise valueless physical world, rather in the way that reductionistic materialism tries (erroneously) to construe colour itself as projected onto a colourless physical world.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

¹⁵⁵‘On the Value Core of Deep-Green Theory’, Richard Sylvan. In *Justice, Ethics, and New Zealand Society*, eds. G. Oddie and R. Perrett, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 222-223. What’s inconvenient here is the well-known fact that shapes are thought of as primary qualities by Locke (although Locke uses the term ‘figure’ instead). *Cf.* Locke’s *Essay* at Bk. II, Ch. 8, Sects. 14-15.

¹⁵⁶*Op. cit.*, p. 223.

This is more than just inconvenient, isn't it? Because, after all, *part* of the traditional story about secondary qualities is that

“...the ideas produced in us by these secondary qualities have no resemblance of them at all. There is nothing like our ideas, existing in the bodies themselves. They are, in the bodies we denominate from them, only a power to produce those sensations in us: and what is sweet, blue, or warm in idea, is but the certain bulk, figure and motion of the insensible parts, in the bodies themselves, which we call so.”¹⁵⁷

As Crispin Wright has remarked about Locke's view of secondary qualities:

“Locke's own conception of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities incorporated an ‘error theory’ of the latter: the thought that nothing really is as secondary quality experience represents it as being.”¹⁵⁸

The *systematic error* “*incorporated*” within Locke's conception of secondary qualities is something Richard would not welcome in any interpretation of his view (of intrinsic value) *as itself* importantly akin to a ‘secondary quality’.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk 2, Ch 8, Sect 15.

¹⁵⁸Crispin Wright, ‘Moral Values, Projection and Secondary Qualities’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supp. Vols.* Vol. 62 (1988), p. 1.

¹⁵⁹Careful readers will have noticed, too, that there is in the passage from Sylvan which we have most recently inspected, a *negative* mention of ‘projection’. Given that *projectivism* (often associated with *secondary qualities*) incorporates its own corollary of *systematic error*, Richard is *not having* anything resembling projectivism when it comes to (something as important as) intrinsic value. He would surely have parted company with Hume when the latter wrote:

“Thus the distinct boundaries and offices of reason and of taste are easily ascertained. The former conveys the knowledge of truth and falsehood: The latter gives the sentiment of beauty and deformity, vice and virtue. The one discovers objects, as they really stand in nature, without addition or diminution: The other has a *productive* faculty, and *gilding* or *staining* all natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises, in a manner, a new creation.” [Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Appendix 1, Para 21/21.]

Richard came to regard projectivism as an expression of a “powerful force” in the Anglo-American tradition which has had the effect of ‘thoroughly subverting value theory’ (1986, p. 2), the powerful force *being* the

“...epistemologization of value, which conflates how values come to be known, or acquired, with what is known, what values are, what standing they have, and what meaning. This confusion of epistemology with sistology, which is spectacularly exhibited in verification principles and the like (to the effect

Nor, as the previous passage and *many others* indicate, is Richard generally very happy with *reductionism* in philosophical enterprise, and as we shall very shortly see, Richard is of the view that colour lends itself to such.

And then there is this:

“The comparison of value with shape is decidedly more helpful than the regular, but exhausted, comparison of value with colour, or of goodness with colour determinates such as yellow.”¹⁶⁰

For one thing

“...shape discrimination is more culture dependent...”¹⁶¹

And shape

“...is, or was, a primary property, and thereby more immune to reductionist strategies than secondary properties such as colour.”¹⁶²

that meaning and standing amount to matters of verification and ways of coming to know), lies behind the erroneous picture of values as matters of feeling or interests or expression of emotion and as (only) projected into the world through human valuing.” [‘The Way of Values’ in *Three essayes upon deeper environmental ethics* (1986), p. 2.]

And with the thorough subversion of value theory comes the impoverishment of the world.

“...even more than with specific-sense qualities of bodies – the so-called secondary qualities – such as those of colour, smell, taste, touch and the like, there has been with emotional and valuational qualities – sometimes now called tertiary qualities – a concerted attempt to *reduce* the qualities experienced to features of the experiencers. Indeed so successful has this been in Western cultures, that many there take it *for granted* that valuation features are *not really* features of independent things in the world, but are products of those experiencing the things, ‘projected back’ by the experiencers onto things. Beauty and the like are in us, *not in places*; in the eyes of the beholders. So the developers who destroy the places and therewith destroy their beauty, *only* touch us who experience the beauty, not anything about the places. Perhaps we should be compensated, not the places, for *there was nothing there ...* (‘We rationalise that the place we inhabit has no normative structures and that we can do as we please’: Rolston, p. 150).” [‘The Way of Values’ in *Three essayes upon deeper environmental ethics* (1986), p. 10. The underlinings are in the original.]

¹⁶⁰ ‘On the Value Core of Deep-Green Theory’, Richard Sylvan. In *Justice, Ethics, and New Zealand Society*, eds. G. Oddie and R. Perrett, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 223.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

Well, even though the evidence is abundant that Richard was not happy likening value with *Lockean-like secondary qualities*, perhaps his views about value can, *more generally*, be brought under the umbrella of *response dependent properties* – as Grey suggests. *Alas*, at least according to Sylvan’s views *about his views*, there is no promise here at all. Writing with David Bennett in 1994, he says

“Goodness, and value more generally...are not secondary or tertiary or response-dependent properties, and a comparison with shape is superior to one with colour.”¹⁶³

Someone, or some several, must have broken the news to Richard that his axiology was being interpreted in the fashion just revealed. And, yes, this *is* a definitive rejection by him of that budding interpretative effort. So, it seems to me that a line now needs to be drawn under this particular, somewhat popular, attempt to elaborate Richards’ theory of value (at the very least, *as Richard himself saw it*). In spite of detectable and apparently significant similarities between Richard’s developing axiological theory on the one hand, *and response-dependency theories on the other*, it *appears* one must look elsewhere (presumably, and carefully, to Richard’s own further works and words) in order to fairly characterize, and thus understand, his axiological views for what they were. For all of his negative views – values are *not* subjective, *not* objective, *not* (much like) secondary qualities, *not* response-dependent properties – are surely to be understood in the light of his *positive* views about value, and our access to it. I will return, briefly, to these matters later – in the final section, Section IX.

¹⁶³Richard Sylvan & David Bennett, *The Greening of Ethics*, The White Horse Press, Cambridge, UK (1994), p. 143. Although, in this late passage, he writes that value is not a response-dependent property, he was (at least earlier) willing to countenance one significant similarity (putting “dispositionals” in the place of “response-dependent properties”):

“If a syntactical comparison [for “value predicates”] is wanted, that with dispositionals is better [than that with indexicals], that with secondary quality terms in particular. Where object *a* is *v* then, for both values and colours, *a* is such as to feel or seem *v* to any normal participant in given framework *s* – a first-approximation connection which turns in part on the meaning of ‘normal!’”
[‘The Way of Values’ (1986), p. 15]

This is, however, entirely consistent with his *rejection* of the proposition that value predicates *are* response-dependent predicates. For the likeness he points to here is only one half of the equivalence condition deployed in the typical analysis of response-dependent predicates (such as ‘red’). See section IX of this paper.

VII. What Sort of Items Have Intrinsic Value?

Well, it is time to take (temporary) leave from this issue, and return to the issue of good *reasons*, i.e., to “the issues of what sort of items have or carry noninstrumental value, and how they obtain it”, issues which, you will recall, “cannot be escaped indefinitely”. The question, more exactly, is how is the “*assignment* of (intrinsic) value to some items independent of the states and conditions of humans” either “possible, or *rational?*”.¹⁶⁴

Recall, too, that the Routleys had suggested that

“Evaluative features such as worth, merit, beauty are features which...do not have a hard observational basis but are decidedly theory-dependent.”¹⁶⁵

and that, as a consequence of this, it had begun to look as if good reasons that might be offered for X’s being of intrinsic value would have to take the form of being good reasons offered for an entire *theory* (presumably, of value) *within which* X is assigned ‘intrinsically valuable’ status. But, in fact, this makes it seem more plausible that good reasons for X’s being of intrinsic value can be offered, *just because* the task has been *transformed* into the offering of good reasons for an entire theory of value (within which X has a place as something of intrinsic value). Remember that the reason it seemed so difficult to offer reasons for X being of intrinsic value, *without* that supportive context, was that the usual reason-giving pattern, *viz.*, the kind associated with saying why something has *instrumental* value, was unavailable. But, now, our options have been increased. We can talk about the *explanatory power* of an *entire theory* of value within which...[etc.].

As regards ‘good reasons for an entire theory of value within which X has a place as something of intrinsic value’, the strategy of the Routleys (1980) – at least in the very first instance – is to go on the attack, specifically, to assimilate enemy ethics, i.e., *human chauvinist* ethics, to *ethical egoism*, except that in this case the ‘egoism’ is of the group-variety. Paraphrasing,

‘Since humans, persons, indeed, agents generally – taken collectively – can never, well, not really, do anything except that which is *in* their perceived collective ‘interest’ (*i.e.*, their perceived collective *advantage*), it follows that *they*, again taken collectively,

¹⁶⁴R. & V. Routley (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 152. The question was one of the last raised at the end of Section V.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 153.

are not obliged to do anything else than act in their collective or group, or species-‘interest’ as they see it (*i.e.*, not obliged to do anything else than act to secure their perceived collective *advantage*).⁷

And this bit of negative deontic ‘wisdom’ must be reflected in an axiological theory. All good is that – can only be that – which is to the advantage, or the perceived advantage, of the agent, in this case the group agent, *i.e.*, humanity (or persons, or possibly, preference-having creatures in good working order). Hence, all good is that which is to the advantage of the limited Moral Club, as perceived by its members.

But just because the genuine problems of ethical egoism (and psychological egoism) have been so well exposed – to the extent that it is fair to say that the standard arguments against such egoisms, many well-known since at least Butler’s writings, and improved upon since, are generally thought to be among the most powerful and successful arguments in the history of philosophy – just for that reason, it is surprising that chauvinist ethics, especially human chauvinist ethics, should *still* (1980) be so vigorous. For such arguments as might be offered in favour of chauvinist ethics are no more than transforms of the arguments for ethical egoism; and thus all the arguments against (human) individualistic varieties of ethical egoism apply equally well against collective varieties.

A passage which efficiently demonstrates the existence and the spirit of this strategy, a strategy pursued by the Routleys in lengthy and laboured fashion, is this one from ‘Against the Inevitability of Human Chauvinism’ (1979):

“Most philosophers think they know how to discredit the egoist arguments. It is curious indeed then, that an argument which is regarded as so unsatisfactory in the individual case – that for egoism – remains unchallenged and is still considered so convincing in a precisely parallel group case – that for human chauvinism.”¹⁶⁶

Well, perhaps this is all so, that is, perhaps all the arguments against (human) individualistic varieties of ethical egoism apply equally well against collective varieties. *If* it is so, then the way is *open* for some version of

¹⁶⁶R. & V. Routley, ‘Against the Inevitability of Human Chauvinism’, in *Ethics and Problems of the 21st Century*, ed. by K. E. Goodpaster and K. M. Sayre, University of Notre Dame Press, 1979: 47.

non human-chauvinist ethic. *Some* version, yes, but they are legion.¹⁶⁷ And amongst many of the *non human*-chauvinist ethics, some of them are still inappropriately chauvinist, e.g., *sentient*-chauvinist ethics, others which inappropriately deploy the notion of *rights*, and so on.

The question then is forced: which amongst the *non*-chauvinist ethical theories is the best, and why?

The Routleys are not shy about putting forward their own favoured kind of candidate amongst the possible kinds of *non* human-chauvinist ethic. It is a “multiple factor model” (170) in which certain very general properties such as

“...diversity of systems and creatures, naturalness, integrity of systems, stability of systems [and] harmony of systems”¹⁶⁸

each contribute, *ceteris paribus*, to the intrinsic value of the entities possessing them. A *ceteris paribus* clause is required because the factors can, and not untypically do, compete with one another (*e.g.* diversity *v.* naturalness). So in an account of the intrinsic value of something, it will be the case in most situations that the maximization of each factor, considered on its own, *will be constrained* by the others. I am putting things in this somewhat awkward way in order to retain *the thing* (the forest, the river, or the local ecosystem) as the *bearer* of intrinsic value (the ‘entity’, as Richard would put it). For I think this is usually the way the Routleys (1980) think of these matters. But not always.

Here is one of their accounts of how – in particular situations – this multiple factor model works, and in the account you can witness the *bearer* of value become *the property of diversity itself* (as opposed to the thing bearing that property).

“Optimizing a mix of factors, which are mutually constrained, meets constant reproaches made against such ecological *values* as *diversity*. The objections take the form that enhancement of diversity as a sole factor can lead to undesirable ecological results, indeed can diminish net value.... On the multiple factor model diversity is constrained by naturalness and stability, for example; thus net value is not going to be increased through increasing the diversity of a simple temperate rainforest by felling

¹⁶⁷“There are...*various competing* environmental ethics, some simple extensions of Western ethics which extrapolate the notion of right, some not, some rationalistic, some not, and so on.” [R. & V. Routley (1980): 175.]

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*: p. 170. The view is reminiscent of Leopold’s.

some of its trees and replacing them with exotic species. On the other hand, diversity will be increased by planting the banks of a stream, eroded through excess clearing and overgrazing, with suitable exotic species – then birds and other animals will increase as well as plant diversity – and in such a case stability will also be increased in the longer term and naturalness not diminished (since already removed); thus overall value will be increased.... *Diversity*, though (like enjoyment or pleasure) *good in itself*, is (again like hedonistic values) not an unconstrained value (compare, e.g., enjoyment obtained through secret maltreatment of animals....).¹⁶⁹

Personally, I think this is a moment of confusion, easily repaired. Strictly speaking, it is *the thing*, the ‘entity’ (the “simple temperate rainforest”) which is (or ought to be regarded as) the bearer of intrinsic value. It is the simple temperate forest which is good in itself. Not diversity, not naturalness, and so forth. These properties, *possessed* by the actual bearer of intrinsic value, are what contribute to the thing’s being intrinsically valuable (*i.e.*, being of intrinsic value). The relevant properties are mutually constrained value-makers. And, generally, apart from some slip-ups, this is the way the Routleys develop their account. It is, however, easy to slip into the other way of talking – as a convenient shorthand.

Janna Thompson’s criticism¹⁷⁰ of the adequacy of such a ‘multiple factor’ modelling of what preservationists really value is perhaps initially troubling, but ultimately ineffective. It goes as follows:

“In the late Cretaceous, seventy million years ago, the earth was devastated by one of the worst cataclysms in the history of the planet. No large land animal was left in existence; an enormous number of species of plants and animals were destroyed in the sea as well as on land. The forms of life remaining were enormously depleted in numbers, and they were left on an earth that would have seemed empty.

Let us suppose that this destruction was caused by intelligent beings from another planet who used Earth as a testing ground

¹⁶⁹R. & V. Routley, (1980), pp. 170-171. The italics are mine.

¹⁷⁰In ‘Preservation of Wilderness and the Good Life’, Janna L. Thompson in *Environmental Philosophy*, eds., Robert Elliot and Arran Gare, Univ. of Queensland Pr., 1983, pp. 85-105. The two quoted paragraphs are at pp. 90-91.

for neutron bombs. Were their actions wrong?¹⁷¹ The immediate effect was, of course, severe degradation of ecosystems. But after several million years, new systems of plants and animals established themselves. It would be hard to argue that in the very long term, the postcatastrophe environments were any less valuable than the precatastrophe environments.¹⁷² For similar reasons we might argue that the last people would not be wrong to destroy large parts of their planet, providing they did not destroy everything.¹⁷³ But what preservationists want to condemn is our lack of concern for the environmental systems and species that now exist on earth. They would not condemn human actions less if they believed that after a million years or so, the earth could recover from human devastation. What the preservationist really wants is for us to come to value a more respectful, harmonious way of living with nature. But this result by no means follows from an insistence that some properties of natural systems are intrinsically valuable.”¹⁷⁴

The major response to Thompson’s odd, and somewhat puzzling, critique must, I think, point out the (Routleys’ insistence on the) value-making character of *the natural* (and the consequent net *disvalue resulting from interference*¹⁷⁵ *with it*) – oddly, the particular factor Thompson most ignores

¹⁷¹Of course they were, or rather – mindful of the fact that this is only a possible world – of course their actions *would* have been *wrong*, for the intelligent beings would have destroyed much of what was of *intrinsic value*. And this fact is unaffected by the recovery that was to come in the world in question.

¹⁷²That may be so (though, of course, we have no idea what the ‘post-catastrophe environment’ might have been like had there been no catastrophe in the first place). Nevertheless, this fact (let us admit it as such) does not seem to diminish the wrongness of the actions of the hypothetical intelligent beings.

¹⁷³But these reasons do not seem to be *good* reasons at all! Is it really to be morally permissible to deliberately destroy things of intrinsic value provided that in the end (*e.g.*, 70 million years on), things – now left to their own reparative ways – will somehow ‘work out’? This would seem the maddest form of objective consequentialism. And I am not sure that Thompson thinks they would be good reasons either. Rather, it is as if she is intimating that a mere “insistence that some properties of natural systems are intrinsically valuable” (and with *only that* in his or her argumentative arsenal) may well land a philosopher – who so insists – in such an unsatisfactory moral region.

¹⁷⁴What, not *even* if one of those properties were itself the property of *being natural*, *i.e.*, of being naturally evolved? Why *wouldn’t* we ‘want to come to value a more respectful, harmonious way of living with nature’ if we thought of ‘being natural’ as contributing to the intrinsic value of something?

¹⁷⁵Unless, of course, the ‘interference’ is of the in-built constraining variety deriving from other *intrinsic value*-making properties.

in her criticism, and not present *at all* in her own example. Instead, what is present in her example is the *interference* with natural process by actions of “intelligent beings”.

Environmentalists *may* stress the value of natural process, *even when* such processes are inevitably destructive, however temporarily, of some of the other value-making-factors (e.g., *stability of systems*). Then again, *depending on the situation*, they may *not*. The important, and difficult, kind of debate prefigured here (about when to stress the value of natural process over other factors of value, and when not) is highly reminiscent of the heated debate in America over what to do about the enormous, naturally caused (at least immediately so), Yellowstone fires of 1989 - and what ought to have been done, before, during, and after that cataclysmic event.

This sort of issue is briefly touched on, in the broad, by Val Plumwood, in her discussion of another, later, article of Thompson’s, *viz.*, ‘A Refutation of Environmental Ethics’.¹⁷⁶

“[Thompson] ask[s]: ‘How can [such an ethic] justify not being concerned to prevent (if possible) natural occurrences which threaten the stability, diversity, and integrity of an environmental system?’ It in no way follows that it is not [so concerned]. When the criteria are in conflict, it certainly does not follow that naturalness overrides all other values or criteria in such a case.”¹⁷⁷

The multiple factor model can be put to further use as well, a use which works *to integrate* the new ethic with the older traditional ethic. Here is how the Routleys put this point:

“The multiple factor model also solves the problem of how to combine traditional values...with...environmental values...by a constrained optimisation which takes due (i.e. weighted) account of them *all*. Thus in moving to an environmental (or nonchauvinist) ethic one is not *denying* ordinarily acknowledged welfare values for persons or humans, but simply recognising a further set of values to which such welfare values should be added. Nor is one *devaluing* humans, for human welfare values are retained; one is simply aiming to remove – through constraints which may re-

¹⁷⁶Janna Thompson, ‘A Refutation of Environmental Ethics’, *Environmental Ethics* 12 (1990): 147-60.

¹⁷⁷Val Plumwood, ‘Ethics and Instrumentalism: A Response to Janna Thompson’, *Environmental Ethics* 13 (1991), pp. 139-149. This passage on p. 144.

duce assignments to human values in favour of other values – the unwarranted privilege and chauvinism of the displaced Western super-ethic.

One would not have come very far if, despite the claim to have recognised environmental values, one assumed that wherever there is conflict between natural values and human values, the latter must always prevail. This would be equivalent to assigning them very low weight, or even zero value,¹⁷⁸ in all serious conflict cases. ... To allow that *some reduction* in human welfare values may sometimes – or even often, especially with increasing human populations – have to be accepted in cases of conflict is an essential part of *assigning* a genuine positive value to nonhuman factors. Sometimes humans, their states and conditions, do not come first.”¹⁷⁹

Yet to seek a *quick* answer to our original, and motivating, question (in case you have forgotten, it was: “which amongst the *non*-chauvinist ethical theories is the best, and why?”) may well be to want what many beginners in philosophy want, the truth *now*. However, an adequate ethic is, it seems, properly the object of on-going cultural (and these days *intercultural*) proposals along with proposed justifications of them, critiques of such substantive and justificatory proposals, responses to these critiques, counter-proposals, internal and friendly critiques of justifications for proposals leading to friendly but possibly significant modifications of proposals, a smattering of traded relevance and consequent optimism among parties to the on-going discussion, a barrel of irrelevance and correlative frustration; and perhaps all of this with no more end in sight than physical science itself has. It is, after all, a *human* project, and there is as much disagreement about proper methodology, or even its possibility, as there is about content. Still, it is theory-construction, normative theory construction, which is being attempted in all this, and it is near to impossible to avoid being caught up in it to some extent. And, in spite of profound methodological disagreements, and even disagreement over whether there could be adequate methodology in such a domain of (optimistically) ‘inquiry’ or (less optimistically) ‘endeavour’, there is no knock-down argument to the effect that there is just *no* prospect of ‘success’ – only some disagreement about what might constitute success. Hence, as far as the pro-

¹⁷⁸Importantly, *assignment* appears inescapable. If high positive intrinsic value assignment requires justification, so, too, will low or even zero intrinsic value assignment.

¹⁷⁹R. & V. Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

vision of, and persuasion to, adequate (thus, new) normative environmental theory goes, I suppose it is early days, and that the Routleys conceded, or even would have insisted, on that. And as is often the case, theory provision – and persuasion, self or otherwise, to theory thereby provided – will follow practice.

Such practice is complex and labor-intensive:

“In the case of transformation to environmental values, what is often important are distinctive features regarding the factual bases of many of the evaluations. In particular, there is the matter of removing or correcting *widespread misconceptions* on a broad range of matters of environmental concern; for example, about animals, their various behaviours, abilities, etc; about the alleged gulf between humans and other animals and the uniqueness of humans and each human; about the profitability, or desirability, or necessity, of environmentally destructive enterprises; about the inevitability of current Western social arrangements and about the history of the way these particular arrangements developed. There is, moreover, the matter of sheer information, for example as to how free animals live together and what they do; about how factory and experimental animals are treated, and in the latter case for what: about the sources and effects of various forms of pollution and the reasons for it; about how natural creatures such as whales or environments such as forests are commonly dealt with, for what products, by what interests, for what ends. Naturally (given a fact/value division), none of this information is entirely conclusive support for a change in ethic; for many of the evaluations the data help support can be included in other ethics (including sometimes modifications of prevailing ethics), while remaining evaluations can, at worst, be simply rejected (as e.g., those utilitarians who extend consideration just to sentient creatures are obliged to reject versions of the last man argument where no sentient creatures are affected).”¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

VIII. Emotional Presentation, Systemic Relativisation, the Phenomenological Base, Theory

(A) *Emotional Presentation*. When it comes to the matter of our relationships to things of intrinsic value, there is – as we have just been examining – this complex and labor-intensive matter of *defending* an (entirely naturalistic) “theory of intrinsic value which assigns intrinsic value to wilderness and species of free animals” (139). But “the matter of sheer information” that will play a role in this defense will not be “entirely conclusive for a change in ethic” for a variety of reasons. One reason, say the Routleys, is the “fact/value division”. Additionally, as we have just seen,

“...many of the evaluations the data helps support can be included in other ethics (including sometimes modifications of prevailing ethics), while remaining evaluations can, at worst, be simply rejected.”¹⁸¹

But *defending* a particular normative theory of intrinsic value, in the natural course of events, ‘*comes later*’ – if I may so put it. And, so, this is true of defending a “theory of intrinsic value which assigns intrinsic value to wilderness and species of free animals”. Typically, defending a theory of intrinsic value (within which intrinsic value – just to take an example – is assigned to “wilderness and species of free animals”) *follows* an original assignment. And the *source of that* assignment, too, has a place in ‘the matter of our relationships to things of intrinsic value’ just as much as does the complex and labor-intensive matter of defending a particular normative theory of intrinsic value. Richard’s discussion of that source goes under the heading of “emotional presentation”.

The matter is first introduced in ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’ (1980), thus by both Richard and Val, in brief discussion as to different ways in which a place may emotionally present – and we have previously noted the introductory passage:

“There is an enormous *felt* or *emotive* difference between feeling that a place should be valued or respected for itself, for its perceived beauty and character, and [on the other hand] feeling that it should not be defaced because it is valued by one’s fellow humans, and provides pleasurable sensations or money or convenience for them. ... These differences in emotional presentation are accompanied by or expressed by an enormous range

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

of behavioural differences.... The sort of behaviour *warranted* by each viewpoint and thought *admissible* by it, the concept of what one is free to do, for example, will normally be very different. It is certainly no coincidence that cultures holding to the intrinsic view have normally been far less destructive of nature than the dominant Western human chauvinist culture.”¹⁸²

Three years later *emotional presentation* receives its next mention from the Routleys in ‘Semantical Foundations for Value Theory’,¹⁸³ a paper appearing in the September, **1983** issue of *Noûs*. The mention is brief, but instructive – the first passage being this:

“...the valued object may be emotionally presented and its value *thus* recognised, without its value simply amounting to its emotional presentation.”¹⁸⁴

Explicit here is the anti-reductionist thesis in the Routleys’ writing: although emotional presentation occupies a crucial role in any adequate axiology,¹⁸⁵ value does *not reduce* to emotional presentation. Secondly, although it is not entirely clear from this passage (because it is not clear what work is being indicated by the occurrence of “*thus*”), it will in time become clear that they think the emotional presentation of an object is *crucial to recognition* of its value.¹⁸⁶

“In the end environmental value systems are based on different preference rankings from the chauvinistic systems they now compete with, a different group preference ranking (for those of the new deeper environmental movement) which may be the result of a different perception (and emotional presentation) of the world.”¹⁸⁷

The very large topic of *emotional presentation* and the nature of its role in our relationship to things of intrinsic value is – so far as I am aware – not addressed by Richard (now **Sylvan**) in any kind of extended way until his

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁸³ ‘Semantical Foundations for Value Theory’, R. & V. Routley, *Noûs* 17 (3), Sep. **1983**, pp. 441-456.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 453.

¹⁸⁵ That is, any meta-theory of value, including an account of our access to it.

¹⁸⁶ The thesis is reminiscent of Hume’s account of the role of *desire* in action. No action without desire. No recognition of value without emotional presentation (within which desire often has a crucial role).

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

1986 essay entitled, ‘The Way of Values: elaborating Meinong’s theory of impersonal values’.¹⁸⁸ This, he says, takes the form of “free variation on Meinong’s theory”:

“Since what is sought is a theory of values which blends both with object-theory and with deeper environmental theory, and which makes proper room for cultural and paradigmatic differences, free variation on Meinong’s theory will be the approach. However, the input from Meinong’s theory will be evident, and crucial at points, especially in the treatment of values as non-Platonic objects and in the account of access to their instantiation through emotional presentation.”¹⁸⁹

It appears from this early claim (about “access”) that Sylvan credits emotional presentation with a role in some epistemic (or epistemic-like) process.

Meinong, like Sylvan, is no subjectivist. According to the latter, Meinong introduces a

“...theory of impersonal value, of value without valuers, and the removal of ‘false psychologism’ from value theory (*On Emotional Presentation*, p. 125ff.)”¹⁹⁰

That emotion and evaluation and value are *somehow* connected has long been recognized – but, according to Sylvan, utterly misconceived – in received philosophical traditions. For example, there is the tradition of *projectivism* arising, he says, out of a very powerful but subverting force, *viz.*, what he called “the epistemologization of value” (2):

“...which conflates how values come to be known, or acquired, with what is known, what values are, what standing they have, and what meaning. This confusion of epistemology with sistology (the study of objects and their standing), which is spectacularly exhibited in verification principles and the like (to the effect that meaning and standing amount to matters of verification and ways of coming to know), lies behind the erroneous picture of values

¹⁸⁸This article (‘The Way of Values’: elaborating Meinong’s theory of impersonal values’) is the first of three articles by Richard to be found in: *Three essays upon deeper environmental ethics*, by Richard Sylvan. It is Number 13 in the Preprint series in Environmental Philosophy, Departments of Philosophy, Australian National University (1986), ISSN 0729 – 2708.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*

as matters of feeling or interests or expression of emotion and as (only) projected into the world through human valuing.”¹⁹¹

Routley, that is, Sylvan, is having none of this impoverishment of the world.

“...even more than with specific-sense qualities of bodies – the so-called secondary qualities – such as those of colour, smell, taste, touch and the like, there has been with emotional and valuational qualities – sometimes now called tertiary qualities – a concerted attempt to reduce the qualities experienced to features of the experiencers. Indeed so successful has this been in Western cultures, that many there take it for granted that valuation features are not really features of independent things in the world, but are products of those experiencing the things, ‘projected back’ by the experiencers onto things. Beauty and the like are in us, not in places; in the eyes of the beholders. So the developers who destroy the places and therewith destroy their beauty, only touch us who experience the beauty, not anything about the places. Perhaps we should be compensated, not the places, for there was nothing there ... (‘We rationalise that the place we inhabit has no normative structures and that we can do as we please’: Rolston, p. 150).”¹⁹²

The relationship between emotional presentation and value when *properly* understood is understood quite differently. Although there *are* emotional presentations, *what* they are, are

“...emotional bases through which values come to be known.”¹⁹³

So far, this follows Meinong’s intentions which, as described by J. N. Findlay in his *Foreword* to the English translation of *Über emotionale Präsentation*, were to present a

“...theory of the possibility of there being values at once given in and through emotion and yet also ontologically independent of emotion or of any subjective attitude.”¹⁹⁴

But,

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 10. The underlinings are Richard’s. The Rolston quotation is from H. Rolston, ‘Are Values in Nature Subjective or Objective?’, *Environmental Ethics* 4 (1982), pp. 125-51.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Findlay’s foreword to *On Emotional Presentation*, by Alexius Meinong, tr. M-L Schubert Kalsi, North-western University Press, 1972, p. xi.

“...Meinong’s early argument for the factuality of values is importantly modified in [one] respect: [it is] relativised.”¹⁹⁵

(B) Systemic Relativisation. As we have already seen¹⁹⁶, back in **1980**, the Routleys had written that:

“...the distribution of values (and especially of intrinsic values) is much more theory (system, or viewpoint) relative than the distribution of charges.”¹⁹⁷

And, as well, that,

“Ethical judgements, both axiological and deontic, have truth values, relative to their context of occurrence.”¹⁹⁸

The later (**1986**) approving reference to “the factuality of values” (5) suggests that *just as* axiological judgments have *truth values* (as *per 1980*, p. 164, fn. 78), so there are also *facts of the matter* when it comes to what’s valuable: that is, there are *value facts*. But such value facts *are so*, that is, *are facts*, relative to some ‘framework’, or ‘context’. That axiological judgements *have truth values* suggests that Sylvan’s theory of value judgements is *cognitive*, but – on the other hand – that their truth is relativised might seem to cloud the distinction (cognitive/non-cognitive). No worries; Sylvan will regard his meta-ethic as *neither* cognitivist nor noncognitivist. It will be fairly regarded as ‘*nonvistic*’.

“According to the way between [cognitivism and noncognitivism], to nonvism if you like, value judgements are correctly said to be true or false, known or not, etc., to conform to a cognitive vocabulary – only, in the semantical assessments, a systemic relativisation of some sort is always tacitly presupposed, in the end. Without this sort of relativisation, cognitive assignments do not determinately apply. Of course absolutist positions assume there is a uniquely determined background system. But as the blatant situation of competing (environmental) paradigms helps show, the uniqueness assumption is mistaken. While there may be some evaluations shared by almost all cultures, perhaps even

¹⁹⁵Richard Sylvan, ‘The Way of Values’ in *Three essays upon deeper environmental ethics*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁶At the end of Section V.

¹⁹⁷R. & V. Routley, ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’, p. 153.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 164, fn. 78. See footnote 116 in this paper.

a small common core, there is no uniquely determined correct value system. There are various overlapping systems.”¹⁹⁹

This combination of having truth values and being the object of knowledge, on the one hand, with systemic relativisation on the other, can be found disturbing. For example, William Grey (2000) writes:

“This relativism is less disturbing on a noncognitivist account of values. . . . However, Sylvan defends a cognitivist account of value, and the relativity of evaluative judgments for him is therefore problematic.”²⁰⁰

It seems Grey doesn’t take Richard’s disclaimer seriously, *i.e.*, the disclaimer that he is *not* a cognitivist; or else, for some reason, Grey does not think the “way between”-move is legitimate – that one has a forced choice here: either be a noncognitivist, or else take your cognitivist lumps. As to the former – not taking the disclaimer seriously – well, it is not as if the disclaimer is casually delivered, not some mere passing remark. Consider this:

“The prevailing divisions and classifications of value theory rest on a series of false dichotomies. The dichotomies are damaging because, if they were accepted in the way their exponents insist, they would rule out viable and important positions concerning values – including, so it is contended, the way values are. . . . [One] false contrast is the cognitivist/non-cognitivist dichotomy. ‘Are you a cognitivist about values or not?’ is a favoured initial move in a philosophical game that often ends in quick defeat for non-standard positions. Well, we environmentalists are spoilsports, and are not playing the game. There’s something right, and something wrong, about each of the answers admitted: cognitivist and non-cognitivist, the usual (vistic) answers. And we can say exactly what.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹‘The Way of Values’, by Richard Sylvan, in *Three essays upon deeper environmental ethics* (1986), pp. 12-13; #13 Preprint series in Environmental Philosophy, Depts of Philosophy, ANU, ISSN 0729 – 2708. The underlinings are Richard’s.

²⁰⁰William Grey, ‘A Critique of Deep Green Theory’, *Beneath the Surface*, eds. Eric Katz, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg, MIT Press (2000), p. 47.

²⁰¹Sylvan (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 12. *Re* “. . . and we can say exactly what”: I speculate that what he takes to be right, and in that sense what is right about cognitivism is that value judgments *are* true or false, but what is wrong with cognitivism is that value judgments *are not* true or false *absolutely*; and what is right about non-cognitivism is that value judgments *are not* true or false *absolutely*, but what is wrong with non-cognitivism is that value judgments *are* true or false. (So that what is right about cognitivism is what is

With a rather determined passage like that confronting one, it seems odd – did Richard find it maddening? – simply to write: “However, Sylvan defends a cognitivist account of value”! No, he doesn’t – even though he finds *something* right about it (value judgments *are* true or false); but cognitivism is (at least in Sylvan’s sights) a complex position. It is the view that value judgments are true or false, and that they are true or false *absolutely*. It is not clear that Grey is prepared to countenance this particular complexity. To be true or false *is* to be true or false absolutely. ‘Frame relative truth’ appears to be a *no go domain*. Grey (2000) thinks there is something “unstable” here.²⁰² The *terra* is not *firma*.

According to Sylvan, such “systemic relativisation” is *not* a form of ‘*ethical relativism*’ – at least not if *that* is understood to involve “independent” (non-overlapping), noncomparable, *or* “equally satisfactory” systems. Systemic relativisation is, instead, what is required by “cultural pluralism”. In Sylvan’s words:

“To say all this is not to succumb to some sort of ethical relativism.... What is being advanced is rather a cultural pluralism.... Such a pluralism differs from [ethical] relativism in several important ways, in particular the following:- The systems (frameworks, cultures) with respect to which semantical assessment is relativised are by no means independent, but may overlap, and, more significantly, admit of assessment and evaluation from one another. Thus systems are not incomparable, or, different, all equally satisfactory. Rather some, seen from where we are, are more satisfactory than others. ...evaluative frameworks can be ranked, internally or from other systems.”²⁰³

Sylvan notes, indeed insists upon, the inescapability of systemic relativisation, but – unlike Grey – is not made “uneasy” by it. It is, he thinks, something we are or should be rather used to; and, more importantly, he thinks that it tends not to inhibit semantic assessment:

“Consider, to illustrate, the evaluations of two different tribes of mathematicians on the merit of various mathematical problems.

wrong with non-cognitivism, and what is wrong with cognitivism is what is right with non-cognitivism; but also that what is right with non-cognitivism is what is wrong with cognitivism, and what is wrong with non-cognitivism is what is right with cognitivism.)

²⁰²“It is hard not to feel uneasy about the instability of this position.” Grey, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

²⁰³Sylvan, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

Both agree that certain problems in number theory are worthwhile, but tribe *i* (intuitionists) maintains that various problems in transfinite set theory, which tribe *l* (of classical logicians) finds immensely interesting, are of no real interest. From our different relevantist framework (that of a very minor cult), we should want to criticise both tribal frameworks, to set them both into systems involving restrictive and accordingly rejectable assumptions (*cf.* *Exploring Meinong's Jungle*, chapters 10-11), but on the specific evaluations at issue we should want to side with tribe *l* rather than *i*, arguing, from where we stand, that the transfinite problems are of interest and important.”²⁰⁴

The fact is, the need for acknowledging systemic relativisation is common and found across the board. And perhaps we should remind ourselves of this when commenting particularly sceptically about discussions over *what's intrinsically valuable*.

“...relativisation in semantic evaluation is not peculiar to value qualities, but rather grosser and more extensive there. But it also applies to primary and secondary quality judgements. Localisation and relativisation in the semantics of secondary quality claims was forced by classical physics,²⁰⁵ localisation of primary quality claims by relativity. In the assessment of ‘The box is 2 metres long’ a local frame is presupposed, and is supplied as part of the context in semantic evaluation. In each case primary, secondary and tertiary, there is an understood native range (as Rolston felicitously puts it), in terms of which semantical evaluations are made. In the tertiary case however the cultural component of the native range bulks much larger than with primary and secondary judgements.”²⁰⁶

(C) *The Phenomenological Base.* A few pages back, I noted Richard’s view that emotional presentations are “emotional bases through which values come to be known” (3). Taking this idea seriously, as he undoubtedly did (and as I will further demonstrate), helped lead him to a *view* of the world that is recognizably *phenomenological* in character, and therefore somewhere between *abundant* and *teeming* (as befits one who authored a book called

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ I take it that the Doppler shift (of all wave phenomena) is at least one of the phenomena being referred to here.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15. The underlining is Richard’s.

Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond). Take this rather remarkable passage, for example:

“The total flow of experience (inferentially or systemically influenced or not)...that human receivers or recorders obtain is exceedingly diverse. A forest can be experienced as dark, green-black, oval shaped, dense, gloomy, damp, immature but millable, ugly, ... (perhaps that is how it is). It is astonishing (especially given the enthusiasm of empiricists for experience) that there is an immediate, and rather automatic, reduction of this experience in mainstream scientific thought, to certain approved forms. Experience is commonly, but quite illegitimately, cut-down to that received through certain approved sense channels (secondary qualities) or gathered by certain elementary verification procedures (primary qualities), leaving out for instance much bodily and psychic experience and all emotional reception. While these sorts of distinctions between types of experience can more or less be made out, as can other distinctions, that is no good excuse for ditching the rest, for impoverishing the phenomenological base. There is even less excuse for the extensive philosophical programs committed to impoverishing the world – to deintentionalizing it, or *to removing its valuational features*, to return to the main issue.”²⁰⁷

Richard was insistent on the epistemic source-value, or base-value, of emotional presentation.

“Much as the primary way of coming to know (experiential primary and secondary) qualities of objects is by sense perception or presentation, through the various senses, so the primary way of getting to know value features is by emotional presentation, through the various modes of feeling and desire. Moreover the ‘channels’ here can be extended by equipment, devices, training, etc., as with sense presentation: this is already to some extent evident from such things as the training of children..., the education²⁰⁸ of adults...and the emergence of people of refined

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9

²⁰⁸ Recall the Routleys’ description of the role of education in the “transformation to environmental values” on pp. 127-8 of ‘Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics’ (1980) – quoted at the end of section VII of this paper.

sensitivity and feeling.”²⁰⁹

But this – in his view – is no intuitionism, as that notion is traditionally understood. He wishes to sharply

“...separate the emotional presentation position from intuitionism. For it is not being claimed that there is a special moral or value sense, which delivers reliable (or even infallible) judgements. There is no special sense at all, but feelings which choice-making creatures clearly have and often act upon, though in ways that are hardly error-free. Emotional presentation affords a means, without however offering a reduction; it enables a passage between intuitionistic objectivism and reductionistic emotivism and subjectivism. Emotional presentation offers not the prospect of some analysis, as on emotivism old and new, but what is very different (though verification principles try to equate them), a way of coming to know.”²¹⁰

Meinong had argued that feeling “*participates* in the apprehension” of value²¹¹ (and thus *is not all there is* to such apprehension); and according to Sylvan in this passage, emotional presentation offers “a way of *coming* to know”. But neither is it the whole story of such acquisition. For according to Sylvan, there *is* the matter of the “reliability of presentation”, and how *that* “is to be ascertained, or correctness determined”. (18) He writes:

“The immediate problem is, of course, that

‘...relation-free value is not always there where it is presented or could be presented. It is only there where, so to speak, something which is correct is the object of presentation. It is no easier to decide on such correctness, but in general much harder, than in the analogous case of external perception.’ (Meinong, p. 134).”²¹²

(D) Enter Theory. Enter theory. Much earlier (at the end of Section V), I cited a passage from the Routleys (1980) which read:

“Evaluative features such as worth, merit, beauty are features which...do not have a hard observational basis but are decidedly

²⁰⁹Sylvan, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

²¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 18.

²¹¹In *On Emotional Presentation*, p. 28; and cited by R. Sylvan (1986), p. 17.

²¹²R. Sylvan (1986), *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

theory-dependent, though the theories involved are evaluative in character and not empirical.”²¹³

And I concluded that

“It begins to look, then, as if any ‘good reasons’ which might be offered for X’s being of intrinsic value will take the form of being good reasons offered for a *theory* (presumably, of value), *within which* X is assigned intrinsic-value status.”

Sylvan now confirms this:

“The first steps in explaining how the problem²¹⁴ is resolved are simple enough: an encompassing theory is applied to separate out the correct from the incorrect presentations, to weed out the wrong from the right. Thus though feelings are the source or base, theory quickly enters, to organise and discriminate the data. This introduction of theory, which typically enhances culture or paradigm dependence already in the bases, enables both extension beyond the bases to be made and a certain independence of the bases to be achieved and also corrections of claims to be made and correctness to be assessed.”²¹⁵

The process is a familiar one, certainly in its idealized clothes.

“The structure is the same, in broad outline, in several important cases where transition is made from a given basis in search of correctness or rightness: not only emotional presentation and also sense perception but as well inferential practice. Always, for example, there is some filtration and ranking of participants and states. For example, some perceivers are discounted because defective or abnormal and likewise some states are excluded, e.g. being drugged or drunk. Some states are preferred for judging, e.g. the judge is fresh, not under stimulation or sedation, and some judges are preferred, e.g. those especially gifted or who have undergone appropriate training. These matters all affect the first stage in an idealised account of the route from empirical bases to end theory.”²¹⁶

²¹³R. & V. Routley (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 153.

²¹⁴The problem of the “reliability of presentation”, and how *that* “is to be ascertained, or correctness determined”. (R. Sylvan (1986), p. 18)

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 19.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*

If there are *first* stages then, of course, *many more*, and the process is presumably dialectical – a moving from first base emotional presentation to initial theory construction with resultant tempering of first ‘reports from the field’ so to speak, to better – *i.e.*, more theoretically informed – *affective* data, to more data enriched *theorizing*, ... *etc.* And, for all the good work of theorizing, contact with the source, the base, is not to be lost. It is a “check point”.

“The presentational basis provides us ... empirical ground and check points in value theory. Many the theorist who neglects, or fails to observe these empirical linkages, Quine for one:

We can judge the morality of an act only by our moral standards themselves. Science, thanks to its links with observation, retains some title to a correspondence theory of truth; but a coherence theory is evidently the lot of ethics. [There are] no empirical controls ... (p. 43); [No] empirical check points (p. 45).

Not so: these unsupported claims have to be qualified piece by piece in the light of emotional presentation (something that the wide appeal of emotivist theories should perhaps have suggested).”²¹⁷

In this section, I have sought primarily *to display* – as is evident from all the citation – in some coherent order what Sylvan’s views about emotional presentation actually were. This is because they are *not* widely known and, too, because – in traditions we are most familiar with – they are rather uncommon. They may even appear quite strange, perhaps naïve too. The *very idea* that emotion might inform! Or even play some significant role in informing. Yet, of course, we often *act* as if it does *just that* – forming judgments, *evaluative* judgements (about people, about motivations, about situations) often very quickly upon their ‘emotional presentation’ to us; and it’s almost always later that we look to justify those evaluations if called upon to do so by reference to facts and maybe with reference to how those facts cohere with some decent moral or psychological theorizing as well. Sylvan sought to call our attention to this process – certainly one which at *some level* is well-recognized, but nevertheless largely ignored, or else not well-regarded

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20. The passage which Sylvan quotes from Quine is from the latter’s article, ‘On the nature of moral values’, *Values and Morals* (ed. A.I. Goldman and J. Kim), Reidel, Dordrecht, 1978.

in familiar philosophical traditions. And he sought to dignify the process (and its source) with attention, with a description of it and its place – a deserved place, he thought – in our coming to be acquainted with *what's good* and *what's bad*.

IX. Why Intrinsic Value is not a Response-Dependent Property

We have seen²¹⁸ that Richard (1994) was not friendly to the idea that intrinsic value is best understood as a response dependent property, even though on his analysis it does satisfy two significant conditions associated with such properties. For, as noted, just as

“Response-dependent properties do not depend for their instantiation on the existence of a single conscious entity in the whole universe.”²¹⁹

and thereby are not mere ‘subjective’ properties, neither – according to Richard – does intrinsic value have any such dependency. And, secondly, just as

“...analyzing [a property] in a response-dependent manner without doubt makes [that property] *existentially* mind-independent, it with equal certainty renders it *conceptually* mind-dependent.”²²⁰

so, too, Richard’s analysis of intrinsic value makes *it conceptually* mind-dependent, for, as he and Valerie say,

“...values in a world...always depend upon a valuer existing in *some* world.”²²¹

And being “conceptually mind-dependent”, objectivism is also avoided. There can be little doubt that these two similarities in analysis are a significant part of what leads some commentators to suggest that, really, Richard’s analysis is some kind of response-dependency analysis. Yet, as we have seen, he rejects this. What reason does he have for such rejection, or what reason might there be which would make such rejection plausible? There is one which stands out above any other potential candidate for such, although it presents in two modes – one logical, one epistemological.

²¹⁸End of Section VI.

²¹⁹R. Joyce (2009)

²²⁰*Ibid.*

²²¹R. & V. Routley (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 155. Italics are the Routleys’.

Its most immediate, unclothed, mode is this. The basic logical form which any response-dependency analysis takes is that of *an equivalence*. So, for example, Philip Pettit writing about response-dependent *concepts* (rather than *properties*, but no matter) says they are

“...biconditionally connected, as an *a priori* matter, with certain more or less primitive responses: in particular with responses of a perceptual or affective character.”²²²

But there is nothing in Richard’s writing about intrinsic value that suggests he sees any similarly-placed biconditionality. What we get from him on the relationship between value on the one hand, and valuers and evaluation on the other, is entirely made up of this sort of thing:

“...where a state of affairs has a value then there is a certain valuer...who assigns that value to that state.”²²³

“Where object *a* is *v* then, for both values and colours, *a* is such as to feel or seem *v* to any normal participant in given framework *s* – a first-approximation connection which turns in part on the meaning of ‘normal’.”²²⁴

“...the determination of [the] valuer [is] *dependent upon* the values concerned”.²²⁵

These Sylvan-esque thoughts, persistent, place sufficiency entirely with the states of affairs having value, never on the valuer. There is no “if and only if” here. *If* something is intrinsically valuable, *then* there is a certain valuer – not required to be actual – who appreciates that fact. But possible evaluators do *not* similarly guarantee value. It would be a “strange result”²²⁶ if

“...any state of affairs, however environmentally appalling, is valuable because we can find a valuer, e.g. a spokesman for your local development association, who would account it valuable.

²²²Philip Pettit, ‘Terms, Things, and Response-Dependence’, *European Review of Philosophy*, Vol. 3 (1998), pp. 55-66; p. 55. As cited by Christopher Norris in *Truth Matters: Realism, anti-realism and response dependence*, Edinburgh University Press (2002, 2005), p. 60.

²²³R. & V. Routley (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 157.

²²⁴R. Sylvan (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²²⁵R. & V. Routley (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 157. And this time the emphasis is the Routleys’ own.

²²⁶*Ibid.*

But ‘there are no values without a valuer’ properly understood yields no such bizarre results.”²²⁷

Valuables rule, possible valuers follow. The valuables wear the pants here. And this is one reason, *I speculate*, why Richard in **1994** was simply *not having it* that value should be thought a response-dependent property – *given the equivalence conditions* which dominate the way particular ‘response dependent’ properties (or the concepts which refer to them) are analysed in the relevant literature. With Richard, you get one-half of response dependency analysis, but *not* the Full Monty. The pants remain on the valuables. His account of value is accordingly not really an attempt at anything like a complete *analysis* – certainly not a *reductive* one – of value at all. As he puts the matter:

“Value is what it is, its own sort of object with its distinctive features, and not another thing...”²²⁸

The *epistemological* mode, or face, of this issue has, perhaps, an historical dimension to it. I refer to the view, current *hereabouts* in the *early 90s*, that in the case of any concept for which a response dependency analysis was successful, it was a corollary that certain accredited ‘observers’ were *immune from error* in their sincere applications of that concept. So, for example, in a widely discussed article in *Mind* (1991), Philip Pettit defended the view that

“There are different conceptions of response-dependence but under the approach adopted here response-dependent concepts privilege certain responses on the part of subjects; they ensure that [just] as an observer under normal conditions cannot be in ignorance or error about the colour of something – under the traditional view – so the responses involved in any response-dependent area of discourse cannot lead subjects astray under suitable conditions.”²²⁹

There is nothing I know of in Sylvan’s writings on moral or axiological discourse that bears this kind of message. Instead, the question of ‘reliability’, repeatedly raised by him (and Meinong too²³⁰), is – I would maintain – global

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ R. Sylvan (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²²⁹ Philip Pettit, ‘Realism and Response Dependence’, *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 100, No. 4, Mind and Content (Oct., 1991), pp. 587-626: p. 622.

²³⁰ *Cf.* “...relation-free value is not always there where it is presented or could be presented. It is only there where, so to speak, something which is correct is the object of presentation. It is no easier to decide on such correctness, but in general much harder,

and unrelenting.²³¹ Presumably, this is – at least in part – for precisely the *same reason*: that, in *these* matters, he rejects biconditionality itself. For, if there *were* cases where the valuational responses (specified non-trivially)²³² *were* immune from error, were *infallible*, then in just those cases the valuational responses would be sufficient for the truth of the valuations. And that is the half of the biconditional that Richard never accepted, indeed, gave every appearance of having rejected – and sensibly so.²³³

than in the analogous case of external perception”. [Meinong, *On Emotional Presentation*, p. 134.]

²³¹*Cf.* “. . . it is *not* being claimed that there is a *special* moral or value sense, which delivers *reliable* (or even *infallible*) judgements. There is *no special* sense at all, but *feelings* which choice-making creatures *clearly have* and often act upon, though in ways that *are hardly error-free*.” (R. Sylvan (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 18)

²³² “. . . it is *no use saying* that a subject *S* is properly equipped to judge and that conditions *K* are the right sorts of condition under which to exercise that judgement just so long as the result of *S + K* is a correct. . . usage of the. . . moral-evaluative predicate in question. Rather the specification must be one that explains *just what it is* about *S* that makes her a competent or reliable judge in such matters, and also *just what it is* about the normal set of conditions *K* that serves to distinguish them from other, that is, non-standard or distorting conditions.” [Christopher Norris, *Truth Matters*, Edinburgh University Press, 2002, p. 60.]

²³³I am immensely grateful to my friend and colleague, Dominic Hyde, for being such a willing, critical, and engaging participant in many long discussions about the Routleys’ ideas on the matters presented above. Thanks, too, to members of the philosophy department at the University of Queensland for bearing up so ably under the weight of two lengthy seminars; and, earlier, to logically-minded participants at ‘Beyond the Possible – Remembering Richard Sylvan’ (University of Melbourne – July, 2011).

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