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Virtue, Environmental Ethics, Nonhuman Values, and Anthropocentrism

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Abstract: This article discusses the encounter between virtue ethics and environmental ethics and the ways in which environmental virtue ethics confronts nonhuman axiology and the controversial theme of moral anthropocentrism. It provides a reasoned review of the relevant literature and a historical–conceptual rendition of how environmental and virtue ethics came to converge as well as the ways in which they diverge. It explains that contrary to important worries voiced by some non-anthropocentric environmental ethicists, environmental virtue ethics enables and requires a rich and nuanced engagement with nonhuman values of all sorts—intrinsic as well as extrinsic, moral as well as nonmoral, anthropocentric as well as non-anthropocentric—and neither presupposes nor implies moral anthropocentrism in its normativity. Finally, the article considers the fortunes of, and some challenges for, environmental virtue ethics in its application to the ethics of climate change, an increasingly central topic in environmental ethics. This article proceeds as follows: the first section introduces virtue ethics; the second section looks at axiological and normative themes in environmental ethics; the third section discusses environmental virtue ethics; and the fourth section considers its application to climate change. The fifth section draws some conclusions.

Keywords: virtue ethics; environmental ethics; anthropocentrism; climate change

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1. Virtue Ethics

The study of virtue investigates what sort of person one should be to live a good life. Since ancient times, in the East and West, the practice of virtue has typically been thought to not only enable but also to constitute (at least partly) a good life. Correspondingly, the practice of vice has typically been thought to not only enable but also to constitute (at least partly) a bad life. This is the core of virtue ethics (VE)[1].

Virtues and vices are traditionally understood to be tendencies in thought and action that are sufficiently habitual to an agent as to count, though somewhat loosely, as characteristic modes of their being. These modes are typically identified as "character traits"[2]. Influential versions of VE have it that a character trait (being benevolent/malevolent, humble/arrogant, courageous/cowardly, etc.) qualifies as a virtue if, because, and to the extent that its development and exercise contribute to the agent living a good life. Correspondingly, a character trait qualifies as a vice if, because, and to the extent that its development and exercise contribute to the agent living a bad life.

The criteria for what counts as a good life typically include welfarist, perfectionist, aesthetic, and moral entries, with different theories privileging or emphasizing one or more of these entries over the others. Importantly, while these criteria for goodness may be (and typically are) impersonally defined, the goodness of satisfying them—including other-regarding criteria like moral criteria—is, according to VE, to be measured from the perspective of the agent. In other words, the goodness of a virtuous life (whatever its ingredients and their proportions) is/must be good for, and from the perspective of, the agent who lives it: it is/must be a prudentially good life[3].

Many versions of VE accept that a prudentially good life is a life of *eudaimonia*, a term used by Plato and Aristotle to indicate something like a "good spirit" and typically

translated as "happiness" or "flourishing". A good life is thus a happy or flourishing life, and the practice of virtue not only enables but also constitutes (at least partly) such a life. This is the eudaimonistic view of VE, which is very influential among virtue ethicists though not without alternatives [9–16]. This article does not dismiss but will not discuss these alternatives; its subject is eudaimonistic VE[4].

Widely different accounts of *eudaimonia* have been given through the centuries (for a conceptual overview, see [19]). Differences in such accounts tend mainly to stem from the ways in which different theorists define, ordain, and relate to one another (including by reduction and subsumption) the criteria—including the welfarist, perfectionist, aesthetic, and moral—for the goodness of a life. Generally, these different configurations in turn depend on the ideas about human nature and/or the human condition that different authors entertain which, in turn, inform their ideas about what matters most to a good human life.

Whatever may matter most in different theories, all theories agree that a virtuous agent will be able to appreciate that certain things do matter most, or more than others, to a virtuous life, and steadfastly, or as steadfastly as possible, comport themselves accordingly. In the eudaimonistic picture, both such orderings of importance (whose practical functions are those of blueprints, allowing for the planning and pursuit of a good life, as well as yardsticks to measure the extent of one's success in living such a life) and their steadfast pursuit are typically thought to be guided by reason, often understood as a blend of rational understanding, practical rationality, and socio-circumstantial reasonableness whose proportions vary in different theories.

Indeed, the exercise of virtue is traditionally thought to require a special, reasoned appreciation of what matters most in particular circumstances considering what matters most in general. Such appreciation is known from ancient thought as *phronesis*, which is typically translated as "practical wisdom" and often conceived of as something of a meta-virtue, activating and guiding the exercise of the other virtues [20,21]. The practically wise virtuous agent knows what matters to a good life and what does not (or less), and they are thus able to read some features of given situations as more salient than others and conduct themselves accordingly (see, among others, [22]). Another meta-virtue, also counselled and buttressed by reason, is fortitude, typically conceived of as strength of character. Fortitude is a bastion against practical irrationality (or *akrasia*)—the lack of self-control that leads one to act against one's better judgment—and, as such, is also often seen as a precondition for the development and exercise of the other virtues[5].

Few theories will expect a virtuous agent to be guided always and only by reason. Most VE is rather concerned with the good lives of those not-fully-rational, non-idealized, desiring, biased, limited agents that most humans are. Yet it is still as reflective agents that humans explore the question of how to best live their lives, so most versions of VE will appeal to reason when evaluating living in certain ways rather than others (both at the macro level, where those general blueprints for life are built, and at the micro everyday level where the agent acts).

VE persisted as the dominant normative theory in Western philosophy from the times of Plato and Aristotle to the 18th century, when it was superseded by Deontology and Utilitarianism. These theories focused less on the agent's self-regarding search for happiness or flourishing and more on their other-regarding obligations—or, in other words, less on the prudentially and more on the morally good life—and provided rules, formulas, and tests for the goodness and rightness of actions based on universalist and universalizable principles rather than focusing on these less-regimented, less clearly action-guiding, and inevitably more situated refinements of character.

In the late 20th century, Deontology and Utilitarianism came under sustained attack, particularly at the hands of Cambridge philosopher B. Williams. Williams [25] argued that in most cases, agents do the right (or wrong) thing not because they apply (or dis-apply) the universalist and universalizable rules, formulas, or tests that these theories provide but rather because they recognize certain actions, preferences, practices, etc.,

to correctly valorize themselves, other people, relations, traditions, projects, and other things that they see as important and care about. These recognitions feed on emotions, attachments, and commitments that are vital to the agent but, Williams argued, are sidelined by both Deontology and Utilitarianism as these theories work toward their universalist and universalizable systematizations. From this perspective, "the Morality System" (as Williams called it) is mostly an invasive external factor which tends to obscure what really matters to us as individuals with lives of our own to live, conflating living well with obeying the right rules or formulas and mostly ignoring that which really moves us: affections, allegiances, emotions like shame, pride, fear, love, and disgust (most of which are socially configured and reinforced), and personal and collective aspirations.

None of this is to say that morality does not matter, of course. Williams' point was rather that there are various ways in which morality can matter, and the correct one—morality at its best, as Williams saw it—is from within and in the light of our projects and attempts to live a good life. From this perspective, however important morality may be, it remains the other-regarding, obligation-speaking department of ethics more generally understood—the "do-onto-others" focus group in the larger "living well" office of practical reason(s). Williams thought that too much of what matters is lost, in philosophy as well as in practical life and its evaluation, if morality cannibalizes ethics; and although he was not engaged in a thematic defense of VE, his objections and arguments were moves toward the re-instatement of a picture (which 18th- and 19th-century deontologists and utilitarians had managed to upset) that had long seen the prudentially good life as including rather than being guided by the pursuit of a morally good life, and that picture entailed a larger and renewed role for VE[6].

Williams' concerns about "the Morality System" were shared by many philosophers, including A. McIntyre, S. Cavell, I. Murdoch, J. McDowell, and S. Blackburn. His and their works have led other theorists to re-embrace VE as a central framework for ethical reflection, recommendation, and evaluation, while others yet have revamped their favorite versions of Deontology or Utilitarianism by complementing them with morally justified virtue theories (e.g., [27,28], among utilitarians; and [29], among deontologists).

Overall, the work carried out to bring VE back has been quite significant[7]. It has sharpened both VE itself and the moral systems that previously obscured it, greatly enriching our contemporary ethical vocabulary and conceptual toolbox. So equipped, we met the ecological crisis.

2. Environmental Ethics

The philosophical discipline that first engaged this crisis is Environmental Ethics (EE), the origins of which as an independent field of academic study are customarily spatiotemporally located in early-1970s North America and synchronized with the peak of US environmentalism as a political movement [50–52]. EE's guiding idea has always been that thinking differently—basically, non-anthropocentrically or at least less anthropocentrically—about nonhuman entities will also lead to acting differently (less exploitatively) toward and regarding them. In particular, a more thorough consideration of the value(s) of nonhuman entities would lead to the recognition of their moral standing and the articulation of human responsibilities (of beneficence, respect, care, justice, and solidarity) toward and regarding them.

The founding philosophical move of EE is a critical denunciation of a cornerstone of Western thought, namely anthropocentrism—an understanding of the human station within the wider workings of things as, in various ways, exceptional, justifying "humans first" or even "humans only" axiologies and normativities. These anthropocentric axiologies and normativities have roots in antiquity, gained strength through Christianity [53] and were then consecrated by modernity with the metaphysical schism practiced by Descartes in the early 17th century—the division of being into *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Descartes' allocation of mentality exclusively to humans among all bodily beings implied human

exceptionalism (see, among others, [54], for a discussion). The latter, in turn, can justify forms of anthropocentrism.

Ontological anthropocentrism baptizes human beings as the end or reason for which everything exists and works in the way that it does. It is often accompanied, but does not entail nor is entailed by, *moral anthropocentrism*, which holds that human beings are morally superior to everything else in the natural order. This can justify axiological anthropocentric instrumentalism—the thesis that the nonhuman has value only and insofar as it is useful to the realization of the value of the human. Such instrumentalism, in turn, can justify an anthropocentric normativity that selects actions, practices, or policies exclusively on grounds of what good they do for humans and regardless of the ills they may bring to nonhumans. Finally, *conceptual anthropocentrism*, which is neither implied nor implies its ontological and moral counterparts, holds that human beings can only encounter and comprehend the world from a characteristically human vantage point. Different theories may present that vantage point as either privileged or just one among many and as either empowering or limiting[8].

These distinctions were not always kept clear in the early days of EE, but what environmental ethicists really took issue with was, and still is, moral anthropocentrism. That was, and still is, widely believed to be the ideational root of all ecological travails, degradation, and destruction that humans, especially affluent Western humans, have brought about, particularly in the last five centuries, with colonialism first and industrialization later[9]. Therefore, many thinkers past and present have seen moral non-anthropocentrism as something of a pre-condition for any plausible, stable, and incisive EE[10].

A central research domain in which this question has been explored is that of nonhuman axiology, with a focus on the notion of intrinsic moral value and the question of whether and which nonhuman entities possess it and on what grounds. Environmental ethicists have traditionally thought that the normative demands of obligatory non-anthropocentrism (or the limits of justifiable anthropocentrism) could be made to follow from the results of such axiological exploration.

2.1. Values

By intrinsic value, environmental ethicists will at least mean non-instrumental value. Based on this interpretation, nonhuman entities that have intrinsic value are valuable for their own sake: they have what, in value theory, is sometimes called final value [60–62]. With a stronger interpretation, intrinsic value means non-relational (or non-extrinsic) value—that is, value that nonhuman entities may possess simply based on grounds of their own features alone, quite apart from whatever relations they may happen to entertain with anything else (including, but not limited to, relations with humans). On this stronger interpretation, what has intrinsic value matters not just for its own sake but also in its own right and has what may be called freestanding value[11].

Historically, there has been something of a hierarchy—at times made explicit, more often left implicit—in the sorts of values that environmental ethicists have thought nonhuman entities to have, and this hierarchy has mostly tracked the anthropocentric vs. non-anthropocentric divide. Basically, the more anthropocentric a value, the lower its ranking; the less anthropocentric a value, the higher its ranking. So, in the scale of values, instrumental value is typically thought to rank lower than intrinsic value, and non-instrumental intrinsic (final) value is often thought to rank lower than non-relational intrinsic (freestanding) value. The beings thought to bear such different values are typically ranked accordingly: entities of freestanding value are thought to have higher axiological status than entities of final value, and both are thought to have higher axiological status than those that are valuable merely instrumentally. In EE, entities of freestanding (intrinsic non-relational) value have been thought to have direct moral standing, entities of final (intrinsic relational) value have been thought to have derivative moral standing, and entities of instrumental value have been thought to have no moral standing whatsoever.

EE's primary focus has mostly been on establishing, wherever possible, the freestanding moral value of nonhuman entities. This has widely been thought to be the most solid axiological basis for non-anthropocentric normativity. Sentientists argued that individual nonhuman animals have such value because they are sentient [65]. Biocentrists argued that all individual organisms have such value because they are alive [66]. Ecocentrists argued that all ecosystems, understood as ontological units, have such value on grounds of their internal complexity, diversity, integration, evolvability, and other features deemed to be morally relevant [67–69][12].

Immediately below in the ranking of values is relational final value, which comes in two versions and thus involves a sub-ranking. In one version, ranking higher, the relations grounding the final value of nonhuman entities are not anthropocentric. For example, ecocentrists who argued that ecosystems, understood as ontological units, have freestanding value also typically argued that all ecosystem members, from humans to rivers and on equal footing, have relational final value as parts of an ecosystem that is valuable, and each to the extent that it is a valuable part to such ecosystem (contributing, for example, to its complexity, integration, diversity, and evolvability). Non-anthropocentric relational final value can still support a fully non-anthropocentric normativity.

Not so the other version of relational final value. Here, the relations grounding the final values of nonhuman entities do involve humans, with their perspectives, systems of meaning, and larger axiological and normative constructions. These are aesthetic, scientific, historical, cultural, and sacred/religious relations, which make nonhuman entities important to humans in ways that are more than merely instrumental. All those thinkers who have insisted on the manifold meanings that nonhuman entities have for humans have been concerned with relational final value [70,71]. Yet these thinkers—at least during the first decades of EE's development as a discipline—have been relatively few compared to those who engaged in the search for non-relational freestanding value. This is somewhat surprising, considering that many nonhuman entities have vast amounts of anthropocentric relational final value(s)—of many varieties and disseminated across space, time, and cultures.

One reason may simply be that such value, as noted, is anthropocentric, and that is not what many environmental ethicists were looking for because it seemed to not provide a solid grounding for non-anthropocentric normativity, which was the normativity they wanted. Another reason may be that much of the anthropocentric relational final value of nonhuman entities is non-moral value, which is also not what many environmental ethicists were looking for because what they wanted their axiology to deliver were moral obligations toward nonhuman entities, not (or at least not primarily) aesthetic, scientific, historical, cultural, and sacred/religious reasons for acting one way or another toward or regarding them. A third reason for the relative neglect of anthropocentric relational final value in/by EE may be that such value can be incorrectly construed, or conflated, with instrumental value, and instrumental value occupies the two lowest ranks in the hierarchy of values that nonhuman entities have been thought to have.

Next to last sits non-anthropocentric instrumental value. This is very rarely discussed in EE, although innumerable nonhuman entities use and are used by one another in myriad ways. Humans themselves have non-anthropocentric instrumental value for many nonhumans in various circumstances (for example, when they steward them in gardens or restoration projects, when they feed and nurture them as pets in their homes, when they host bacteria or provide breeding grounds for viruses in their guts, etc.). Emphasis on non-anthropocentric instrumental value effectively brings the human down to the level of an instrumental node in a wider multi-species, multi-realm network of interconnected use, on a par with all other entities. It thus highlights a basic, factual condition of axiological equality.

Leveling down the human in this way, however, does not pair well with the moralization of the nonhuman, which rather wants to bring the nonhuman up to the (allegedly higher) axiological level of humans[13]. Such moralization is the task that many environmental ethicists, in their different ways and domains, have traditionally set for themselves. The

study of non-anthropocentric instrumental value has accordingly not enticed them much, as it seems to deliver no normative directives for humans toward nonhumans because the intrinsic nonhuman values that are typically thought to ground these directives are absent. The value is certainly non-anthropocentric, but only because it is a-centric generally. This seems to be no fertile axiological ground for other-regarding obligations of any kind among any beings.

Finally, the lowest of the low in the eyes of many environmental ethicists is anthropocentric instrumental value. Such is the value that nonhuman entities have merely as a means to human benefit. Nonhuman entities can have exorbitant amounts of anthropocentric instrumental value, but if that is all the value that they (can be shown to) have, then they have no moral standing of their own. The normative upshot is that it is entirely permissible for humans to use nonhumans in view of human benefit alone. Nonhumans may be used wantonly and exploitatively or cautiously and gently, but even that will be decided only according to obviously and exclusively instrumental anthropocentric considerations. For many environmental ethicists, this is literally not a good enough basis for normativity.

This overview oversimplifies very complex and subtle debates. Even so, one element should emerge quite clearly: the nonhuman values that EE has mostly focused on, and upon which it has built its main theoretical postures and normative constructions, have been mostly limited to two sorts, both of which are non-anthropocentric—namely freestanding intrinsic value (for sentientists, biocentrists, and ecocentrists looking at ecosystems whole) and non-anthropocentric relational final value (for ecocentrists looking at ecosystem members). In addition, in its search for nonhuman moral standing, EE has typically focused just on the moral or morally relevant variants of these values.

These may well have been the most important values to focus on, and doing so might have been the most theoretically innovative and practically urgent action that EE could take. Nonetheless, non-anthropocentric moral values simply do not exhaust nonhuman axiology, which is rather richer and far more nuanced. Although anthropocentric non-moral and yet still final values, non-anthropocentric instrumental values, and anthropocentric instrumental values have obviously not been absent from EE's radar entirely, they have not managed to shape its theoretical configurations and preoccupations with the same intensity and systematicity as non-anthropocentric moral ones have. Yet all these values can provide humans with reasons, including extremely strong and strongly felt reasons, to respect, protect, and steward nonhuman entities. These reasons are somewhat sidelined once moral ones take center stage.

2.2. Normativity

As already noted at various junctures, many environmental ethicists, particularly early in the development of the discipline, saw it as their task to establish intrinsic non-anthropocentric moral value and, with that, the independent moral standing of nonhuman entities, in view of a non-anthropocentric form of normativity that could establish precise moral obligations of humans toward nonhumans. Most attention was devoted to, and most controversy occurred about, the first step of this sequence, devoted to value/standing. Fewer thinkers questioned the next step—from standing to non-anthropocentric moral obligations. Yet including an element within a moral community does not necessarily imply a requirement for human agents to respect it, preserve it, promote it, etc. For example, mosquitos may have moral standing, but there might nonetheless be excellent and in some cases overwhelming anthropocentric reasons to exterminate them, for instance, when they act as disease vectors[14]. Some virulently invasive plants may have moral standing, but there might nonetheless be excellent and in some cases overwhelming non-anthropocentric reasons to exterminate them, for instance, when they cannibalize the spaces and resources of native and typically more diverse and ecosystemically integrated plants.

The reasons for which morally considerable nonhuman entities may be protected or killed, left alone or appropriated, and revered or exploited may be anthropocentric or non-anthropocentric but, either way, they will be reasons for us humans. Something must

intervene at the juncture between axiology and normativity to turn the former into the latter, and however non-anthropocentric the axiology and the normativity, what turns the former into the latter are humans and facts about us and our modes of being. Even nonhuman values that have nothing to do with us (freestanding value but also non-anthropocentric final value) need to become or be made ours in some way or another before they can normatively direct us in some way or another. These values need to concern us, make sense to us, and perhaps even make sense of us before we can begin to see the ways in which we should be concerned about them and create within our individual and collective lives the conditions to adequately express these modes of concern [74–76] (p. 113). This is not to deny that the intrinsic non-anthropocentric values of nonhuman entities can or even should guide our behaviors but to underscore what it takes for them to do so.

Unsurprisingly, B. Williams, in his only brief incursion into EE, was eager to make just this point: axiological and normative questions about nonhuman values must be asked and answered as questions about values and norms "that human beings can make part of their lives and understand themselves as pursuing and respecting" [25] (p. 234). Otherwise—one may hear him continue—EE will either simply fail to become relevant or become yet another set of external constraints (however solidly grounded and justified), plotted against an agent's lived experience, in this case their experience of and with nonhuman entities. The nuances, complexities, and contradictions of such an experience may thus fail to be fully represented, and the experience itself will be regulated but not necessarily enriched, better understood, or made more meaningful thereby.

So, it is not just whether given nonhuman entities should be addressees of human obligations—a question that the establishment of their intrinsic moral value was thought to resolve—but also what these obligations are and how they should be fulfilled. Asking these questions is to ask how these obligations fit, or can be made to fit, into our individual and collective lives given the lives that these are, and answering them will inescapably require taking into account the particular combinations of, as well as trade-offs between, values (intrinsic and extrinsic, moral and nonmoral, and anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric) that will be at stake in specific circumstances given all the value-bearers involved (human and nonhuman animals, all other living organisms, species, ecosystems, landscapes, etc.).

The general point is that whichever entities are ultimately shown to have intrinsic value, normativity will not just simply follow. Normative directives will still need to be built on the ground, balancing in each particular case a plurality of values (intrinsic as well as extrinsic) and reasons, and possibly a variety of obligations (some of which might also be conflicting), and then selecting this or that particular course of action as the most adequate (feasible, useful, sustainable, legitimate, and fair) in the circumstances. Given such a plurality of values, reasons, possibly conflicting obligations, and adequacy standards, it is implausible to expect that the contents of the most adequate response will always be identifiable simply by spotting intrinsically valuable entities and then applying a restricted set of universalist rules and principles to determine courses of action for or regarding them. At least in many cases, the practical wisdom that is part of virtue will be indispensable to identifying the contents of the most adequate course of action[15].

And then, once such a course has been identified—even if clearly obligatory, and whatever its contents and nonhuman addressees—it will also need to be effectively pursued in real life every day. Alas, it is perfectly possible to know the best and still do the worst—that is, to act akratically. *Akrasia* already infests our moral comportments toward humans, and it seems it should find even easier terrains when one's obligations are toward nonhuman entities which, unlike humans, usually have little to no power to plead, protest, or retaliate if these obligations go unfulfilled. To know the best and also do it in such circumstances will take fortitude as well. The latter is the virtuous agent's bastion against *akrasia*.

So, two central elements of VE, practical wisdom and fortitude, will need to power even obligation-based versions of EE that recognize intrinsic value to nonhuman entities. Even an agent who acknowledges their obligations toward intrinsically valuable nonhumans will often need to exercise practical wisdom to place and understand these obligations

within the larger context of their life and to determine what actions to take to fulfil them in specific circumstances; and they will also need fortitude to follow up on that determination in action despite powerful incentives not to do so.

This suggests that, at least in EE, the meta-virtues of practical wisdom and fortitude will be of instrumental importance also to utilitarians and deontologists. The former will define them as character traits that yield utility, and the latter as character traits that propel the reliable fulfilment of duties. But environmental virtue ethicists will want more. They will want virtue to be foundational rather than just an aid to differently grounded systems.

3. Environmental Virtue Ethics

An (eudaimonistic) environmental virtue ethics (EVE) will include an account of the role of nonhuman entities, and virtuous relations therewith, in and for a prudentially good human life; in other words, it will explain how developing and exercising environmental virtues will benefit the agent by opening them up to experiences, goods, sources of meaning, knowledge, etc., that would instead be unavailable to the non-virtuous. EVE's evaluative focal point will be character traits, and its normative standards will be environmental virtues, that is, prudentially valuable character traits whose development and exercise involve responsiveness toward nonhuman entities and their values. It will provide a catalogue of such virtues and indications regarding which practices will enable and require the agent to develop and exercise them[16].

Environmental virtue ethicists have argued that EVE, though anthropocentric, is an adequate reference framework for EE. In what follows, I size up this claim against the themes that have been given prominence in this article so far–nonhuman values and the issue of anthropocentrism (with no implication that no other themes exist that may also be relevant to an assessment of EVE's overall adequacy as a reference framework for EE)[17].

3.1. EVE and Nonhuman Moral Values

EVE simply bypasses the whole intrinsic-value-to-non-anthropocentric-moral-obligations format that has been so popular in EE. EVE is concerned with prudential reasons rather than moral obligations, and that is enough to eliminate the theoretical need for nonhuman intrinsic (freestanding) moral values. To do so is not to deny the existence and importance of such values, but it emancipates EVE from having to prove their existence and importance prior to launch. In the previous section, I noted that, by themselves, these values are often not sufficient bases for normativity even for obligations-based EE; EVE has it that they are not necessary either.

EVE takes all nonhuman entities, regardless of whether they have freestanding or other varieties of value, as ethically considerable—that is, as all involved in, and relevant to (though each in its own ways, roles, and contexts), the goodness of a human life. Different virtues are responsive to different entities and their different intrinsic as well as extrinsic properties in different ways (via different actions, reactions, inactions, and practices). Different virtues are also responsive in different ways to the different sorts of values that these nonhuman entities may have (from freestanding to anthropocentric instrumental value), and it is the job of practical wisdom to adjudicate which virtues should be more centrally or urgently operative in response to which values in particular situations [76] (pp. 40–42).

So, EVE can be theoretically lean, axiologically flexible, contextually alert, and practically inclusive. These are all good things. Nonetheless, in this framework, emphasis is lifted from nonhuman intrinsic moral values and the establishment of non-anthropocentric obligations, and is instead placed on the agent's search for a good life and their prudential reasons for pursuing it by acting in certain ways and not others. The worry is that EVE might be an anthropocentric quicksand. Under its lens, for example, the freestanding values of nonhuman entities no longer seem freestanding but are rather derived from the value of a good human life. And what makes a character trait a virtue is its contribution to

a human life being prudentially good for and from the perspective of the agent who lives it—not its contribution to that life being morally good toward nonhuman entities[18].

Regarding the first concern, EVE does not claim that nonhuman entities derive all their values from their contribution to the goodness of human lives. EVE rather claims that the goodness of a human life is enabled and constituted (at least partly) by the agent's developing and exercising character traits that adequately respond to the values of nonhuman entities, including freestanding values as much as any other sort of values these entities may (be shown to) have. It is the character traits that one develops and exercises as a response to the intrinsically valuable sentience of animals, the aliveness of plants, and the complexity of diverse ecosystems, whose ethical value (their status as virtues or vices) derives from their contribution to the goodness of the agent's life, not the freestanding moral value of the animals, plants, and ecosystems to which these character traits respond. To count as a prudentially good environmental virtue, a character trait might well have to also respond to non-anthropocentric moral demands posed by intrinsically valuable nonhuman entities.

Regarding the second concern, although the theoretical justification for developing and exercising an environmentally virtuous character trait is anthropocentric and prudential, considerations about what makes a character trait a virtue do not guide a virtuous agent's actions and practices; instead, the virtues themselves do [93] (p. 439). In various circumstances, some of these virtues may well countenance reasons for actions and practices that respond to non-anthropocentric moral demands. Whatever the anthropocentric, prudential benefits of engaging nonhuman entities virtuously, in many cases, for these benefits to accrue, the engagement must be with these entities as ends in themselves—much as is the case among humans when relating to friends [94,95].

As noted, EVE need not deny the existence or importance of nonhuman freestanding moral values. What EVE is concerned about is the ways in which humans should appreciate and respond to nonhuman values as they attempt to live a good human life. That includes freestanding moral values but it is also not limited to them, simply because even if/when nonhuman entities (can be shown to) have such values, they hardly ever have these values only. Most nonhuman entities are also extremely likely to have final non-anthropocentric value (as elements of valuable ecosystems) and non-anthropocentric instrumental value (as means for other nonhumans—for example, as food, pollinators, mates, and habitats) Many nonhuman entities are also likely to have anthropocentric non-moral final values (aesthetic, cultural, etc.), as well as anthropocentric instrumental values. EVE sees none of these many sorts of nonhuman values as constitutively pre-eminent, at least not in the sense that responding virtuously to that sort of value should automatically dispense the agent from responding virtuously to the others. Each and all sorts of nonhuman values provide the virtuous agent with some reasons to act in certain ways and not others. It will be practical wisdom that indicates which values and reasons matter most in particular cases and how virtuous responses should be accordingly modulated.

Freestanding moral values will provide a virtuous agent with reasons for valuing their bearers intrinsically and responding accordingly [96]. Other sorts of values that these bearers might have will provide reasons for valuing and responding to them differently; and of course, other contextually relevant bearers might have various values of their own. Even if intrinsic values may be stable, some of these other values will shift as they will be triggered, reinforced, weakened, changed, or annulled by circumstances. An environmentally virtuous agent will have rich and nuanced capacities to appreciate all the values involved in given circumstances and their contextually shifting combinations and thus to appreciate the varieties of reasons dynamically soliciting the exercise of different virtues in different cases. But again, while EVE is indeed open to the many and diverse sorts of values that nonhuman entities can have and is thus alert to a wide variety of reasons for exercising virtue—including anthropocentric instrumentalist reasons, such as those typically enshrined in sustainability policy documents—EVE presumes not that any specific sorts of values and reasons should take systematic precedence over the others,

taken either singularly or in concert. Hence, it also presumes not that anthropocentric instrumental values and reasons should take systematic precedence over all other varieties of values and reasons, taken either singularly or in concert.

It could be objected that EVE indulges a different, deeper form of anthropocentric instrumentalism: whatever actions a virtuous agent takes they take to live a good life that is good for them in their own eyes [92]. Verily, the virtuous agent is using the nonhuman entities that they treat virtuously to achieve a good life for themselves. Environmental virtues are thus means, and the nonhuman entities toward or regarding which these virtues are developed and exercised are, as it were, the means of means.

This might be an objection to the virtuous agent's motives, or to the structure of EVE as a theory (or both). Regarding the motives, as noted just above, it is widely recognized among environmental virtue ethicists that for the prudential benefits of exercising virtues toward and regarding nonhumans to accrue to the agent, these entities must often be engaged with as ends in themselves: engaging them as means to an end invalidates the very possibility of reaching that end. So, if the objection charges the agent with intentionally instrumentalist motives, whereby the agent does what they do because they believe that doing so will help them to achieve *eudaimonia*, then the charge is not only that the agent is objectionably anthropocentric but also that they are practically unwise. Yet a practically unwise virtuous agent is a wild theoretical (and practical) anomaly. So, the agent that the objection targets, with their objectionably anthropocentric/instrumentalist motives, is likely not to be an environmentally virtuous agent.

If the objection is to the structure of EVE as a theory, for it to bite it must be presupposed that the exercise of virtue is an efficient cause of a good life, with such a life understood as something other than the exercise of virtue—as an effect produced by and external to it. But it is a constant leitmotiv of VE, and EVE, that the exercise of virtue is rather (at least partly) constitutive of the good life, or an immanent cause of it, with a good life inhering (at least partly) in the very exercise of virtue. Rather than an efficient means to the good life, then, the development and exercise of virtues are better described as immanent modes of it. And if the good life also inheres in the exercise of environmental virtues, and the exercise of environmental virtues enables and requires the agent to adequately respond to the values of nonhuman entities, including freestanding as much as any other sort of values—then the exercise of environmental virtue is anthropocentrically instrumentalist only in substantively unthreatening senses of both "anthropocentric" and "instrumentalist". This should go some significant way in deflating the objection.

3.2. EVE and Nonhuman Nonmoral Values

Because EVE, like VE more generally, is not in the business of articulating moral obligations, it does not restrict its attention to specifically moral values, nor to specifically moral virtues. So, among the reasons for the development and exercise of virtues, there may be, in addition to intrinsic moral values, the relational anthropocentric nonmoral final values (aesthetic, scientific, historical, cultural, and sacred/religious) of nonhuman entities and their anthropocentric as well as non-anthropocentric instrumental values. And among the virtues, there will be intellectual virtues (virtuous ways of thinking about human-nonhuman relations, for example, openness and ecological sensitivity)[19], aesthetic virtues (virtuous ways of experiencing and appreciating nonhuman aesthetic qualities, for example, wonder and attentiveness)[20], and socio-political virtues (virtuous ways of relating among humans when nonhumans are also involved, for example, cooperativeness and justice, and/or virtuous ways of relating to nonhumans, for example care and respect)[21].

According to EVE, a good life is one in which an agent's capacities to appreciate and adequately respond to nonhuman values enable and/or constitute (at least partly) the agent's enjoyment of those very values. Now, much of the prudential goodness that EVE promises to the virtuous agent lies in their enjoyment of the anthropocentric relational nonmoral final values of nonhuman entities. It is often through the protection and promotion of these values that the agent can valorize those emotions, attachments, commitments, and

other realities of their individual life that involve, refer to, or depend on the manifold meaning(s) that nonhuman entities can have. As noted in Section 2, theoretical consideration for what nonhuman entities mean for humans has traditionally not been a signature of EE. EVE is more interested in and hospitable to it[22].

Meaning emerges from the mental ability to "connect things" [103]. Any anthropocentric relational final value that nonhuman entities can have depends on humans connecting them to other "things" (beliefs, values, objects, persons, narratives, etc.)—typically on aesthetical, scientific, historical, sacred/religious, and generally cultural grounds. This makes human sense of nonhuman entities, often as a part of larger attempts to bring a structured coherence to the human experiences of such entities and to position these experiences within some version of a "bigger picture". In this way, nonhuman entities acquire forms of significance for humans, and in many cases, come to matter personally to individuals as well as collectively to peoples, becoming in various ways entwined with human self-conceptions and cultural identities.

Such entwinement explains why exercising virtues toward or regarding nonhuman entities can be a source of meaning in and for one's own life, when that life is seen as connected in valuable ways to these entities and the exercise of virtues toward or regarding them is seen to correctly valorize such connections. One's life acquires meaning through the exercise of environmental virtues when that exercise makes that life cohere with larger structures of value, belief systems, and traditions, and when it connects one's present actions with the future persistence and furthering of such structures, systems, and traditions, thus providing a sense that one's life also matters to "the bigger picture". This sense of meaning is a powerful component of prudential goodness [104], and the search for it provides strong reasons for individuals and collectives to exercise virtues toward and regarding nonhuman entities, including virtues of stewardship such as loyalty and diligence [105].

Finally, EVE has no disdain for the instrumental values, both anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric, of nonhuman entities. Indeed, the material component of the prudential goodness that EVE promises to the virtuous agent lies in the (virtuous) enjoyment of the anthropocentrically instrumental values of nonhuman entities. These values are, of course, very notable, as nonhuman entities—now understood as goods, capital, services providers, and the like—can be necessary to human life, agency, and the very exercise of virtue [82]; to the initiation and continuation of valuable human projects [94]; and to the maintenance of social and political stability. This all provides strong reasons to exercise virtues of sustainability (including temperance and farsightedness) and virtues of environmental activism (including cooperativeness, perseverance, and creativity)[23]. These virtues focus on how best to structure and manage our uses of nonhuman entities to the advantage of all humans and ensure their availability for all humans to use into the future. Yet the very same virtues can also respond to non-anthropocentric values and be focused on creating and maintaining the conditions for, for example, retaining a climate congenial to the survival of nonhuman species, sustaining a resource base sufficient to the replenishment of ecosystems, ensuring that enough pollinators remain active in given areas, containing the spreading of invasive organisms, and other non-anthropocentric actions, practices, and policies[24].

4. EVE and Global Climate Change

In the early 1990s, global anthropogenic climate change (CC) was officially added to the list of planetary environmental challenges, which already included resource depletion, pollution, and biodiversity loss [108]. The consensus was that a changing climate could be anticipated to have pervasive, transformative effects at all scales, from the planetary to the cellular, many of which would be uncongenial to *sapiens* and other species. Over the next thirty years, climate science solidified—yet climate diplomacy squabbled, climate governance stalled, average global temperatures continued to rise, and the effects of CC became increasingly significant and apparent the world over [109].

CC shot EE to new heights. It posed unprecedented theoretical challenges; connected the discipline to many other research programs across the sciences; and, in a (perhaps dark) sense, valorized it in the eyes of a wider public, simply because it raised the stakes of so-called "environmental problems" so vertiginously. The lives and well-being of billions of present as well as future people are now known to be on the line, along with the preservation of large chunks of the Earth's and *sapiens'* natural and cultural heritage, the stability of ecosystems, and the persistence of uncounted species. In addition, CC challenged social, economic, and political institutions at all scales—whose rationality, efficiency, sustainability, legitimacy, and justice were (are) all called into question by its planetary, multifarious ills and risks (for a wide-ranging treatment of the philosophy of CC, see the essays in [110]).

CC is a planetary, intra- and inter-generational collective action problem that feeds on the accumulation of individually innocuous everyday actions and behaviors, such as driving cars and consuming imported foods; it enmeshes causal responsibilities in complex ways, and it harms and burdens humans and nonhumans dispersed across space and time. Given these (and other) features, CC seems to overwhelm individual moral agency: no one causes nor can ever fix it in isolation; no one intends to bring about the badness and injustices that it mobilizes; and indeed, no one brings about any specific instances of such badness and injustices by contributing to CC with their everyday fossil-fueled actions and behaviors. For these (and more) reasons, some philosophers have argued that our moral theories are mostly incapable of generating individual moral obligations not to engage in those everyday actions and behaviors (see, among others, [111]; for an overview of the complex debate on individual responsibility for climate change, see [112]).

M. Midgley has called this insufficiency of our moral systems in articulating the connections between the individual and the planetary a "conceptual emergency [113] (p. 40). S. Gardiner [114] (p. 41) has denounced it as "theoretical ineptitude" that fuels moral corruption. Some have also argued that such insufficiency or ineptitude is part of a much larger difficulty. D. Jamieson [109] has diffusedly explained the many ways in which our psychology, cognitive schemes, value systems, normative criteria, and institutions—evolved as they have in low-density, low-tech societies—are mostly at a loss when confronted with CC, and B. Latour [115] has examined the incongruences between this challenge and the interpretive, emotional, symbolic, and ideational tools made available by our (Western) cultural repertoire and inherited understanding of the human station within the wider workings of things. Ultimately, these and other thinkers have suggested, whether explicitly or implicitly, that what is at stake with CC is the very tenability of our (Western) conception(s) of the good life and our ability to still find meaning in such life as we remake the planet.

The recalcitrance of CC to our individual-obligation-generating moral systems; the depth of its cultural, philosophical, and existential premises and implications; and the power with which it threatens our very idea of what a good, meaningful human life is, has led many environmental ethicists to EVE [116]. In this connection, EVE can be used both as an upper, as it were, and as a downer.

As an upper, EVE functions as a reflective framework for processing the premises and implications of CC and revising conceptions of the good life accordingly, as well as a normative framework in which individuals can experiment these new, climate-wiser conceptions through different practices with different effects on both humans and nonhumans [88]. In this scenario, the development and exercise of virtue enables and requires individual empowerment, both intellectual and practical, considering this planetary challenge and in view of structuring more savvy and effective forms of its societal management. This empowerment, which can be seen as a form of ethical adaptation to CC, is to be pursued through "experiments in living", in J. S. Mill's apt words: new conceptual, practical, cultural, technological, and institutional (re-)arrangements that finely disregard the status quo and try alternatives. Ideally, such experiments should be capable of prompting systemic reform if adequately scaled up, and interpersonal coordination upon them should be as easy as possible to achieve [90]. Individuating and even inventing these experiments in

living, personally engaging in them, and promoting and sustaining coordination upon them is one way to retrieve one's agency in the face of CC and possibly also find new sources of meaning in one's life amidst planetary changes (for more on CC and meaning in life, see [117]).

I have argued elsewhere that networked, food-producing urban gardening is one such climate-wise environmentally virtuous experiment in living [90]. Of course, there may be many others: while one individual grows their own food, another may be changing their teaching topics and practices; another may be searching for ways to calculate and price carbon emissions more precisely; another will organize weekly strikes, or campaign for the rights of nature; and another will push for the establishment of green courts, science courts, nonhuman institutional representation schemes, a global constitution, or other institutions for the future.

From this perspective, EVE is also environmental virtue politics (EVP). Given the nature of CC, EVE/EVP must be multi-scalar, ranging from global/multi-generational to local/individual. This means that EVE/EVP requires accounts that connect and explain the connection between planetary goodness (which, not to forget, must also be multi-species in most versions of EVE) and the goodness of local, situated, individual virtuous lives. Given such demands for multi-scalarity, using EVE/EVEP as an upper in the face of today's ecological challenges is itself very challenging in both theory and practice.

It is also tempting to use EVE as a downer, for however empowered by and through experiments of living, and however interpersonally well-coordinated these experiments may be, a virtuous agent confronting CC will still have extremely little power. CC remains a transformative phenomenon of planetary proportions involving, in a wide variety of different ways, billions of humans and nonhumans across time and space and mobilizing human and nonhuman forces of monumental complexity that are still only partially understood. However virtuous an agent is, Earth's climatic future is mostly out of their hands, and even well-coordinated experiments that can prompt systemic reform are neither guaranteed to achieve nor to secure that reform. Still, an agent is virtuous not because they achieve some final success but rather because they steadfastly strive for it by exercising effort, skills, wisdom, and fortitude even in the face of probable failure, and even as a way of facing that failure [109,118].

In such circumstances, exercising virtues will reward the agent with prudentially precious self-acquiescence. This is an ancient theme in VE—going back to Epictetus at least—that is easily repackaged for contemporary times: none of us can control the climatically incongruous behaviours of other people, states, companies, and global institutions, nor the nonhuman forces that these behaviours unleash, but each of us can try to refine our evaluations of, and responses toward, these uncontrollable human and nonhuman factors so as to control at least our own ways of living with them. Then, says VE, forms of pacification will follow.

Perhaps this notion of virtue as hard-won self-acquiescence in the face of the overwhelming was best articulated by B. Spinoza in his *Ethics*:

> Human power is very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes. So we do not have an absolute power to adapt things outside us to our use. Nevertheless, we shall bear calmly those things which happen to us contrary to what the principle of our advantage demands, if we are conscious that we have done what we had to do, that the power we have could not have extended itself to the point where we could have avoided those things, and that we are a part of the whole of nature, whose order we follow. If we understand this clearly and distinctly, that part of us which is defined by understanding, i.e., the better part of us, will be entirely satisfied, and will strive to persevere in that satisfaction[25].

Obviously, the worry with using EVE as a downer is that it might foster squeamish forms of quietism, or even resignation, just when action is needed most. But the worry is misplaced, and in the last line of the quote above, Spinoza explains why. To "persevere in that satisfaction" of self-acquiescence is to "strive"; self-acquiescence is never final and

there is no acquired entitlement to it, and thus, there is no relenting and no resignation in it. As the climate changes and the planet is remade, we will need to persevere in thinking and acting virtuously and do so knowing that what Spinoza calls “the whole of nature”—humans included—surpasses us infinitely in power. So, engaging in experiments of living in the face of CC will also enable and require the development and exercise of a peculiar, self-acquiescing form of clear-mindedness that still counsels further engagement, whereby the sobering acknowledgement of one’s vertiginous insufficiency accompanies without contradiction a constant, unending striving toward self-empowerment [109,118].

This tells us that when it comes to CC, to use EVE as a downer is also always to use it as an upper and vice versa. And as Spinoza would also tell us, there is only extremely limited self-empowerment without the empowerment of others and thus no ethics without politics [119]. In the face of overwhelming ecological changes and challenges, even self-acquiescence requires experimenting, and even self-concern requires coordination with others. EVE is both an upper and a downer, and all EVE is also EVP.

What about obligation-based, non-anthropocentric EE in all this? No illuminating indications have come from that direction with respect to CC yet. It is mostly unclear how CC should be thought of from the perspective of value positions such as sentientism, biocentrism or ecocentrism, and how these positions look at certain forms of climate adaptation or geoengineering. No solid position has been reached on whether CC provides justification for strongly interventionist environmental policies and on whether there are obligations to preserve intrinsically valuable nonhuman entities facing climate-induced extinction or transformation. It is also controversial that the idea of “climate justice” can meaningfully be extended to nonhumans. Perhaps most importantly, obligation-based non-anthropocentric EE has not yet provided a clear assessment of the extents of convergence or divergence between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric theoretical and practical approaches to CC, nor clear pronouncements on the moral acceptability of possible divergences.

EVE might be a few steps ahead compared to non-anthropocentric EE regarding CC, but it has its own matters to attend to. From what has been said in this and previous sections, at least two stand out. First, as noted just above, with CC, there is a need for both a theory and a practice of these continuous transitions from agent to planetary scales and back, and from individual self-concern to societal and indeed species-level arrangements, including cultural and institutional arrangements—in other words, the systematic remodulation of EVE into EVE/EVP. This is no small feat considering that, being prudentially focused, VE is originally a self-centered form of ethics [120–123].

Here, EVE can move in at least three different but compatible directions. First, it can explore the theoretical configuration, practical development, and exercise of specifically political virtues of sustainability, stewardship, and activism—such as justice, loyalty, and cooperativeness [101]. Second, it can configure a form of virtue politics which, in Western democratic contexts, typically means loosening liberalism in favor of perfectionism and typically goes by the name of civic republicanism [124]. And third, it can move in Spinoza’s own, characteristically radical direction to rethink the self—the very self on which VE is centered, from atomistic to intrinsically relational and indeed ecological: one with “the whole of nature”, human and nonhuman [125].

This leads to the second matter that EVE needs to attend to—the very topic of this article: its relations with nonhuman intrinsic values and its anthropocentrism. Even if, as I have argued, EVE enables and requires a rich and nuanced engagement with nonhuman values of all sorts and neither presupposes nor implies moral anthropocentrism, the fact remains that most of the thinking about virtue that has been carried out throughout Western history has indeed been morally anthropocentric, even with those rare thinkers, like Spinoza, who did deny ontological anthropocentrism[26]. Most of what we think virtue is has been built upon morally anthropocentric foundations. In questioning such foundations, EVE might be well equipped but is nonetheless venturing into largely unchartered waters, which it enters in a particularly stormy time of planetary ecological changes and challenges,

as well. In addition, precisely because EVE enables and requires a rich and nuanced engagement with nonhuman values of all sorts and neither presupposes nor implies moral anthropocentrism, the EVP that EVE must somehow always also become in the face of these ecological changes and challenges needs to be multispecies, and we—and our current political theories and institutions—have virtually no experience with that [126].

5. Concluding Remarks

In this article, I suggested that EVE enables and requires a rich and nuanced engagement with nonhuman values of all sorts. While promising prudential goodness to the agent, EVE neither presupposes nor implies moral anthropocentrism. EVE denies the theoretical primacy but not the existence and importance of non-anthropocentric intrinsic nonhuman values. It accepts that these values can and possibly should guide human behavior in the context of our individual and collective projects of living well, and, indeed, it might affirm that all the more strongly in times of CC. It does not suggest that nonhuman value is derivative from human value, including the prudential value that EVE promises to the agent. It does not assign moral standing to humans only, and it accepts that there might be circumstances in which the interests of nonhumans may obligatorily override those of humans. It does not claim any privileged ontological role of humans. It only claims that a good human life is one that includes a rich and nuanced engagement with nonhuman values of all sorts, and that the exercise of environmental virtues not only enables but also constitutes (at least partly) such a life.

Still, however well-equipped EVE may be, its tasks are daunting. Virtue is human virtue, and in discussing human virtue, Western philosophy has traditionally assumed moral anthropocentrism. In addition, the goodness that virtue promises is prudential, and in discussing prudential goodness, Western philosophy has not always been clear if it was one with or the very other of moral goodness and political justice. In the face of planetary ecological challenges such as CC, which mobilizes spatiotemporally unbound badness and injustices for both humans and nonhumans, EVE is catapulted to the task of not just articulating but of also becoming a multispecies EVP—shot across scales and levels of social and genetic organization in search of a theory and practice of the good life that links individuals to collectives, the species to the planet, and human with nonhuman values.

What seems most exciting about this task is that for EVE to engage with it successfully, it will require EE's help. With its characteristic focus on nonhuman intrinsic values and non-anthropocentric obligations, EE has investigated nonhuman axiology and normativity for decades now, thoroughly mapping the fundamental options as well as challenges for extending our moral consideration to nonhumans (from animals to plants; from rivers to forests and planets). As it did so, EE also interrogated the boundaries between morals and politics and always informed, or aimed to also inform, political theory and action. As EVE attempts to become a multispecies EVP, and non-anthropocentric EE continues its evolution to confront CC and other planetary ecological changes and challenges, perhaps the best we can hope for is reciprocal guidance across uncharted waters.

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Notes

1 On the difficulties of defining VE effectively and concisely, see [1].

2 The notion of character traits has been powerfully problematized in the past two decades. Findings in experimental psychology have shown that individuals are very significantly influenced in their choices and actions by situational factors, casting doubts on

the idea that character traits are standing dispositions whose operations extend consistently across contexts and situations, which, as some have argued, would in turn cast doubts on the existence and nature of virtues [2,3]. Virtue ethicists have sometimes downplayed [4], often responded to [5], and, in some cases, absorbed these findings and critiques, possibly by reconceiving character traits as habituated skills rather than standing dispositions [6,7].

3 On the distinction between criteria for goodness and the goodness of satisfying them see [8].

4 Among these alternatives are broadly sentimentalist ones (most notably Slote's), and among the most important contemporary expressions of the sentimentalist tradition is care ethics, which stresses the normative significance of relations and dependencies and the deliberative and evaluative significance of motivations, emotions, and the body. Care ethics is hospitable to and interested in the theory and practice of virtues; VE very often sees care as a virtue and/or recognizes that there are distinctive virtues of care. Care ethics has also been thought to have strong affiliations with feminist thinking, and the contact points between VE, care ethics, and feminism are many and important; nonetheless, there are good theoretical reasons to keep VE, particularly in its eudaimonistic variant, distinct from both care ethics and feminism [17,18].

5 On fortitude as a meta-virtue, see [23], which discusses Spinoza's notion of *fortitudo*. It is generally the case that fortitude, understood as a meta-virtue, is a notion more at home with Stoic versions of VE. Other versions, influenced by certain readings of Aristotle, conceive of fortitude rather as continence and then actually contrast it with virtue on the grounds that a truly virtuous person is precisely one who is not even exposed to acratic temptations and thus needs not exercise continence. On these matters see, among others, [24].

6 On what makes an ethical position a genuine specimen of VE, see [26].

7 See, among others, [16,30,31]; essays in [1,10–13,32,33]; essays in [34]; essays in [14,35]; essays in [36]; essays in [37]; essays in [6,38,39]; essays in [40,41]; essays in [42,43]; essays in [44]; essays in [7,45–48]; essays in [49].

8 This classification of anthropocentrism(s) is in [55].

9 See [53], for a classic statement of this thesis. See [56], for a discussion of its many and only partially coherent variations. On colonialism and industrialization as key historical premises of the contemporary ecological crisis see, among others, essays in [57].

10 Anthropocentrism is often "equated with forms of valuation which easily, or even necessarily, lead to nature's destruction" [58] (p. 9), and thus, "We are told by some theorists that we must assume that an adequate and workable environmental ethics must embrace a restricted set of properties: non-anthropocentrism, holism, moral monism, and, perhaps, a commitment to some form of intrinsic value" [59] (p. 273).

11 According to an even stronger reading, which mobilizes very complex issues in metaethics, intrinsic value means objective (i.e., non-subjective) value, that is, a value that nonhuman entities possess even in the absence of any human valuer. Value objectivism has always been tempting to EE, and some of its defences within the discipline have been strong and highly influential (see, for example, [63]). Nonetheless, it remains a very impervious position to hold, and insistence on it within the discipline has waned with time (see [64], for a discussion). This article does not dismiss but will not discuss nonhuman intrinsic value in this controversial objective sense.

12 It should be noted that none of these claims are uncontroversial, and none of these views have been spared extensive criticism. In fact, some of those who have turned to environmental virtue ethics may have done so because they were ultimately unpersuaded by the arguments for the intrinsic value of nonhuman entities, at least as provided by these theories. In what follows, I will not insist on this aspect and will rather direct my critical remarks in different directions.

13 One would be hard-pressed to find an environmental ethicist who has questioned the idea that humans have intrinsic (freestanding) value. For relevant reflections, see [72].

14 On the strange environmental ethics of mosquito eradication, see [73].

15 On the role of practical wisdom in normativity-configuring deliberation, see [77,78].

16 See, among others, [37,76,79–91].

17 Aside from anthropocentrism, other contentious terrains include whether EVE is objectionably self-centred, whether and how it can be action-guiding, whether it can produce an adequate account of right action, whether it is able to respect but not succumb to cultural relativism, and whether it be self-effacing. Most of these worries are simply inherited by EVE from VE, and none of them appear to be fatal. For a literature-savvy comprehensive treatment, see [76].

18 A classic statement of these worries is in [92].

19 On epistemic virtues see, among others, [31]; essays in [34,97].

20 On aesthetic virtues see, among others, [98].

21 On socio-political virtues see, among others, [50,90,99–101].

22 On the relation between virtue and meaning generally, see [102].

23 See [26,76,106].

24 The EVE discussed in this and in the previous subsection evokes B. Norton's "weak anthropocentrism" but corrects it at one central juncture. In Norton's words [107] (p. 133), weak anthropocentrism "distinguishes between the actual felt preferences (which may be irrational) and the considered felt preferences (rationally justifiable preferences)" of humans, and is guided

by the latter preferences only. Norton argued that "While the pursuit of selfish, short-term, consumptive desires may lead to the destruction of nature, a far-sighted individual with scientific knowledge, rationally defensible moral ideals, and a set of preferences consistent with such a world view would protect nature for human reasons" [107] (p. 133). The juncture at which EVE corrects Norton's position is where it substitutes his "rationally justifiable preferences" or "rationally held world views" with "environmentally virtuous character". There is no element in Norton's view securing that rationally justifiable preferences or rationally held world views will favour nonhuman entities and, clearly, there are rationally defensible preferences (for efficiency and convenience, for example) and rationally held worldviews (liberalism, for example) that could, at least on occasion, also work to the disadvantage of nonhuman entities [107]. An "environmentally virtuous character", on the other hand, both secures that, and explains why, its possessor entertains the specifically environmental-friendly rationally justifiable preferences and worldviews that Norton wants.

25 Ethics IV, Appendix XXXII, G II.276/C I.593–94. On Spinoza's virtue ethics, see [23].

26 Spinoza denied conceptual anthropocentrism as well, though his philosophical routes there are too thick to follow here.

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