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IN DEFENSE OF NON-ANTHROPOCENTRISM—A RELATIONAL ACCOUNT OF VALUE AND HOW IT CAN BE INTEGRATED

By

IAN INTI WECKLER

BA Philosophy, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, 2016

Thesis

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Weckler, Ian, MA, Summer 2020 Environmental Philosophy

In Defense of Non-Anthropocentrism: A Relational Account of Value and How it Can Be Integrated

Chairperson: Christopher Preston
Committee Member: Deborah Slicer
Committee Member: Wade Davies

Climate change has been show to be caused by humans. Human-centric behaviors have affected the world to the extent that many believe we have entered a new geologic epoch. This epoch—the Anthropocene—has prompted exploration into the ethical relationship between humans and the rest of the world. We know that a purely anthropocentric ethical system of values has lead ecological imbalance and environmental destruction, and that a non-anthropocentric (or human-centric) ethical system of value would be better suited for maintaining and regaining a habitable environment. However, past conceptions of non anthropocentrism have relied on abstract conceptions of value that fail to create a useful and practical ethical system. A look into the views of indigenous cultures provides another conception of non-anthropocentrism grounded in the concept of relational values. Relational values emerge out of indigenous systems of knowledge, which are grounded in and supported by indigenous origin stories and cosmologies. These systems of knowledge are the product of thousands of years of observing the functioning of the natural world, and the efficacy and practically of the derived values are proven through generations of lived experience that embodied those values to great success. In order to integrate such values into the mainstream, we must overcome the institutionalized historical biases designed to oppress and diminish indigenous cultures and values. This can be done by integrating a land-based educational approach to learning, where the entire history of relations within a place or community is critically analyzed and discussed. If this can be done, then the foundation will be set for modern society to develop the necessary relational principles needed for avoiding perpetuating the same issues that resulted in the Anthropocene.

In Defense of Non-Anthropocentrism—A Relational Account of Value and How It Can Be Integrated

Part 1–Reconceptualizing Non-Anthropocentrism—Intrinsic vs Relational Value

In the wake of climate change, there has been much discussion surrounding to what degree humans have negatively impacted the planet. Humans, through our various practices and habits, have impacted the earth to a large degree, so much so that many within the academic community have begun to argue that we have entered a new geologic epoch, one often referred to as the Anthropocene (Subramanian). Though there is some disagreement over the exact moment the Anthropocene began, what exactly constitutes the new epoch, or whether the term Anthropocene (etymologically and linguistically speaking) truly represents what has happened to the world, what is agreed on is that the current environmental practices and habits of humanity have substantially and detrimentally left their mark on the planet, putting its long-term habitability at risk (Subramanian, IPCC).

In that sense, the Anthropocene, despite the discussions surrounding the term, indicates that the kind of relationship between humans and the planet has resulted in an environmental crisis. According to environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott, the environmental crisis stems from “a widespread belief within Western culture that the nonhuman world was but a pool of resources existing only to satisfy human needs and wants” (Callicott 3). With that in mind, as humanity gains a better understanding of how their actions affect the world around them, we have begun to recognize that many of the anthropocentric practices and beliefs we once took for granted are environmentally exploitative and harmful. The harmful practices that have detrimentally affected the environment, such as mass agriculture, deforestation, and fossil fuel

extraction and consumption, are now understood to be human-centric—or anthropocentric—in character, in the sense that such practices are geared toward the benefit and utility of humans alone, regardless of their effect on the rest of the world. For example, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports from 2001 (McMichael et al. 1543-1546) and 2019 (IPCC), the continued practice of fossil fuel extraction and use (among other practices) has resulted in massive amounts of carbon dioxide being pumped into the atmosphere, directly resulting in global warming and putting the habitability of the planet at risk (McMichael et al. 1543, IPCC).

Environmental philosophers and ethicists have made attempts to construct a system of values designed to avoid justifying the kinds of practices and behaviors that result in the destruction of our habitat. According to Callicott, "Some philosophers suggest that if the resolute and often militant anthropocentrism of Western traditions of ethics was partly to blame for the environmental crisis, then replacing the western [anthropocentric] worldview all together would be better than modifying or extending it" (Callicott 5-6). If a human-centric worldview resulted in climate change, then a non-human-centric worldview could avoid these issues by creating an ethical system that considers more than just the needs and wants of humans. Humans live within the environment and depend on it for survival, so an ethical system that considers the health and well-being of humans and the rest of nature would be in a better position to avoid the issues resulting from a humans-only view.

According to Callicott, if we choose to do away with anthropocentrism, then we need a more holistic conception of value (Callicott 5-6). Environmental philosopher Andrew Light argues that in order to do this, people who share Callicott's view would need to "come up with a description of the value of nonhumans, or the nonhuman natural world, in non-anthropocentric

terms" (Light 430). Light continues this thought, writing "the preferred description of this form of value has generally been as some form of intrinsic value, thought to mean that nonhumans or ecosystems possessed some sort of value in and of themselves (as opposed to only possessing instrumental value to the achievement of human ends" (Light 430). Rather than valuing things by their ability to satisfy human needs, the concept of intrinsic value intends to extend value to things outside of how they serve human ends. Within an intrinsic value paradigm, all things—human and non-human—contain value in and of themselves (Rolston 143-144; Light 430). The purpose of extending intrinsic value to the world is to try and show that things have value outside of human needs, and as a result should be treated as more than just instruments for humans to exploit. This overcomes the issues that a human-centric instrumental worldview has resulted in the exploitation and abuse of the environment to such an extent that the world is at risk of being uninhabitable.

Though the concept of intrinsic value was used to construct a non-anthropocentric ethical system, Light argues that this has failed to be useful in addressing environmental issues. This is because the non-anthropocentric ethical systems based around intrinsic value have not been a motivating concept for inspiring environmental change due to its reliance on an abstract, intangible conception of value (Light 427). According to Light, "the focus on somewhat abstract concepts of value theory has pushed environmental ethics away from discussion of which arguments morally motivate people to embrace more supportive environmental views" (Light 427). Light argues that the failure to appeal to human interests and the focus on abstract theories of value has not produced a functional ethical basis for environmental work. According to Light, "environmental ethics is not living up to its promise as a field of philosophy attempting to help

resolve environmental problems. It is instead evolving mostly as a field of intramural philosophical debate" (Light 436).

For Light, the concept of intrinsic value does not prescribe a way to completely overcome an anthropocentric worldview, since "[h]uman interests still exist even if a non-anthropocentric theory has been justified...we can easily imagine that humans who had recognized the valid justification of non-anthropocentric natural value would still feel the reasonable tug of competing claims to protect human welfare and would conceivably decide contrary to the non-anthropocentric calculus." (Light 438). With that in mind, Light objects to Callicott's call to do away with anthropocentrism. He instead prefers the pragmatic route of appealing to an anthropocentric worldview. Light writes: "My claim is that if philosophers could help to articulate moral reasons for environmental policies in a way that is translatable to the general anthropocentric intuitions of the public, they will have made a contribution to the resolution of environmental problems commensurate with their talent" (Light 444). Light offers up a practical reason for appealing to the already established anthropocentric worldview—focusing on constructing a non-anthropocentric ethic "separates it from other forms of environmental inquiry" (Light 444). According to Light, "Most other environmental professionals look at environmental problems in a human context rather than try to define an abstract sense of natural value outside the human appreciation of interaction with nature" (Light 444). In that regard, "Fields like environmental sociology and environmental health, for example, are concerned not with the environment per se but with the environment as the location of human community" (Light 444). This is a reasonable position; many previously established forms of environmentally conscious thought are already human-centric, and appealing to those forms of environmental action can and most likely will produce results. In that sense, Light's anthropocentrically

grounded environmental pragmatism may be useful in tackling environmental issues because it is focused on addressing how those issues specifically affect humans. Viewing environmental issues through a human lens can help avoid the abstract environmental thought that may be distracting, confusing, or appears pointless to a non-philosopher or academic. More people are inclined to care about environmental issues if they see the connection between the environmental problem and how it immediately affects the world around them.

However, the problem with Light's idea of environmental pragmatism is that it does not end up addressing the core issue for environmental concern: the relationship between humans and nonhuman nature. Muskogee philosopher Daniel Wildcat argues in favor of doing away with the previous anthropocentric worldview, stating "because climate change is the result of humans "not knowing what they were doing" (Wildcat 16), then environmental philosophy should place its focus on the human relationship with the environment, and how to develop a proper ethical system for sustaining that relationship (Wildcat 16). As Wildcat puts it, "If the planet is telling us the problem is the way much of our kind is living, it seems arrogant and unproductive to continue to want to change everything but the way we live" (Wildcat 20). This is where anthropocentric environmental pragmatism falls short. Light's environmental pragmatism, though rightly critical of the failure of "intramural philosophical debates", is focused on addressing human issues stemming from climate change which are symptomatic of the larger ethical issue—the ethical relationship between humans and the rest of the world. The emergence of the Anthropocene highlights this issue—humans have been living and acting in ways that ignore and overshadow how their actions affect the world around them, leading to ecological imbalance and disharmony as a result of exploitative, anthropocentric behavior. In that regard, when considering the larger overall issue of climate change (which encompasses far more than

just human-centric issues), environmental pragmatism is akin to putting a bandage on a bullet wound—it addresses the symptoms of the problem (the bleeding), but does not get at the core issue (the bullet). We want to stop the bleeding, but we need to remove the bullet, otherwise the bleeding will continue. That begins with fundamentally restructuring our relationship with the planet as to act in a way that promotes the flourishing of life on the planet, not environmental degradation resulting from misguided human behavior. In that sense, we need a value system that prescribes an ethic that promotes the types of sustainable practices necessary for the world to continue existing (at worst) and at best, flourish in perpetuity. Otherwise the same anthropocentric proclivities, though appealed to in a green fashion, still continue. You can only patch buggy software for so long before you need to completely rewrite and restructure the code. This rewriting starts with thinking differently about values.

To be clear, this is not to say that Light's environmental pragmatism is without merit, importance, or should be thrown out. In fact, such environmental pragmatism can and should continue to be used to help alleviate the disruptive and harmful effects climate change has on people around the world. We should treat the symptoms of climate change because they are immediately affecting the condition of millions of people, and their plight ought not be ignored. The point is that conceptual discussions of things like value theory are still important and relevant in environmental philosophy if they focus the tangible and experienceable relationships between people, rather than abstract attempts to define value outside of human experience. In that sense, anthropocentrism—though tangible and practical—does not invalidate or overshadow the need for a non-anthropocentric ethical system because, despite the relatability of anthropocentrism, it still does not address the core issue in climate change—the relationship between humans and nature (Wildcat 20).

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Austin Himes and Barbara Muraca argue that a relational conception of non-anthropocentrism is suited for addressing the failed relationship between humans and the world. A relational conception of non-anthropocentrism is grounded in the idea that people do not tend to value things intrinsically, but relationally. According to Himes and Muraca, "all valuations are essentially relational. Valuations are neither entirely produced by the observer nor inherent to the thing but arise in the space of encounter where the subject and objects originate. Thus, the genesis of valuations is not merely subjective nor only objective but rather constitutive of both" (Himes & Muraca 2). With that in mind, Himes and Muraca argue that "we don't first run into an object, then observe it, and then judge it, rather we are already immersed in value-led relationships that evoke what matters and becomes thereby an object for us" (Himes & Muraca 2). When we value an object, we are bringing to our valuation a plethora of values resulting from various different relationships we have with the thing being valued.

Himes and Muraca argue that rather than valuing things intrinsically, we value things relationally. Relational values are values based off of interpersonal and social relationships like place-based value, ethics of care and responsibility, spiritual values, and cultural-historical values (Himes & Muraca 2). These sorts of values refer to "preferences, principles, and virtues associated with relationships, both interpersonal and as articulated by policies and social norms" (Himes & Muraca 2). According to Himes and Muraca, "all processes of valuation are rooted in forms of embeddedness and importance that are constitutive of who we are but are often unexpressed and outside our conscious awareness" (Himes & Muraca 2). As such, relational

values more accurately represent individuals' relationships to the environment and each other and are more representative of how (and why) a person values things the way they do. According to Himes and Muraca, relational values come in two forms, the first being instrumental value, or the value of a thing as a particular means to some particular human end. Instrumental value, though indeed a relational value, is the anthropocentric form of valuation because it is predicated on valuing things as superficial ends to a person's immediate wants and needs. For example, a thirsty human instrumentalizes a water source to quench their thirst, treating the water as a means to satisfy the desired end of hydration. This is a superficial kind of valuation because the valuation ends at achieving this simple transaction, satisfying an immediate need of the human with no consideration beyond that desire.

The second kind of relational values are non-anthropocentric (or eudaemonic) relational values that focus on "the actions, experiences, and habits associated with a meaningful, ethically responsible, and overall satisfying life" (Himes & Muraca 2). Relational values place their focus beyond anthropocentric, superficial, instrumental transactions and as such are "not reducible to mere means to some humans' end, but instead constitute who we are as humans. They are deeper and more complex than merely instrumental ones" (Himes & Muraca 3). Non-anthropocentric relational values are values that go beyond simply means to ends. They are described by considering the impact of an action beyond the superficial and immediate needs of a particular being, specifically how the impact of an action ripples beyond the intended ends. The key point here is that non-anthropocentric relational values represent a reality where humans and all other creatures are fundamentally embedded within a world of intertwining in relationships. For example, again consider the consumption of water. Though one may instrumentalize the water source for their own superficial, anthropocentric needs, the consumption of water from its source

has effects far beyond a thirsty individual—it serves other plants and creatures in that particular ecosystem, affects the local climate (though the degree of impact here is predicated on the size and placement of the water source), the health and survivability of all the creatures it serves, and as such, affects the particular roles and niche behaviors of those creatures.

To emphasize how the concept of intrinsic value misrepresents how the world is truly valued, consider Katie McShane's defense of intrinsic value. McShane argues that a better way to think of intrinsic value is to think of it as "claims about how it makes sense for us to care about [a] thing" (McShane 49). McShane states that "we rarely if ever just plain value things" but instead we "take some particular valuing attitude toward them—admiration, awe, respect, and so on", and these valuing attitudes correspond with "particular kinds of value: admirability, awesomeness, respect-worthiness, etc" (McShane 50). This is what McShane calls "intrinsic valuing attitudes", or "ways of valuing something for its own sake" (McShane 50). Love, for McShane, is one type of intrinsically valuing attitude because, in her view, if one loves something, "the source of value is the loved thing, rather than, for example, our relationship to it, the way it makes us feel, the state of affairs that include it, etc" (McShane 52). For McShane, "if I genuinely love you, what I value is you, not the joy you bring to my life, the person you inspire me to be, the experience of friendship you allow me to have, etc" (McShane 52-53).

McShane is on point in suggesting that we extend particular valuing attitudes to things when we value. Her mistake, however, is to attribute these valuing attitudes to attitudes that key in on intrinsic properties of things. None of the examples of valuing attitudes she provides—the valuing attitudes of love, respect, and awe—are intrinsic. Love, respect and awe are all relational attitudes predicated on the particular context of experience and personal sensibilities of each individual being. For example, the concept of love is fundamentally relationship based—that is

why folks in love are described as being in a relationship. If someone loves another, it is because the loved person has formed a relationship with another such that it constitutes a loving relationship, rather than a friendly relationship or negative relationship. Love is a product of one's relation to another. If someone loves someone, then they are infatuated by certain qualities that particular person has developed throughout their life that appear in their interactions with others. This individualized preference for those particular qualities separates this specific relation from other relationships and makes that specific person worthy of love. This is evident by the fact people can fall in love with someone after previously holding no such sentiment towards them, and the fact that people can fall out of love with a once-loved person. Both these outcomes are results of changes in certain qualities of a person's relationship with another. People can act in a way that causes them to fall out of love, and the same holds for falling in love. If being love-worthy was an intrinsic quality of a person's being, then they would always be loved, regardless of the relationship one holds towards that person. But love is far less concrete--it is predicated on relationships. We do not love something because loving is good in and of itself, we love because love (in the most general sense) makes us feel good, and feeling good (or not feeling bad) is beneficial to maintaining social relationships. This is not to say we only love things because they make us feel good, or that we only love to get something out of it. The qualities that make someone feel good are exhibited by a person, so to love those qualities and the feeling those qualities provide is to love and appreciate the source of those qualities—the person. Even though we love the qualities a person possesses, the point here is that those qualities are not intrinsic—they are the result of particularly formed relationships.

The same holds true for other valuing attitudes. Respect, for example, is fundamentally relational based, indicated by the fact that people can lose or gain respect only in relation to the

people with whom they interact. If someone acts in such a way that they gain respect from another, then they have established a relationship that is worthy of respect. One earns respect by acting in a respectful manner. If someone acts in a way that is normatively considered not worthy of respect, then one would lose respect from those around them—they have changed their relationship with them from one worthy of respect to one that is not. There is nothing intrinsic about respect—if there were, the amount of respect one has for another would not change (regardless of a person's actions) because respect would be an intrinsic quality. But clearly there are folks that act in a way that is respectable, and there are folks who act in ways that are not. We respect those who exhibit respectable behavior, and do not respect those who act disrespectfully. We respect the hard worker, and do not respect the cheater, and we respect the honest person, and not the liar. Respect, in this sense, emerges from a particular relationship formed by one's actions, and as such, is necessarily dependent on the relations between people. Respect is an attitude that bolsters and encourages the maintenance of a relationship between two beings—it provides a relational attitude towards an other that indicates both parties intend to act in ways that are not detrimental or harmful towards each other. Respect is valued as good because of a specific reason—it helps sustain a relation by setting the tone for acceptable behavior between parties, not because respect is simply a good in and of itself.

Similarly, awe is contextually relative, in that what is awesome for some may be a usual occurrence for others. If someone has never seen the ocean, they would most likely be awestruck upon seeing it for the first time, while a person who has lived their entire life by the ocean would not experience the same emotional response. This is not to say that a coastal local is destined to become jaded and disconnected from the ocean as a result of spending all their time next to it, but that they would not feel the same sense of awe as a first timer. Consider someone who has

never heard rock music or eaten pizza before—they would feel far more awestruck when experiencing it for the first time, whereas a working musician or a long-time pizza eater would consider it just a part of their day.

The issue with the notion that valuing attitudes representing intrinsic properties is that they ignore the contextual relations that make up the uniqueness of the human experience by placing the value of those relations outside of the context they emerge—as a thing good in and of itself instead of a thing being good *for an actual, contextually supported reason*. The valuing attitudes McShane describes are not intrinsically valuing attitudes—they are relational valuing attitudes since they are all predicated on one's particular relationship to a thing. In McShane's attempt to defend intrinsic value, she accidentally shows that the valuing attitudes people use to value things are, in fact, not intrinsic at all, but instead relational values attitudes, further showing how unproductive relying on the concept of intrinsic value is in forming a relatable and tangible ethic. We value things based on relationships—fundamentally. Though McShane is correct in describing how we value as valuing attitudes, what we value is the relationship between us and the other, not an intrinsic quality of the thing being valued.

Environmental philosopher and anarchist Edward Abbey commented on the unattractiveness of overly abstract and unconvincing philosophical concepts (like intrinsic value), writing "When the philosopher's argument becomes tedious, complicated, and opaque, it is usually a sign that he is attempting to prove to the intellect what is plainly false to the common sense. But men of intellect will believe anything—if it appeals to their ego, their vanity, their self importance" (Abbey 10). This is the issue Light is highlighting—the state of environmental philosophy and ethics has allowed "intramural philosophical debates" like those surrounding the concept of intrinsic value to take priority over ideas and prescriptions for application in the real

world to bring about urgent and/or important change. However, grounding such conceptual discussions something that is practical and tangible—like relationships or experiences—can help avoid this pitfall. Relational values are practical values, in the sense that they are derived from "preferences, principles, and virtues associated with relationships, both interpersonal and as articulated by policies and social norms" (Himes & Muraca 2). Relational values emerge from *experience*, and as such are more tangible than abstract concepts like intrinsic value because they are easily able to be experienced. In that regard, relational values are a product of lived experience, from interactions between beings within various social and interpersonal networks, and as such are more representative of how life operates.

Relational values, then, prove to be a more than capable replacement for intrinsic value as a basis for a non-anthropocentric worldview because it represents how people actually value the world, which is far more digestible than attempting to sell folks on an abstract concept like intrinsic value. The relational values in question would not be pure instrumental relational values, since that is an anthropocentric form of valuation (and the whole point is to construct a non-anthropocentric system of valuation). It would be an ethic centered in non-anthropocentric (eudaemonic) relational values because such a system of valuation would be constituted of what it means to be a flourishing being in the flourishing world living a flourishing life (Himes & Muraca 2). An understanding of relational values helps clarify the difference between anthropocentric (or instrumental) values that begin and end with the experience of an individual, and the effects of those individualized actions on the world around them (non-anthropocentric relational values). In the context of climate change, a value system directed towards a flourishing life in a flourishing world is necessary to rectify, remedy, and avoid the same exploitative and unsustainable behaviors that lead to it. Whereas pure instrumental valuation serves to perpetuate

anthropocentric behavior, and intrinsic value fails to account for how we actually value things (Himes & Muraca 2), constructing a system of non-anthropocentric relational values would allow for humans to explore their ethical and moral relationships to other beings in the world so as to live in a sustainable and livable, flourishing world.

Part 2–Relational Values and Indigenous Systems of Knowledge

If we are to commit to a system of non-anthropocentric relational values aimed at establishing a harmonious and sustainable relationship with the planet, then there are three tasks that must be undertaken. First, there must be clarity regarding what a relational understanding of the world is, and what it means to exist in one. Relational values emerge out of relational worldviews, and if relational values are to be understood in full, one must understand why such values emerge in the first place. Each person has their own mess and variety of interpersonal relationships unique to their own experience. However, non-anthropocentric relational values are deeper than individual human relations to things *as such*—they are about what it means to be immersed in a world made up of interdependent and interconnected relationships, and the compounding and rippling effects each action taken in that world has on those relationships (Himes & Muraca 2). For example, one can clear cut a forest for firewood in order to warm themselves, but in doing so their actions would detrimentally affect the habitat of creatures that reside in the forest, the ecological health of that location, the weather, the rate of soil erosion, etc. As such, non-anthropocentric relational values are intended to account for the far reaching affects of our individual (anthropocentric) actions on the world around us.

Next, in order to fully digest and comprehend a relational worldview and values, we must recognize and overcome epistemological biases against the validity and utility of the systems of

knowledge that produce a relational understanding. According to Himes and Muraca, systems of relational values emerge from and within non-western cultures—particularly indigenous cultures—that had been using those values to live in a reciprocal, sustainable manner for thousands of years without destroying the planet (Himes and Muraca 3-4). Therefore, a useful starting point for constructing a new relational framework conducive for addressing the issues of climate change would be to draw on the systems of values practiced by Native American cultures because those groups have a deep history of living within a relational framework. Within these often overlooked worldviews might lie useful resources for rectifying our relationship with the world around us. There are deep, historically rooted biases against indigenous systems of knowledge that assume them to be mythological, primitive, and unreliable, and therefore should be disregarded. Upon deeper examination, however, indigenous systems of knowledge are conceptually and procedurally similar to western science, which shows that there is no reason to dismiss or disregard them. To do this, we must understand the process in which knowledge is uncovered within these systems, how this knowledge results in a set of values, and why those values are effective within an relational framework.

Finally, when we have established we that we live in a relational world, we must address a classic philosophical obstacle to relational conceptions of value—the issue of the is-ought gap and how it relates to deriving values from a relational framework in order to overcome a deeply entrenched conceptual bias against relational systems of ethics. A classic discussion within traditional ethics is the is-ought gap, or the idea that one cannot draw an ethical prescription (and "ought) from an "is" or a particular aspect of reality. Indigenous systems of knowledge appear to derive their ethical systems directly from the way the world around them works. This is-ought

feature could be used to undermine the validity of indigenous systems of knowledge, and must be addressed.

The indigenous philosophy of Daniel Wildcat helps us with the first task. According to Wildcat recognizing what living in a relational world is begins with the recognition that “we must begin to understand our lives as essentially not only about us, but about our human selves in...the web of life” (Wildcat 5). For Wildcat, this means that humans must shed their anthropocentric worldview where nature is subservient to the needs of humans and recognize the extent of our inseparable relations to every being around us, both human and non human (Wildcat 5). The web of life, as Wildcat puts it, “implies that our human intelligence must be framed in the context of learning how to live well and sustainably as one small but powerful part of nature, as opposed to strategizing how to manage nature” (Wildcat 5). In that regard, (eudaemonic) relational values would be based on not just human flourishing alone, but the flourishing of the web of life and all its inhabitants. According to Wildcat, “Humankind does not stand above or outside of Earth’s life system“ (Wildcat 20), and as a result we are immersed within the world as one of its many moving pieces which make up the overall function of the larger system. When one piece stops working or operating outside of the symbiotic and cooperative behaviors necessary for the larger system to function, the whole system is affected.

This is the purpose behind the idea of the web of life. Each being can be thought of as their own point on a web, where the movement of one point is felt by the entirety of the structure. If we reground our worldview under the idea of the web of life, the need for a non-anthropocentric theory of value becomes clear, and the idea of an anthropocentric theory of value becomes incommensurable with a relational worldview—if humans view themselves outside and independent of the web of life and act as such, the structure of the web becomes stressed,

structurally unsound, and doomed to fail. But if humans recognize their place in the web and act in ways that work in harmony and symbiosis with the entirety of the web, then the structure holds. If we accept the existence of the web of life, and if the web of life necessitates a set of (relational) values or principles in order to continue its existence, then it is imperative to understand where and how those principles or values emerge and how their validity can be confirmed. Simply understanding that a fundamental aspect of reality is being immersed in a wide and far extending array of interdependent relations alone does not describe the values necessary for the sustainment of the web of life.

Nuu-Chah-Nulth philosopher Richard Atleo argues that non-anthropocentric relational values result from the ancient indigenous systems of knowledge that emerged out of a millennia of observing the nonhuman functionings of the natural world and then confirming those observations through lived experience. As such, they have been molded to be effective at maintaining and sustaining the web of life (Atleo 52). In indigenous systems of knowledge, relational values are explained and represented through origin stories or ancient creation myths that play integral roles in the shaping of each indigenous culture (Atleo 52). One common misconception surrounding indigenous systems of knowledge is that the reliance on creation myths and origin stories as a basis for an ethical framework makes it unreliable. However, according to Atleo, "although myths seem to focus on the non-physical or spiritual, they comprise stories that are meant to be practical. They are meant as guides to understand the nature of reality." (Atleo 52). The lessons drawn from origin stories and creation myths emerge from and are confirmed through years of observing how the non-human world functions via lived experience (the product of a millennia of trial and error) making the lessons practical enough and—for lack of a better term—true enough to be guidelines for living a sustainable life (Atleo

52). This entails “the development of harmonious relationships between all life forms” (Atleo 54), since harmony within the web of life is necessary to maintain its structure. Systems of knowledge that use origin stories as the basis for their system of values, are not qualitatively different than knowledge derived from the western scientific system of knowledge. Because the values that emerge form indigenous systems of knowledge are often dismissed due to preconceptions of how such systems of knowledge operate, designating them as mythological (i.e made up), crazy, or as a form of ventriloquizing or anthropomorphizing nature, have prevented the kinds of values and understanding of nature from making their way into the mainstream.

Atleo argues that the “scientific way” operates as follows: someone makes an observation and comes up with a scientific theory, that theory is then tested via the scientific method, the results are then reported to the scientific and academic community so as to confirm the findings, and then the results become usable for the world (Atleo 53). Indigenous systems of knowledge operate similarly: origin stories are used in place of scientific theory since they both emerge through the interaction and observation of the functioning of the world. The origin stories are tested through lived experience and its practicality is confirmed within the community, which then makes it applicable to the world (Atleo 53).

Origin stories, according to Atleo, are conceptually the same as scientific theories, in that each origin story is ‘testable by its own method, just as scientific theory is testable by its own method (Atleo 141). Origin stories are further similar to theories in outcome. Atleo writes, “when a theory has been tested over a long period of time and has reliable and consistent outcomes, the data derived from it become facts. The same is true for the testing of origin stories” (Atleo 141). When shown to be a practical and relatable guide for living, origin stories

become, as Atleo puts it, “an allegory, a dimension of truth" (Atleo 142). Potawatomi philosopher and scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer describes origin stories as “‘Original Instructions”, but rather than being “instructions” in the classic, directive sense, they are “like a compass: they provide an orientation” (Kimmerer 8). Put simply, origin stories provide guidelines for how to live in the world, validated from generations of lived experience.

The point here is to show that the lessons and values that emerge from indigenous systems of knowledge are true and usable in the same sense that scientific results are considered to be true and useable. However, one big difference between the scientific system of knowledge and indigenous systems of knowledge is that indigenous systems of knowledge focus strictly on how to live a flourishing and practical life in an embedded world, whereas the scientific system of knowledge has no such guidance, and acts as an attempt to objectively describe the functionings of the world. It is not designed to produce a system of values that provides any sort of moral or ethical guidance—it is merely explanatory. In that sense, scientific knowledge is then guided by the values created within human societies, based on the relations of humans between humans. However, in an indigenous system of knowledge, one is embedded in the “nature-culture” nexus, where there is no separation between human relations and non human relations—they are all part of the same “web of life”(Wildcat 5). There are no human societies separate from the non-human community because humans are immersed within the same web of relations as every other being in the world. The non-human community (i.e the rest of the world) is also part of the web of life, making the values derived from the non-human community as real as those resulting from explicitly human relationships and societies. The values that emerge from indigenous systems of knowledge are holistic, since they emerge from the experience of observing how the nonhuman world interacts with itself, and as such derives lessons from how

those beings perpetuate their existence. These values are not human constructs, but values demonstrated in the practices and functioning of the environment.

There are a variety of relational values that have emerged from indigenous systems of knowledge, and each is unique to the culture it comes from. Ideas such as (but not limited to) principles of consent, respect, harmony, mutual recognition, continuity, agency and personhood of non-humans, and kinship between beings, are all types of values shown to be conducive to living a good, fulfilling life and sustaining the world. However, these values, with all due respect to their individual importance and necessity, can be more generally conceptualized as a few fundamental relational principles in the sense that they indicate how best to maintain the web of life, since all values emerging from indigenous systems of knowledge are aimed at living in a "world that strives to balance and harmonize" (Atleo 52).

One of the most important of these is the principle of reciprocity between all things in the web of life. Atleo provides an origin story describing the importance of reciprocity through the Nuu-Chah-Nulth story of Bear (Atleo 100-101). The (short) version of the story of Bear begins with a man who places a fish trap by the river so as to acquire food for his family. When the man checks his fish trap each day during the salmon run, he notices his trap is empty and destroyed. This happens day after day, so the man decides to camp overnight to see what is messing with his fish traps. That night, the man sees Bear approach his trap and take fish from it in a way that breaks the trap. The man confronts Bear and asks why he is taking the fish from the trap. Bear does not respond, but instead suggests that the man follow Bear for an answer. The man and his bear companion travel a long way until they reach Bear's village. The man sees that Bear was taking fish from the trap to provide for the village. Bear introduces the man to the chief of his village, who brokered an agreement with the man. If the man was willing to share his fish,

there would always be fish to eat, for both the man's community and Bear's community. The man returned home and set his trap. Upon checking it, he saw it half full, but not destroyed. Part of the agreement was that Bear would not destroy the trap so that both communities could share the bounty in perpetuity (Atleo 100-101).

According to Atleo, the story of Bear demonstrates that "creation is set up in such a way that resources are juxtaposed with, rather than held in common by, any number of communities" (Atleo 142). In that sense, "a resource juxtaposed with a variety of communities presents a challenge regarding how to negotiate that particular condition of reality" (Atleo 143). According to Atleo, "How these different communities respond to this juxtaposition is a matter of choice" (Atleo 142). The story of Bear demonstrates how there is always inherent polarity in the world, presented as conflict, a conflict whose resolution forges a balanced and harmonious world (Atleo 142). The lesson of the story of Bear is "that it is possible to communicate between species in such a way as to develop a sustainable and shared protocol" (Atleo 143). This notion aims to exemplify how the choice for these communities is between "survival of the fittest and mutual recognition, between brute force and sustainable living" (Atleo 142). In order for the man and Bear (and their families) to live in harmony, they must form a reciprocal relationship with each other through the sharing of their fish bounty, otherwise one or both parties would suffer. Neither could simply think about themselves without provoking conflict between hungry parties. Reciprocity, in this sense, is the middle ground that resolves inherent polarity by providing an equitable solution to conflict—neither group goes without what they need, but neither gets more than they need, creating balance among communities.

Robin Wall Kimmerer also provides an origin story describing the importance of reciprocity through the story of Skywoman, a creation story from the indigenous cultures

surrounding the Great Lakes Region. Skywoman was a woman that fell to earth from the Skyworld, with "nothing but a handful of seeds" (Kimmerer 8). Skywoman was given gifts by other beings so as to help her make a home, and she in turn shared what she brought from Skyworld with her neighbors. When Skywoman arrived, she was pregnant, and "knowing her grandchildren would inherit the world she left behind, she did not work for flourishing in her time only" (Kimmerer 9). Skywoman recognized that in order to live a flourishing life, one must act fairly towards their neighbors and towards those who will inherit the earth. This notion of reciprocity became thought of as a fundamental part of one's immersion within the web of life, orienting them towards a type of behavior conducive to sustaining a flourishing life for generations.

The story of Skywoman prescribes the idea of reciprocity by telling a story of how Skywoman's actions of reciprocity resulted in a mode of sustainable, harmonious living that was later practiced for generations to great success (until the arrival of European settlers). The idea of reciprocity between beings provides an ethical framework that avoids blatant exploitation of nature for the purposes of one particular being, thus reinforcing the idea that all beings exist in the web of life. In order to maintain the integrity of the web, no individual part of the web can move as it sees fit—it must move in harmony and symbiosis with the entirety of the web or risk throwing the entire structure off balance. The practice of reciprocity is not simply confined to material or instrumental transactions. Reciprocity can take the form of any act aimed at maintaining and sustaining the web of life, whether it is a physical, material, or spiritual act of reciprocity. What constitutes reciprocity is dictated by the values of a particular culture or group, which may vary. The idea behind reciprocity is to encourage and support all acts aimed at harmony, rather than imbalance, regardless of what shape they take.

Inherent in the idea of reciprocity is the attitude of selflessness, or, more specifically, an aversion to selfishness. Kimmerer shows the connection between the issues with selfishness and reciprocity through the Windigo, another creation story of the legendary monster of the Anishinaabe people (Kimmerer 304). The story of the Windigo was used as a sort of boogeyman to “scare children into safe behavior” (Kimmerer 304) or be eaten by the beast. The Windigo was no regular beast, as “Windigos were not born, they are made” (Kimmerer 304). According to Kimmerer, “the Windigo is a human being who has become a cannibal monster” whose “bite will transform people into cannibals too” (Kimmerer 304). The Windigo is a massive, terrifying monster which is always stalking humans through time. The Windigo is a creature inclined to consume and consume, which promotes more intense hunger in itself, and this relentless more consumption, a cycle that continues until there is nothing left to consume (Kimmerer 303-305). Kimmerer describes this as an example of a positive feedback loop, or when “a change in one entity of a system promotes a similar change in another, connected part of the system” (Kimmerer 305). Though positive feedback can lead to growth, when unchecked and unregulated it can lead to exploitation and destruction (Kimmerer 305). In that regard, behavior that results in unregulated and unchecked positive feedback loops can be thought of as selfish behavior, because it only seeks to satisfy a specific need of one being at the likely expense of the world around them.

The Windigo acts in positive feedback loops; behaviors grounded in reciprocity are examples of negative feedback loops, or when “a change in one component intices [sic] an opposite change in another, so they balance each other out. For example, hunger is supposed to increase eating, which, unlike the Windigo who only gets hungrier, is supposed to decrease hunger, making satiety possible” (Kimmerer 305) In that regard, Kimmerer writes, “negative

feedback is a form of reciprocity, a coupling of forces that create balance and sustainability" (Kimmerer 305). In this sense, reciprocity is a fundamental non-anthropocentric relational principle that is necessary to sustain and nurture of the web of life—-it aims to offset any detrimental impact of one's actions, while selfishness upsets the web of life by perpetuating imbalance.

Stories like the Windigo "sought to encourage negative feedback loops in the minds of listeners" by demonstrating how selfish behavior that results in destructive positive feedback loops upsets the world. Because the Windigo is a thing that is created from humans, it was taught that "Windigo nature is in each of us" and as such "we might learn why we should recoil from the greedy part of ourselves" (Kimmerer 306). According to Kimmerer, the Windigo is "born of our fear and failings" and as such "Windigo is the name for that within us which cares more for its own survival than for anything else" (Kimmerer 305). In that regard, being cognizant of how one's behavior affects the world—creating positive or negative feedback loops—is necessary for living a flourishing life.

It is important to note that the difference between these sorts of stories, as reflections of the nature of reality (Atleo 54), is more than just a simple parable or allegory. The stories themselves emerge from generations of observing the functioning of the natural world and living within it. Although characters are anthropomorphized for the sake of narrative, like in the story of Bear, the important takeaway is that the non-human characters are represented as actants within the web of life, and as such are more than mere objects in the world—they are agential beings that can be interacted with. According to Shawnee philosopher Thomas Norton-Smith, a being is considered to be agential "by virtue of its membership and participation in a network of social and moral relationships and practices with other [beings]" (Norton-Smith 1728). As such,

all beings within the web of life are agential beings that move and act on their own accord. In that sense, origin stories are more than just an allegory—they are general descriptions of how the natural world works in harmony to sustain the web of life. According to Kimmerer, this understanding of origin stories allows them to be viewed as "original instructions" (Kimmerer 8) because they represent a tried and true understanding of how the world functions, and provide an insight into how to live within those parameters.

The relational principles offered up by Kimmerer and Atleo—the principle of reciprocity, inherent polarity represented as conflict, and the slippery slope of selfishness—are three very important relational principles of an indigenous worldview, and are critical in establishing a harmonious and symbiotic existence within the web of life. Because the values derived from indigenous creation myths "are meant as guides to understand the nature of reality" (Atleo 52), these relational principles become fundamental ontological claims. The world *is* deeply interconnected in the web of life, and therefore reciprocity becomes necessary to maintain the web. Selfishness, under this worldview, is fundamentally problematic because it upsets the reciprocal balance of the web of life through destructive positive feedback loops, and as such needs to be avoided. All beings in the web of life *are* agential beings acting in the web of life, and as such are not just passive objects, but active subjects operating independently of humans with a degree of intentionality. These premises are viewed as truisms of the world, and as such form the foundation for a baseline ethic. Relational values like reciprocity seem straightforward and simplistic, but they are more than just general ethical prescriptions—they are claims about fundamental aspects of the nature of reality, where the ethical prescriptions are uncontroversial and unquestionable.

One of the advantages of this approach is that this sort of ethical construction avoids issues surrounding the classic is-ought gap in Western philosophy. According to David Hume, the is-ought gap is grounded in the idea that "Our decisions concerning moral rectitude and depravity are evidently perceptions; and as all perceptions are either impressions or ideas, the exclusion of the one is a convincing argument for the other" (Hume 245). In that sense, "[m]orality, therefore, is more properly felt than judg'd of" (Hume 245), Morality, for Hume, is based off of sentiments and feeling, rather than rationality or reason. Hume posits that because moral claims are not arrived at through reason and instead generated from emotion, one cannot draw a moral conclusion from matters of fact. For Hume, "this small attention wou'd subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relation of objects, nor is perciev'd by reason" (Hume 245).

In light of this, relational ethics that are drawn from indigenous systems of knowledge are often dismissed because they appear to derive "oughts" from a particular conception of an "is". However, the relational ethic that emerges from an indigenous system of knowledge is based on an uncontroversial and empirically rooted understanding of the nature of reality—a fundamentally interconnected web of life. Because we are fundamentally immersed within the web of life, we are always in relation to other beings, and those relations demand a particular "ought" in order to maintain them. "Oughts", in this case, emerge alongside any "is" as a description of how to operate within that particular relationship. Once a relationship is formed between two parties, a set of "oughts" emerges as necessary actions for maintaining or operating within that relationship. "Oughts" emerge in *conjunction* with an empirical understanding of the nature of reality that inform how the "is" functions—how we "ought" to act in relation to the functioning of that "is" so as to maintain it. In that sense, "oughts" are not purely emotional

responses after we have learned the facts, but understandings of how to live within a series of relations. The empirical "matters of fact" produce "oughts" when relationships between facts are formed. Our perception—our ideas and impressions—of the relationship are informed by the empirical functionings of the world—we know facts and experience sentiment at the same time. In this sense, a system of relational values never results in a gap between is and ought—there is no "is" without an "ought" because everything is always in relation to another thing, and maintaining those relationships requires specific "oughts". Without those "oughts" emerging alongside any "is", nothing would exist, because for things to exist, they must be in relation (i.e within the web of life). The fact that relationships exist means that there is, as an emergent property of the web of life, a method of operation intended to maintain those relations.

In an indigenous worldview, the web of life entails that (human) society and the "natural" worlds are one in the same. The web of life, according to Wildcat, means that we reside in a "nature-culture nexus, a symbiotic relationship that recognizes the fundamental connectedness and relatedness of human communities and societies to the natural environment and the other-than-human relatives they interact with daily" (Wildcat 20). There is no separation between humans and nature—they exist in the same social web of relations. As such, any socially normative ethic is not an extrinsic human construction, nor is it purely an emotional response to objective facts of the world.. It is an emergent property of the nature-culture nexus, where the world itself as a social entity demonstrates and proves shown through years of observation, experience, and interaction with the functioning of the natural world—how one ought to act in this particular social order.When what "is" is understood to be a truthful account of the world, rather than a simple emotional response to a type of perception, then there is no issue with drawing an ought, because the "is" is uncontroversial. If morality results from sentiment, then

keying in on the most fundamental society—the nature culture nexus—as the basis for what informs sentiment helps ground prerequisite "is" does not suffer from the same issues that result from a purely human-centric conception of the world. The world is a particular way, and that particular structure indicates that there is a certain type of behavior that is acceptable within that framework. If you are playing blackjack, you know the rules required for the game to function, so you play accordingly. If you are unclear which card game you are playing, the rules are going to be unclear and vary with each different understanding of which game is being played. In an indigenous worldview, the world is both known and discoverable, through observation and lived experience.

As such, the indigenous worldview shows how relational premises discovered through origin stories are foundational truths about the nature of reality geared towards sustaining the web of life (Atleo 52). If years of experience have validated such premises, then denying these sorts of truths about the world, as Abbey put it, is just another attempt "to prove to the intellect what is plainly false to the common sense" (Abbey 10). This "indoor philosophy" is the type of philosophy Andrew Light wants to avoid because it does not result in any sort of action other than intramural philosophical debating. However, unlike Light, who argues for pragmatic anthropocentric action, an indigenous framework's relational premises create a foundation that informs all human behavior from the most normative standard in existence—the nature-culture nexus that makes up the web of life. With a proper relational framework, anthropocentric (i.e superficial or instrumental) values are checked and regulated by non-anthropocentric relational (eudaemonic) principles, which prevents instrumental valuation from exploiting the resources of the world for the sake of humans and at the expense of everything else. It insists that principles of reciprocity, the harms of selfishness, and the inherent polarity of the world—which

necessitates mutual recognition and reciprocity to resolve it—are fundamental truths of the world, and as such are things that need to be accepted in order to survive in perpetuity. Recognizing the validity of a worldview that fundamentally accepts such principles as uncontroversial, and then adopting such a worldview, provides a framework better shaped to maintaining the web of life, through principles that strive for balance and harmony in the world (Atleo 52).

Part 3-Integrating Relational Values using Land-Based Education

If the foundational relational principles of an indigenous worldview are conducive to living a harmonious and sustainable existence within the web of life, and if such an existence is necessary to rectify the behaviors that have lead to climate change, then how is this worldview to be integrated into mainstream society? The dominant societies of the world already have established worldviews, albeit views that have resulted in an unbalanced and unsustainable relationship with the earth. It is a monumental task to change fundamental worldviews, so how might it be done?

The first step to integrating a relational worldview into the mainstream would be to transition away from ethical systems that rely on the concept of intrinsic value all together. We can do this by placing our ethical focus on modes of understanding that are grounded in tangible lived experience, rather than abstract, *a priori* conceptions of value. The very idea of intrinsic value does not exist within a relational worldview, since nothing exists without relations and as such cannot have value separate from their fundamental relations. Intrinsic value attempts to extend value to things from a moral realist perspective, where value exists as an essential and objective quality of reality independent from human social constructions of value. However, if

we accept and understand that all things exist within an interconnected web of relations, then it does not make sense to make the claim that something exists outside of the web of life. In this regard, something cannot be claimed to be "good in and of itself" because, within a relational framework, nothing ever is "itself" in an independent, objective sense. In a relational framework, all things are products of their relations which, in essence, makes a thing not just a thing as such, but a combination of particular and unique relations that resulted in that particular being to exist. I am not just me alone. I am a product of my parents, my brother, my family, my school, the environments I grew up in, lived in, travel to, the books I read, the movies I watch, the music I listen to, etc. All these things have a role in shaping what a particular person is, and in that regard are the result of the shaping and imprinting of those relations. Intrinsic value as a "good in and of itself" just does not exist because nothing ever is itself due to its constant immersion in and shaping of the web of life.

This is where the concept of "intrinsic value " becomes what Edward Abbey thought to be "an attempt to prove to the intellect what is plainly false to the common sense" (Abbey 10), because the concept of intrinsic value is inconsistent with not just how we view and value things, but with the nature of reality itself. In that sense, a conception of non-anthropocentrism that reflects the non-anthropocentric aspects of reality necessitates a rejection of intrinsic value and its replacement with something that has a grounding in relational values. A relational framework will always be undermined by an idealistic, abstracted conception of value that can be applied and invoked in any context with no regard for the web of relations that define reality. Consider the idea of a friendship. If a friendship is valued as good in-and-of-itself and therefore should be maintained, then the actual experience of that friendship is superseded by the intrinsic value of the friendship as such. In other words, if having a friend is good in and of itself, then the

friendship—the relationship between the two parties—becomes secondary to the intrinsic value of simply just having friends. However, if someone has a one-sided friendship or an abusive friendship, most people would reasonably choose to sever the friendship because that particular interpersonal relationship fails to satisfy both parties—in other words, it lacks reciprocity. The same is true for an intimate relationship with a partner—if an intimate relationship is valued as good in-and-of-itself, then this sets the stage for abusive relationships to form, as the relationship is worth maintaining because relationships are good *as such*, regardless of how abusive (physically or mentally) one partner can be. However, a relational framework avoids these issues by grounding our conception of value in how those relationships are *in reality*.

The next step to integrating a relational worldview into the mainstream is to begin promoting and institutionalizing the concept of relational values. This can be accomplished by integrating a land-based education into our educational system because land-based education is built around a deep and complex understanding of one's particular place (temporally and spatially) within the web of life. In that sense, a land-based education is built around developing a relational account of the surrounding world that necessitates a sense of mindfulness towards those relations. Given that indigenous systems of knowledge are fundamentally grounded in a relational understanding of reality, a land-based education can function as a pathway for such a worldview to be integrated into mainstream education because it directly addresses the reasons behind the fact that indigenous worldviews—the worldviews from which relational values emerge—have been historically displaced and dismissed.As such, in order to begin integrating indigenous worldviews into the mainstream, breaking down and unlearning the institutionalized and historical biases against non-western thought through the the use of land-based education becomes necessary.

Dolores Calderon argues that this begins with grounding part of our educational focus in the critical engagement of the concept of place (Calderon 3). Place or place-based education, according to Calderon, is the "focus on a variety of topics, including critical political perspectives in communities, entrepreneurialism, and environmentally centered approaches that take into account the biosphere of the local, culture, citizenship, and community" (Calderon 3). Rather than attempts at describing aspects of reality and experience in objective and universal terms, the concept of place focuses on experiential learning within the confines of one's community or locale. Place-based education is intended to couple learning with real world significance, doing away with abstract thought in favor of practicality (Calderon 2-3).

One of the issues of a purely place-based education is that it does not fully account for the historical phenomena that resulted in a particular place, such as the history of settler colonialism as a shaping force in modern society. Though delving into the history of a place may seem like a venture into the abstract—which is contradictory to the focus on practicality present in place-based and land-based education—in order to fully understand the concept of one's place, one needs to understand how that place developed into its current form. Consider the Trail of Tears—the American government wanted to colonize and settle in parts of the southeast, particularly Georgia, and in order to do so, they needed to remove the indigenous people already residing there (though there was pushback against the idea of removal within the American government, those calling for removal eventually won the battle) (Purdue 79-83). After unsuccessful attempts to "civilize" (i.e Europeanize) the native people of that area so that they would just accept European culture (Purdue 138-142), thus allowing the government to avoid having to forcibly remove them and instead simply assimilate American settlers into a now culturally homogenous area, the government decided that instead of working in conjunction with

those tribes, they would just remove them by force so as to open the area up for American settlers (Purdue 154). This resulted in the displacement of thousands of people onto reservations, where the ancestors of those originally displaced still live today (Purdue 155-157).

Even though the original displacement occurred over a hundred years ago, its effects are still felt in the modern era. What is now known as the American southeast is the result of numerous historical events that build upon themselves to define a "place" and still affect the cultures of those who were victimized in the process. If one were to explore their "place" in the southeast, they would be exploring the modern southeast alone. History, in this sense, is necessary in order to fully understand why a "place" is the way it is because the history of a place provides empirical explanations for why the way things are the way they are. It is one thing to understand a "place" *as such,* but understanding how a "place" developed—along with recognizing the historical scars that resulted from that "place" forming—is necessary for understanding how one is embedded within the web of relations that make up a "place".

For example, consider the Silicon Valley in California. Today, the Silicon Valley, the hub of technological innovation in California, is notable for its sprawling roads, traffic, cities, and homes. Around the massive urbanized locations are a variety of farmland that produce many fruits, vegetables, and other foods such as (but not limited to) strawberries, lettuce, garlic, artichokes, and almonds. These things make up the "place" we know as Silicon Valley today. These qualities of Silicon Valley, however, come at a cost to the environment. The agriculture in California, particularly almonds, places a strong demand on the environment, especially the water table. Urbanization contributes to air pollution, soil erosion, and various other ecological interruptions. The way Silicon Valley is constructed is designed to primarily benefit humans, with little consideration for the impact on the world around them (though there is a large

population of people who are cognizant of this issue and seek to rectify it though various environmental actions and advocacy).The things that make up the place called "Silicon Valley" are understood to be harmful for the environment around us, but because they are so deeply entrenched within the modern conception of the "place" of Silicon Valley, it is difficult to address this lack of reciprocity within such a one-sided, human-centric framework.

A critical analysis of the historical development of the Silicon Valley shows that the modern version of the Silicon Valley is the result of European settlement and the displacement of the indigenous cultures from that land. The Silicon Valley, the urban grid, and the modern agricultural system all are a product of a history of European colonialism. When tracing back the historical development of California—from the indigenous cultures that existed prior to European contact to the modern Silicon Valley of today—one can see that the process of colonization shaped California into a distinctly different place than it once was. The history of development shows that prior to European contact, the land that we now know as Silicon Valley was once occupied by cultures that had already developed a reciprocal relationship with the land around them and had lived for generations in relative harmony with the land, as opposed to the current, modernized anthropocentric relationship with the land. In the effort to make Silicon Valley a sustainable place, understanding how those with an idea of what reciprocity with the Silicon Valley would entail could provide a pathway for integrating indigenous practices of sustainability and reciprocity into the modern era, whether it is a reconceptualization of the agricultural system or how we construct our cities. This is the benefit of a critical analysis of place—it allows for the issues within current framework to be contextualized as part of a larger process of historical development, and shows how in many places, colonialism has erased generational understandings of place that could be useful in constructing a new modern sense of

place and reciprocity. Understanding what was erased, how it was erased, and why it was erased gives us an opportunity to reintegrate past understanding of place and land-based reciprocity into the modern era.

As a historical phenomenon, settler colonialism has been one of the most powerful factors in the suppression of indigenous worldviews and still exists in the modern era as a shaping force that is felt today. In that sense, one cannot fully understand "place" without knowing its history. A critical analysis of place, then, necessitates a type of mindfulness towards the world around us, where we take into consideration every relation and its development so as to fully comprehend our place within the web of life. With that in mind, in order to create a path for indigenous systems of knowledge to take hold, we must begin to explore how settler colonialism—to this day—affects and suppresses indigenous worldviews because settler colonialism, as an oppressive force, is deeply entwined with indigenous history.

According to Lorenzo Veracini, settler colonialism and regular colonialism are defined by "two fundamental and necessary components: an original displacement and unequal relations (Veracini 1). However, according to Veracini, even though "both colonisers and settler colonisers move across space, and both establish their ascendancy in specific locales", the similarities between the two end here (Veracini 1). In simple terms, colonialism involves establishing ascendancy so as to exploit the local population for the benefit of the colonizers, or "you, work for me" (Veracini 1-2). Settler colonialism, on the other hand, involves fully displacing the local population in favor of the colonizers, or "you, go away" (Veracini 1-2). According to Veracini, "whereas colonialism reinforces the distinction between colony and metropole, settler colonialism erases it" by removing any "colonized" peoples in favor of constructing or "resettling" the land as new permanent residences for the colonizers (Veracini 3).

For example, in North America, European settler colonialists not only displaced indigenous Americans, but actively put in measures to erase their cultural footprint, such as boarding schools, allotment (and the encouragement to adopt Jeffersonian yeoman farming practices), and laws that outright banned indigenous cultural practices (Perdue 83-92). In that sense, settler colonialism actively seeks to ignore or justify its historical effects through suppressing the viewpoints of those being affected. As such, settler colonialism reinforces the surface level understanding of modern "place" that ignores the history and development of a "place".

Critically analyzing the history of settler colonialism is necessary for a critical analysis of place. Because place contains within it the history of settler colonialism, Calderon posits that "A critical engagement with place demands an examination of taken for granted, unconscious attitudes about social place" (Calderon 3). As a way to refine the concept of place so as to overcome the "taken for granted, unconscious attitudes about social place" inherent in the history of settler colonialism, Calderon posits that there ought to be a focus on land-based education, which "centers the relationship between land and settler colonialism" (Calderon 3). In this sense, a land-based education acknowledges the impact of the history of settler colonialism as a shaping force, and as such recognizes the cultures that were disenfranchised or displaced by settler colonialism, rather than focusing on place alone. Place, in this sense, is focused on one particular moment in history—the current moment—whereas land-based education considers the current moment along with the history of that moment's development. According to Calderon, "such a positioning is important, particularly from an Indigenous perspective, because it makes ideologies and structures of settler colonialism explicit" (Calderon 3). In that sense, a land-based education requires a type of mindfulness towards the history of a place's development that recognizes the lingering effects of history as a place-shaping force.

Focusing on land-based education, however, creates a pathway to rectifying the historical suppression of indigenous worldviews that are ignored in traditional or place-based models by auditing the development of the world around us (Calderon 3-4). Given that adopting a system of relational values is necessary to form a healthy and harmonious relationship with nature so as to sustain the web of life, and given that these relational values emerge out of indigenous systems of knowledge, one of the benefits of a land based education is that it "requires us to consider Indigenous agency and resistance tied to Indigenous cosmologies" (Calderon 4). As shown in the previous chapter, indigenous systems of knowledge are grounded in a relational worldview, which is to say they are grounded in a complete understanding of one's positioning within the web of life. Land-based education seeks to uncover this type of relational understanding of reality, and allows a pathway for relational understandings of the world to emerge. As such, a focus on land-based education "acknowledges that Indigenous knowledge(s)/cosmologies are many times the most viable knowledge systems related to place-based goals of critical sustainability, community building" (Calderon 5) because indigenous systems of knowledge are fundamentally grounded in an understanding of one's relations in a place. Goals like critical sustainability are forms of applied relational values, and as such emerge from relational understandings of the world. According to Robin Wall Kimmerer, sustainability is the result of negative feedback loops, which are only possible through the practice of reciprocity (Kimmerer 305). In that sense, the goals of land based education are aimed towards institutionalizing the practice of relational values like reciprocity. If the goal is to institutionalize relational values so as to set the foundation for a healthy relationship with nature, then integrating a land-based education that supports and encourages the practice and development of a relational worldview is necessary.

A proper land-based education begins with decolonizing the settler colonialism identity that resides in modern conceptions of place. Decolonizing, in this sense, is “uncovering how settler colonial projects are maintained and reproduced, with understandings of land being one of the primary ways such identities are formed” (Calderon 6). According to Calderon, “Without such exercises in decolonization, it is impossible to achieve goals of sustainability and the wedded notion of a community building that rejects anthropocentric and Eurocentric understandings of land and citizenship” (Calderon 6), which are a product of indigenous systems of knowledge (i.e relational values). According to Kimmerer, sustainability is synonymous with the practice of reciprocity (Kimmerer 305), and in that regard, decolonization is the necessary first step to laying the foundation for relational values to be institutionalized, because the ideas that decolonization does away with are the ideas that conflict with or overshadow relational values (or at least humbles them by contextualizing them).

Part of the decolonization process involves addressing how the settler colonialist identity is perpetrated within the education system. According to Calderon’s overview of history textbooks, “an entire ideological and institutional project has been put in place that has effectively erased Indigenous realities in the present and reconstructed Indigenous peoples as relics of the past” (Calderon 5). For example, in the National Bison Range, the US federal government maintains control over the bison population, despite the fact that not only have the indigenous cultures in Northern Montana played a critical role in the conservation of the bison after they were driven to near extinction from over hunting by American settlers, they have little to no say over how to manage the current bison population, despite their multigenerational cultural history of living in harmony with the bison. The indigenous influence over their indigenous lands has been erased by a settler colonialist view of superiority and stewardship,

where the knowledge and ability of the settlers is seen as far more superior and effective than that of the indigenous people in the region—despite the fact that indigenous knowledge has been utilized in conservation efforts. Settler colonialism, in this case, has effectively erased the presence of indigenous cultures in managing their own land.

With this in mind, the decolonization process must be grounded in discussions of territoriality, or "settlers' access to territory and the resulting elimination and removal of Indigenous peoples enabled by both legal and ideological mechanisms of removal" (Calderon 5). In that sense, according to Veracini, the struggle against settler colonialism must aim to keep the settler-indigenous relationship ongoing (Veracini 8), since the removal of the settler-indigenous dichotomy is a result of settler colonialism, and as such emphasizing that cultural distinction is necessary to overcome the settler-colonial worldview. With that in mind, placing the concept of territoriality at the forefront of the decolonization process is a clear and loud reminder of the historical fact that indigenous peoples, particularly in north and south America, were displaced by foreign invaders through coercion and violence. This historical understanding, though theoretical, is necessary to understanding how locations affected by settler colonialism formed, and how the lingering effects of history still affect the world today.

According to Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism is a sociological structure, rather than a historical event, because the colonizers ended up staying (settling) in their colonies (Wolfe 388). This mentality, according to Calderon, overshadows and tacitly accepts the actual historical atrocities that took place during colonization, like "miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilation" (Calderon 6). To overlook these historical moments as simply

“part of the process” diminishes the real effects of such practices, many of which are still felt today. In that sense, to overcome settler colonialism, we must begin with territoriality, since “it is clear that the institutionalization of territoriality in settler colonialism is inexorably linked to other characteristics of settler colonialism…[and] territoriality is at the heart of settler colonialism (Calderon 7). With that in mind, Calderon offers up two important characteristics of settler colonialism related to territorialism, the first being the role of settler nationalism in reproducing settler territoriality, and the second being the role of white supremacy in enabling settler territoriality (Calderon 7).

According to Calderon, settler colonialism gives birth to settler nationalism (and by extension, settler territoriality) by creating a narrative of settlers separating themselves from their country of origin to establish a new cultural identity in a different place. (Calderon 7). This new cultural identity is grounded in an immigrant-nation identity, where the settled and colonized land becomes a land of immigrants, and overlooking indigenous cultural identities. This type of settler nationalism is still portrayed in many textbooks within modern social studies curricula through over reliance on “[western] science’- based explanations as a key narrative device, [which] reframe American Indians as a part of a larger immigrant-nation identity” (Calderon 7), which is an issue because a grand scale, simplistically objective narrative of the “immigrant-nation identity” overshadows the cultural history of indigenous people.

Calderon cites as an example two US history textbooks that use anthropological data to explain how humans first “settled” in Northern America by crossing a land bridge that once connected Asia and North America, calling these early humans the first “settlers” or “migrants”. (Calderon 7-8). From a purely western scientific perspective, these claims are not very controversial, as they rely on objective anthropological and archeological data as justification for

this narrative of settlement. However, these “scientific origin stories”, due to settler nationalism, are viewed as more valid than indigenous origin stories because they support the immigrant-nation identity, rather than an indigenous identity. From this perspective, the idea that a culture could be indigenous is completely dismissed, because based on scientific evidence, all humans were settlers or migrants. “Scientific origin stories” say nothing about the experiential connection to the world around them that these first “settlers” developed. According to Robin Wall Kimmerer, indigenous cultures typically do not deny the fact that their ancestors were once “settlers”. However, upon settlement, these ancient people developed, through observation and lived experience, relational protocols for living in harmony with the land, and through “actions of reciprocity, the give and take with the land, that the original immigrant became indigenous” (Kimmerer 9). The kind of “settlement” done by the first “immigrants” was categorically different from the settlement done by European colonizers. Indigenous peoples developed a relationship with the land around them, whereas Europeans operated under the premise of Manifest Destiny, which promoted anthropocentric positive feedback loops that displaced peoples and justified the maximum consumption of natural resources by European settlers. To conflate indigenous “settlement” with settler colonialism disingenuously represents the process of both instances of settlement and overlooks the atrocities that came with European settlement.

Though there may be heuristic value in the kinds of scientifically supported grand narratives of human settlement in other academic disciplines, in order to overcome the implicit settler nationalism within these narratives, they must be juxtaposed with indigenous origin stories that may tell a different story. Though scientific origin stories are viewed as purely empirical and indigenous origin stories are—admittedly—viewed allegorically (Atleo 142), the grand narrative told by scientific origin stories discusses events that took place so long ago that

the importance of that narrative does not transcend the importance of cultural origin stories told by indigenous cultures. Dismissing the importance of indigenous origin stories in favor of the objective, grand narrative of scientific origin stories – as discussed in the previous chapter – directly contributes to the continued suppression of indigenous cultures and knowledge by overshadowing place-based narratives. However, in a land-based approach to telling this sort of narrative, both narratives can be told alongside each other so as to contextualize the narrative in the cultures being discussed (Calderon 7).

This leads to the second characteristic of settler colonialism that needs addressing—the "role of White supremacy as central to the development of an ideology of settler colonialism through the project of settler nationalism." (Calderon 8). The type of settler nationalism subliminally promoted in social studies curriculum plays a role in promoting white (or more specifically, western) superiority over other cultures. According to Calderon, "Settler nationalism incorporates aspects of territoriality that rely on ideas of cultural and biological settler superiority" which is important because "As a White supremacist ideology [was] perpetuated within settler societies, it was (and continues to be) used to affirm the idea that the new settler societies were superior to the 'old societies' settlers left behind in Europe" (Calderon 8). This idea of cultural superiority over indigenous peoples is what justified Manifest Destiny and the relentless expansion of European settlements at the expense of indigenous cultures. Though history textbooks are more regularly framing this moment of expansion as a dark time in history, (Calderon 8) the focus on the history of expansion as a form of "civilization" and modernization perpetuates the notion that such expansion was necessary and inevitable.

According to Calderon, "This racialized ideology informs the belief that settler expansion is thus, in some sense, 'inevitable' and 'necessary', in order for the flourishing of this newly

created morally, culturally, politically, and economically superior society" (Calderon 8). Viewing indigenous peoples as uncivilized and inferior lead to their domination and oppression by settlers, justified under the guise of help. From the conquistadors, who thought that their occupation of Central, South, and later part of North America was justified because they were saving a continent of "uncivilized" and "primitive" people (Shwartz 66), to the settler colonialists who thought that European technology, education, and culture would save the "savages" (Perdue 34-41), western superiority has been implicitly present throughout the historical development of modern society. Unless biases like institutionalized white supremacy are overcome, the kinds of cultures and worldviews that practice and embody relational values will continue to be suppressed under the guise of it being a "primitive" understanding of the world.

Though modern textbooks do at times "articulate the reality that Native Americans were displaced, many times violently" while acknowledging that "settlers and Indians had differing views regarding land", according to Calderon, history textbooks still "fail to explore the reasons for these differing cultural attitudes…[and] also fail to critically engage how settler cultural attitudes shaped policies that were detrimental for Indian peoples" (Calderon 9). Because history textbooks do not typically critically engage with all aspects and angles of settler colonialism, they implicitly allow the story of the dominator to remain unchecked or unanalyzed, and leaves the perspective of the dominated unacknowledged or dismissed, much like indigenous systems of knowledge were simply thought to be mythological and unrealizable (Atleo 52). This has lead to the institutional suppression and oppression of the kinds of worldviews that produce relational values—indigenous worldviews. In order to rectify this, we must teach history in a way that makes the effort to juxtapose the history of modernization with its effects on the people being

"modernized". With a land-based approach, the history of displacement and settler attitudes towards indigenous cultures is included in how the story is told, which helps avoid perpetuating implicit settler colonial biases by contextualizing how those biases emerged. Understanding how such biases came to be creates a pathway to unlearning them

According to Calderon, "Land education is important for environmental educators and students because it asks them to rethink their relation to land as a dynamic ecological and cultural project of recovery and rehabilitation" (Calderon 10). As such, land-based education proves to be a necessary step in normalizing and institutionalizing a system of relational values because it insists on a sense of mindfulness towards one's relations and placement—and the imprints from the development of those relations and that place—within the web of life. This provides a pathway for the institutionalized aspects of settler colonialism to be critically analyzed and then unlearned through the process of decolonization. As Daniel Wildcat said, "In order to acquire insights into how to live well in the diverse environments of this planet, humankind needs multigenerational deep spatial knowledges as well as scientific knowledge" (Wildcat 15). For example, western science shows that fossil fuel extraction and consumption is detrimental to the environment (IPCC), and indigenous knowledge—via the principle or reciprocity—shows us that fossil fuel consumption is unethical because it lacks reciprocity with the earth (evident by the greenhouse gas effect on global climate change) and as such upsets the integrity of the web of life. In this case, western science and indigenous knowledge both reinforce the notion that mass extraction and consumption of fossil fuels is harmful, and as such we ought to reorient our energy practices.

According to Calderon, a proper land-based education utilizes "both western and non-western forms of knowledge to achieve decolonizing understandings of land or place" (Calderon

5). In that sense, a proper land-based education provides a grand narrative explaining the mechanical functions of reality as functions *as such*, along with the experimentally derived ethical prescriptions for how to operate within such mechanical functions, which results in a complete understanding of ones positioning within the web of life. This begins with unlearning institutionalized biases against non-western perspectives, and is continued by learning about and drawing from those previously overlooked worldviews. Since, according to Himes and Muraca, systems of relational values emerge from and within non-western cultures, especially indigenous cultures (Himes & Muraca 3-4), making steps to overcome pre-established biases against indigenous thought is necessary for creating a framework that supports and encourages incorporating a system of relational values into the mainstream. Relational values are not just values *as such*—they embody an understanding of what it means to live in a world full of relationships. To understand relational values is to understand a relational worldview. For relational values to be part of the mainstream, the kinds of worldviews that support and encourage relational values must be integrated into the mainstream as well. This can be done through integrating a proper land-based education into the education system. Only then can we begin regularize the kind of worldview and ethical system properly geared towards a harmonious relationship with the world around us—a system of relational values.

Conclusion

The emergence of the Anthropocene has lead us to recognize that our relationship with the world around us has been self-centered and one-sided, resulting in destructive climate change. As such, philosophers and ethicists have made attempts to reconceptualize our ethical relationship with the world around in a more holistic and non-anthropocentric manner. Some

have argued that in order to better restructure our ethical relationship with the world around us, our ethical system must be capable of extending moral consideration to the non-human other. This was initially done via the concept of intrinsic value, which aimed to place our conception of value outside of human experience so as to avoid falling into past anthropocentric pitfalls. However, the abstractness of placing value outside of human experience has been seen as impractical and intangible, and as such has been unsuccessful in providing a motivating basis for extending moral consideration to non-humans

Some have argued that we can mitigate the effect of climate change through appealing to anthropocentric proclivities that coincide with environmental restoration. However, this approach does not address the core issue of climate change—the one-sided relationship between humans and the rest of the world. As such, I have argued that a tangible, practical, and accessible conception of non-anthropocentrism can be conceived by grounding it in the many intertwined relationships that make up the world around us. This places our conception of value back into the realm of experience, but deepens the understanding of experience as one not simply confined to humans, but shared within what is thought of as the web of life. This avoids the anthropocentric pitfalls of the past by contextualizing individual human action within the context of a network of relationships—like a web, the movement of each point affects the structure of the entire web. This emphasizes the fact that any action has compounding and rippling effects in the world around us, and as such our ethical system must be constructed with this in mind.

Systems of relational values emerge out of relational worldviews like indigenous worldviews. As such, in order to understand what relational values are, one must understand what a relational worldview consists of, how it results in relational values, and why those values are valid. This is done by familiarizing oneself with indigenous systems of knowledge that

produce relational values. However, there are conceptual and historical biases against the validity of indigenous systems of knowledge that must be overcome in order to do so. This can be done by not only becoming familiar with what a relational worldview entails, but by also integrating relational understandings of the world into the modern education system by using a land-based education.

Land-based education emphasizes a focus on a deep understanding of one's various relations within a place, both currently and historically. The historical development of a place shapes its current form and helps define it. As such, land-based education necessitates a critical analysis of place, including how the development of a place has resulted in the suppression of past understandings of place. In the case of indigenous history, settler colonialism has existed as an oppressive force against indigenous worldviews. Because indigenous worldviews are synonymous with relational worldviews, analyzing how settler colonialism has historically oppressed and dismissed relational worldviews provides a pathway to unlearn and overcome those institutionalized biases. In that regard, a land-based education insists on a sense of mindfulness towards how the world is constructed so as to fully comprehend one's place within the web of life.

These relations, even the ones that are not immediately apparent, shape our lives and environment, and being aware and mindful of them is emblematic of a relational understanding of the world. In order for a relational worldview to take hold so as to repair the relationship between humans and the environment, we must understand just how deeply embedded within the web of life we all truly are.

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