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Valuing the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: A Defense of Countercultural Environmentalism

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VALUING THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE:
A DEFENSE OF COUNTERCULTURAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

By Methawee Manupipatpong

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements of Senior Independent Study

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A Defense of Countercultural Environmentalism

Abstract

By Methawee Manupipatpong

This Independent Study Thesis consists of an introduction and four substantive chapters. In the “Introduction,” I lay out the paper’s structure, goals, methodology, and hypothesis. I also explain why I chose to conduct a case study on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

The first chapter, “A General Overview of Environmental Ethics,” is a literature review of existing environmental philosophies. I classify important approaches into three categories, from the most human-centered to the least: strong anthropocentrism, weak anthropocentrism, and non-anthropocentrism.

The second chapter, “Creating and Preserving the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge,” provides background on the establishment of and continued debate around ANWR. Adding to this chapter, in “The Battle over ANWR: Actors Involved,” I explain and assess specific arguments made by important actors for and against establishing ANWR and, later, developing the Coastal Plain, a part of the refuge.

Finally, I revisit the theoretical framework of the first chapter in “Lessons from ANWR” and offer an alternative. Drawing from case study analysis, I argue that countercultural environmental ethics most aptly captures and guides a moral human-nature relationship. As an example of these ethics in practice, I discuss tree ordination in Thailand. To conclude, I give a countercultural analysis of ANWR, and return to my hypothesis at the beginning of the study.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract | 1 |
| Acknowledgements | 2 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Why the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge | 6 |
| Questions and Objectives | 7 |
| Chapter 1: A General Overview of Environmental Ethics | 9 |
| The Anthropocentrists | 12 |
| Strong Anthropocentrism..... | 13 |
| <i>Utilitarian Anthropocentrism</i> | 13 |
| <i>Free Market and Green Environmentalism</i> | 15 |
| <i>Social Liberalism and the Environment</i> | 17 |
| <i>Sustainability</i> | 19 |
| Weak Anthropocentrists | 20 |
| <i>Ralph Waldo Emerson</i> | 22 |
| <i>Henry David Thoreau</i> | 23 |
| <i>Rachel Carson</i> | 25 |
| <i>Aldo Leopold</i> | 26 |
| <i>Ecofeminists</i> | 28 |
| <i>Bryan G. Norton</i> | 31 |
| The Non-Anthropocentrists | 33 |
| Ecocentrism | 33 |
| <i>Arne Naess</i> | 34 |
| <i>John Muir</i> | 35 |
| Biocentrism..... | 37 |
| Conclusion..... | 38 |
| Chapter 2: Creating and Preserving the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge | 39 |
| Important Legislation..... | 43 |
| Chapter 3: The Battle Over ANWR: Actors Involved | 47 |
| Wilderness Advocates | 47 |
| The Meaning of Development | 47 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| A “Wild” American Heritage | 48 |
| Value of the Outdoors..... | 49 |
| Wilderness or Economic Development: Striking a Balance..... | 50 |
| Contesting and Adding to the “Facts” | 52 |
| Native Voices | 54 |
| The Gwich’in: Saving “The Sacred Place Where All Life Begins” | 54 |
| The Inupiat Eskimos: Advocates for Development | 58 |
| Alaskan Officials | 61 |
| Senator Lisa Murkowski..... | 61 |
| Governor Sean Parnell..... | 64 |
| Congressman Don Young..... | 68 |
| The Oil Giants | 71 |
| Putting it All Together | 77 |
| Chapter 4: Lessons from ANWR..... | 79 |
| Countercultural Environmentalism: A Way Forward..... | 85 |
| Arguing for New Grounding in Environmental Ethics..... | 87 |
| Bioregionalism: A Synergistic Relationship with Nature..... | 91 |
| Environmental Virtue Ethics: Defying the Mainstream through Identity Redefinition..... | 96 |
| Buddhism as a Case in Point: Transforming the Self and Society | 100 |
| A Countercultural Analysis of the ANWR Controversy | 103 |
| Concluding Remarks | 106 |
| Bibliography | 109 |

Introduction

“An ethical relation to land [cannot] exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its [philosophical] value.”¹

--Aldo Leopold

While environmental ethics may provide insight to scholars who have time to read the literature, it is often viewed as unnecessary or even irrelevant in environmental debates. Yet, environmental decisions, if they are to be morally sound, should accord with some philosophical foundation for a good relationship with nature. As environmental ethicists work to define what such a relationship entails, policymakers, private actors, and environmental groups alike should consult ethical theory in determining whether their actions are morally right.

Given the seeming disconnect between environmental ethics and policy/action, in this paper I will explore the role of ethics in the controversy over Alaska’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, explain what we can take from this exploration, and, finally, propose a way to bridge the gap between environmental theory and practice. To begin, I provide a literature review of key environmental philosophies. The first chapter is meant to help readers understand the groundwork for and the typical structure of environmental discussions. I will give brief overviews of existing theories on the human-nature relationship, starting from strong anthropocentrism and ending with ecocentrism and biocentrism. At the outset, I do not argue for any one of these theories – I am simply introducing the different approaches environmental ethicists have taken to justify

¹ Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1949, 223.

conservation and/or preservation of nature. In the final analysis and chapter, I will revisit the theoretical framework in the literature review and discuss the implications of my case study results on the way environmental discourse should be conducted.

WHY THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE?

Extending from interior Alaska to the Beaufort Seas, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or ANWR, is home to “42 fish species, 37 land mammals, eight marine mammals, and more than 200 migratory and resident bird species.”² The refuge is known as “America’s Serengeti” because of “its tremendous biological productivity and diversity.”³ Approximately the size of South Carolina at 19.3 million acres, ANWR contains “complete [and] undisturbed lands across five different ecological regions,” ranging from “the lagoons, beaches and saltmarshes of coastal marine areas...to the tall spruce, birch, and aspen of the boreal forest.”⁴ The Gwich’in Natives of Arctic Village and Inupiat Eskimos at Kaktovik Village have lived in ANWR for many years, hunting the caribou and other mammals.

ANWR is also threatened. Since its establishment in 1960, oil interests have been eyeing the refuge’s 1.5 million-acre Coastal Plain and “biological heart,” introducing legislation upon legislation in an attempt to open the area to development.⁵ Wilderness advocates representing non-profit organizations, from within Congress, and speaking for

² *Wildlife and Wild Landscapes*. July 13, 2011.

http://www.fws.gov/alaska/nwr/arctic/wildlife_habitat.htm#section2 (accessed March 1, 2014).

³ *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*. n.d. <http://policy.audubon.org/arctic-national-wildlife-refuge> (accessed March 1, 2014).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The California Academy of Sciences. *Facts About the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*. n.d.

<http://www.bing.com/search?q=arctic%20refuge%20arctic%20power&pc=conduit&ptag=AF2881A5D8F9344A793F&form=CONBDF&conlogo=CT3210127> (accessed March 3, 2014).

the American public have successfully resisted these efforts. Yet, the question remains: should Congress authorize drilling in the refuge?

I chose to study the controversy surrounding ANWR because this case is a microcosm of the much wider debate on how humans should live in their environment. It juxtaposes moral and aesthetic values against a consumerist worldview; an understanding of nature as non-instrumentally valuable against the narrow definition of nature as a means to our ends. Since preservationists want to protect ANWR for its pristine condition, development to any extent would spoil this notion of a (nearly) untouched wilderness. ANWR thus demonstrates the conflict between two extreme and polarized approaches to living in our natural environment: one that prioritizes material growth and the other which condemns economic development as the root of social and environmental degradation.

QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

There are two components to my qualitative case study of ANWR. I will first describe and comment on what has been said against and in favor of development in ANWR, and then discuss the normative implications of my findings. In ensuring a well-rounded representation of the debate, I will look at congressional testimonies, news and journal articles, academic papers, and a variety of other electronic sources. I have selected to include in my study the Gwich'in Natives and Inupiat Eskimos, two communities with direct ties to ANWR, Alaskan officials who have actively pushed for development, the oil companies that stand to gain, and environmental organizations that

are fighting to protect the refuge. By incorporating direct quotes from what relevant parties have said on ANWR, I hope to portray each perspective as accurately as possible.

After giving an account of each group's position, I ask in a separate analysis section: what could account for the successful protection of ANWR? What kind of environmental ethic would most 1) accurately capture the essence of our moral relationship with nature, and 2) fundamentally change our understanding of and action towards the environment? Given this ethic, what can be said about ANWR?

Ultimately, I seek to identify an environmental ethic that both sufficiently outlines a moral human-nature relationship and has the potential to substantially influence American environmental policy and practices. Simply reading about the different theories proposed by ethicists does not reveal so apparently the merits of each relative to the others. My initial bias, though, is towards an ecocentric ethic that recognizes the intrinsic value of nature. I will come back to this hypothesis at the end of my study. An analysis of the ANWR controversy will, I hope, help me distinguish which kind/s of environmental philosophy can best describe our moral obligations to nature, and rightfully guide our policy, individual actions, and worldviews.

A General Overview of Environmental Ethics

*“Without environmental ethics, we may not have a future—
certainly not the one we wish, or ought to have in the next millennium.”*⁶

--Holmes Rolston III

In traditional environmental ethics discourse, three main theories exist which delineate human responsibility for the environment. First, anthropocentrism involves a value system dependent on human valuation. Under the strong versions of this philosophy, only humans are worthy of moral consideration. As a result, environmental responsibility matters only insofar as the environment is important to our survival. The duties we have towards the environment are derived indirectly from the primary duty we have towards ensuring our own well-being, and that of future (human) generations. Strong anthropocentrism assigns instrumental – rather than intrinsic– value to the environment. In *Politics*, Aristotle contends that “nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man,” and thus ascribes instrumentality to natural things.⁷ Immanuel Kant also implies that the environment has instrumental value in his *Lectures on Ethics*. For Kant, cruel treatment of a dog is not, on its own, an immoral action – it is immoral because humans may then act cruelly towards other individuals. The implications of potentially extending such treatment to human beings are, for Kant, what makes cruelty

⁶ Rolston III, Holmes. *A New Environmental Ethics: The Next Millennium for Life on Earth*. New York: Routledge, 2012, 26-27.

⁷ Brennan, Andrew, and Yeuk-Sze Lo. Environmental Ethics. January 3, 2008.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/> (accessed March 2, 2014)..

towards animals unacceptable. Primarily concerned with human welfare, strongly anthropocentric proponents of sustainability likewise argue that environmental protection is necessary because humans rely on a healthy environment.

Weak anthropocentrists, on the other hand, recognize that humans are important, but also see value in nonhuman entities. According to weak anthropocentrists, observation of and interaction with the environment enriches our experience of the world. Transcendentalists, ecofeminists, and ecologists all recognize the value of having nature around and thus strive to conserve it. In arguing for a pragmatic but environmentally friendly ethic, Bryan G. Norton proposes a weaker form of anthropocentric sustainability where individuals act in accordance with a rational world view.

For non-anthropocentrists, value exists within other entities and apart from human valuation. They take the value of our environment to be inherent. Within the larger category of non-anthropocentrism, I identify two sub-theories – namely, those of ecocentrism and biocentrism. Ecocentrism entails a holistic way of looking at the environment, its systems, and its moral standing. Ecocentrists would assign moral value to the environment as a whole for various reasons. Some argue that ecosystems make it possible for biological life to flourish and so deserve moral consideration. Some argue that the environment as a system has integrity. Others still argue that the planet or Mother Earth is akin to a person, and “should have the same right to life as any mother.”⁸

The last environmental approach I will discuss is biocentric, or focused on life. Biocentrists believe that individual organisms – as opposed to entire ecosystems – should be the crux of environmental ethics and policy. For example, Paul Taylor argues that

⁸ Ibid, 18.

every teleological organism has its own good and thus should be able to pursue that good. Some biocentrists argue that our environmental responsibility operates preferentially, and thus we have more of an obligation to save animals and mammals as opposed to plants and invertebrates. Other biocentrists are egalitarians. They argue that “all living organisms have an exactly equal right to exist.”⁹

In this chapter, I attempt to categorize existing environmental philosophies into the three overarching theories (strong anthropocentrism, weak anthropocentrism, and non-anthropocentrism). Before I begin, however, I find it imperative to discuss briefly the significance of intrinsic value in environmental ethics as the heart of biocentrism and ecocentrism. Shelly Kagan explains the two basic concepts of intrinsic value. On one hand, intrinsic value can be understood as the “value that an object has in itself.”¹⁰ This approach implies that, even if, for example, a tree was the last remaining organism on earth, it would still have intrinsic value because such a value is independent of human valuation. In other words, that an object has intrinsic value does not depend on human recognition of this reality or fact. According to the second definition, intrinsic value could also mean that objects are valuable “for their own sake,” as “ends” in themselves.¹¹ Both these definitions share the common notion that the nonhuman world has unique worth. Whether understood as inherent or recognized by humans, intrinsic value has been difficult to prove and support. As a result, choosing the first or second definition does not have significant impact on policy-making. Nevertheless, intrinsic value remains a central concern for some ethicists as I will explain in more detail later in this chapter.

⁹ Enger, Eldon, and Bradley F. Smith. *Environmental Ethics*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education, December 8, 2011, 18.

¹⁰ Kagan, Shelly. "Rethinking Intrinsic Value." *The Journal of Ethics*, 1998: 277-297, 278.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 279.

THE ANTHROPOCENTRISTS

I expand first on six anthropocentric theories: utilitarianism (and cornucopianism), free market environmentalism, green market environmentalism, social liberalism (as applied to the environment), sustainability, and ecofeminism. The strong anthropocentrist view is defended most staunchly by corporations and profit-minded individuals who consider the environment a commodity. Strong anthropocentrists, then, put human desires and preferences above environmental protection, and promote care of the environment only insofar as necessary for human preservation.

Other, weaker anthropocentrists like ecofeminists advocate for a social environmental ethic that combines human concerns with environmental problems. Ecofeminism demonstrates that anthropocentrism is not necessarily anti-environmentalist. At least in the case of ecofeminism, an anthropocentric element helps people to understand the relation between environmental crises and the problems with societal structure.

I note that sustainability, the market environmentalisms, and social liberalism differ from the other philosophies I discuss, simply because they avoid complex ethical and epistemological discussions on social values. For one, proponents of sustainability simply have no need for the existing philosophical framework, and, in fact, encourage the formation of a new, multidisciplinary one rooted in experience. The market system likewise operates in accordance with economic principles that do not quite mesh with a philosophized discourse. These ideologies are still important, however, because of the role played by the market economy in environmental protection.

STRONG ANTHROPOCENTRISM

Utilitarian Anthropocentrism

Gifford Pinchot, first chief of the U.S. Forest Service, is one of the most famous proponents of natural resource use for economic gain. A reading of *The Training of a Forester* reveals that Pinchot's conservation ethic was meant to maximize the benefits society could obtain from nature – in other words, “promote and perpetuate its greatest use to men.”¹²

In fact, Pinchot defines forestry as “the art of handling the forest so that it will render whatever service is required of it without being impoverished or destroyed.”¹³ It is “the art of producing from the forest whatever it can yield for the service of man.”¹⁴ The main purpose man has for the forest is to “make it serve the greatest good of the greatest number for the longest time.”¹⁵ Pursuant to the “Forester's point of view,” the present generation has priority over harnessing nature's “greatest good,” but also must provide for “the succeeding generations through the long future of the nation and the race.”¹⁶

While still clearly anthropocentric in his theory, Pinchot appears more like an environmental pragmatist in his other writing, and less like a conquistador of nature. By calling him pragmatic, I mean to say that Pinchot saw conservation as clearly rational and necessary to the survival of humankind. For example, in *The Fight for Conservation*, Pinchot points out that preventing waste is an “industrial necessity” and “a simple matter

¹² Pinchot, Gifford. 1914. *The Training of a Forester*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 23.

¹³ Ibid, 13.

¹⁴ Ibid, 13.

¹⁵ Ibid, 23.

¹⁶ Ibid, 24.

of good business.”¹⁷ “Conservation” generally, writes Pinchot, “is the application of common-sense to common problems for the common good.”¹⁸ Preservation and development of the environment should lead to “benefit of the many, and not merely for the profit of a few.”¹⁹

The cornucopian view described in Judith A. Layzer’s *The Environmental Case: Translating Values into Policy* parallels the utilitarianism in Pinchot’s ethic. Cornucopian individuals and industries are economically-driven. Cost-benefit analysis constitutes ample evaluation of whether the company/industry or cornucopian should take a particular action. Cornucopians in general emphasize individual liberty. They believe that humans should be able to fulfill their desires without restrictions imposed by others. Technology can help overcome any shortage in resources resulting from such an individualistic system. The government’s sole responsibility is the assignment of property rights to available resources – the market economy then controls distribution. Humans reign supreme in the natural hierarchy of organisms. Of course, Layzer has only provided a very general notion of the cornucopian view. She notes that while “some place a higher value on economic growth than...[on] the moral importance of the natural world...others are avid outdoorsmen who” are more confident in the individual’s “ability to protect natural amenities.”²⁰

¹⁷ Pinchot, Gifford. 1910. *The Fight for Conservation*. New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 44-45.

¹⁸ Ibid, 81.

¹⁹ Ibid, 46.

²⁰ Layzer, Judith A. 2002. *The Environmental Case: Translating Values into Policy*. Washington: CQ Press, 4.

Free Market and Green Environmentalism

Proponents of free market environmentalism argue that a laissez-faire system results in the “greatest good” and the achievement of environmental justice.²¹ The primary and ideal role of government “is the protection of life, liberty, and property.”²² Free market environmentalists do not believe that the market economy is or will be harmful to the environment. Advocates such as Terry L. Anderson and Donald R. Leal point out that society can counteract scarcity by “reducing consumption, finding substitutes, and improving productivity.”²³

Anderson and Leal support property rights as the best way to ensure “optimal environmental decision-making.”²⁴ Problems arise when property rights are not clearly defined, however, or when actors exploit specific natural resources to which they have no right. Free market environmentalists hold the assumption that humans are “self-interested rational calculators” who are little moved by “civic responsibility or moral values.”²⁵ They believe that the management of natural resources should be left to private owners who will, if only for self-interested reasons, ensure that they have continued access to desired resources. If owners are held accountable for how they choose to exercise their property rights, they will take good care of their property so that they can both benefit from it in the long-term and avoid problems with other owners.

Finally, free market environmentalists promote a model centered on property rights as an alternative to government regulation. Pollution, defined as “a trespass against

²¹ Clark, John. 2001. "Political Ecology: Introduction." In *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, by Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren and John Clark, 343-361. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 345.

²² Ibid, 345.

²³ Ibid, 345.

²⁴ Ibid, 345.

²⁵ Ibid, 345.

someone's property or person," is tolerated in minor amounts so long as it does not pose a large inconvenience to affected property owners.²⁶ Theoretically, heavy polluters would be forced to "either clean up or close shop" because they are held accountable for violating the property rights of others.²⁷ Strict enforcement of property rights, then, becomes a solution to the problem of excessive waste.

Anderson and Leal provide examples of free market success, and highlight the potential of market-based solutions to environmental problems. For example, free market environmentalism can prevent overfishing in the open ocean. Individual transferable quotas or ITQs give fishermen the right to some share of fish catch, "thereby eliminating the incentive to over-fish the resource."²⁸ Quotas operate to the advantage of efficient fishermen who may purchase quotas from the less efficient. ITQs have been implemented in Australia and New Zealand, and proven to work. In cases where the party/parties responsible is/are not clear, Anderson and Leal encourage use of technology such as tracers to identify polluters and hold them accountable. They suggest that the free market can also address the issues of the Northern Spotted Owl and the Columbia River salmon. By opening up national forests to competitive bid and rivers to water leasing, property rights may benefit environmentalists who purchase the land and negotiate with other parties to improve the conditions of wildlife habitat.

Green market environmentalists like Paul Hawken agree with free market advocates that government regulation and planning are inefficient. However, Hawken argues that an unrestricted market cannot be the solution to the ecological crisis because

²⁶ Smith, Fred L., and Kent Jeffreys. *A Free-Market Environmental Vision*. n.d. <http://www.cato.org/pubs/chapters/marlib23.html> (accessed November 5, 2013).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid, 370.

industries tend to externalize environmental costs in order to gain a competitive edge. He thus pushes for “Green fees” that internalize externalities.²⁹ Marketplace prices – once subject to these taxes – reflect more closely the true production costs to the company. Hawken hypothesizes that cheaper renewable resources would become preferable to now expensive non-renewable energy sources; organic farming would gain momentum due to the heightened expenses associated with pesticides and artificial fertilizers. This new green tax system would enable the poor and middle class to afford environmentally friendly options. After all, Hawken believes that “the only kind of environmental movement that can succeed has to start from the bottom up.”³⁰

Leaving environmental protection entirely up to market forces poses several problems that these authors fail to address. Who would enforce green standards? If private owners are responsible for environmental stewardship, would not the commons be open to exploitation by all? Should we put a dollar value on the natural world? If no one is willing to pay to protect the environment, does market environmentalism remain a viable theory?

Social Liberalism and the Environment

Recognizing some of the aforementioned difficulties with the market environmentalist position, Avner de-Shalit challenges ideas posited by Anderson, Leal, and Hawken. He argues instead that a “social” liberalism can close “the gap between

²⁹ Hawken, Paul. "A Declaration of Sustainability." In *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, by Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren and John Clark, 392-402. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2001, 396.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 396.

theoretical discussion and praxis.”³¹ Although the American liberal tradition helped foster the development of environmental philosophy, argues de-Shalit, it cannot ensure implementation of biocentric or ecocentric ideals. Market-based environmentalism puts decision-making in the hands of wealthy and influential polluters while burdening those who suffer the harmful environmental consequences. The least advantaged and consumers are forced to shoulder the costs of maintaining unsustainable business and state practices.

Allowing a free market society to dictate environmental policy and the market incentive to guide individuals poses grave concerns. Pollution charges are passed on to consumers. Cost labels on nonhuman life, in the assessment of environmental damage, trivializes the value of nature. Firms can purchase pollution rights, but the poor remain trapped in areas contaminated by the execution of such rights.

de-Shalit asks: “why should we let the private sector make the decisions on where to pollute? Are [these] decisions private at all? Should they be in the hands of those who run the industries and pollute rivers, meadows, and seas?”³² de-Shalit warns that “individualistic, self-involved, short-run interests” cannot resolve environmental problems – we are not merely consumers but members of a society who have an obligation to act in the public interest.³³ He calls for state environmental policies that “take into account the good of the [human] community as a whole.”³⁴

³¹ de-Shalit, Avner. 2001. "Is Liberalism Environment-Friendly?" In *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, by Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren and John Clark, 403-422. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 404.

³² Ibid, 413.

³³ Ibid, 416.

³⁴ Ibid, 416.

Sustainability

The United Nations Brundtland Commission offers a well-known definition of sustainability: “[meeting] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”³⁵ Identifying other ways of understanding sustainability, Sheldon Kamieniecki and Michael E. Kraft give a comprehensive overview of this ethic and science. According to A.J. McMichael, C.D. Butler, and Carl Folke, the anthropocentric goal of sustainability is to establish a beneficial relationship with the environment that will yield indefinite support for human needs. A second, less human-oriented approach to sustainability retains the goal of the first, but also requires consideration of all species and their welfare. Multiple versions of sustainability discuss a balance of “ecological integrity, social equity, and economic vitality,” and note that humans need other species to survive.³⁶ Despite the variety in definition, concern for the future is a common element in sustainability theories.

America is no stranger to the idea of sustainable use. As early as 1789, Thomas Jefferson, writing to James Madison, explained that nature “belongs in usufruct to the living.”³⁷ He referred to the right of stewardship and benign use of the land. President Theodore Roosevelt stated in his speech “The New Nationalism” that, while the then present generation had the right to natural resources, they did not “have the right to waste [these resources], or to rob, by wasteful use, the following generations.”³⁸ President

³⁵ World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). 1987. *Our Common Future*. New York: Oxford University Press.

³⁶ Kamieniecki, Sheldon, and Michael E. Kraft. 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Environmental Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 67.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 70.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 72.

Franklin Roosevelt also put in place programs that combined “economic recovery with social improvement and environmental conservation.”³⁹

Many environmentalists commented on the perturbing trajectory of human development and modernization. In *The Closing Circle*, Barry Commoner argued that the “[industrial] system of production is self-destructive; the present course of human civilization is suicidal.”⁴⁰ Murray Bookchin posited that “a transformation of outlook is warranted, one that will change” our “[problematic] mentality of domination [and destruction] into one of complementarity.”⁴¹

WEAK ANTHROPOCENTRISTS

Having introduced the stronger versions of anthropocentrism, I turn now to the weakly anthropocentric environmental ethics of influential American authors. While Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, and Rachel Carson all argue for the preservation of nature, they do not go so far as to explicitly attribute any kind of intrinsic value to the natural world. In other words, humans still play a crucial part in the recognition of value in the environment outside themselves. I place ecofeminism and Bryan G. Norton’s sustainability concept under weak anthropocentrism because both ethics address human concerns alongside environmental issues. Environmental protection is necessary to procure welfare of the human population, but also that of nonhuman species as well.

³⁹ Ibid, 72.

⁴⁰ Commoner, Barry. 1971. *The Closing Circle*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 295.

⁴¹ Bookchin, Murray. "What is Social Ecology?" In *Earth Ethics*, by James T. Sterba, 245-259. London: Prentice Hall, 1995, 245.

Transcendentalists Thoreau and Emerson came to respect Nature through their enjoyment and interaction with the wilderness. I note that because these authors include human enrichment among their reasons for protecting the environment, they are weak anthropocentrists. They want Nature around so that humans can observe and engage with the wilderness for the advancement of their own good. Leopold likewise encouraged human exposure to the wilderness. His land ethic calls for a redefinition of our “social conscience” to include land and a better understanding of the natural world.⁴² Carson’s method of appealing to her audience in *Silent Spring* implies that she argued against intensive reliance on chemicals primarily because it was an unsustainable practice – harmful to both humans and nature.

That said, each of these authors have an ecocentric side to their ethic – Emerson, like Thoreau, recognized humanity as part of intricate Nature, Thoreau stressed kinship with the natural world, Leopold understood human existence in the context of a highly interconnected ecosystem, and Carson rejected the anthropocentric idea that nature is meant solely to satisfy human needs.

Ecofeminists like Karen J. Warren and Lori Gruen want to do away with the dualism between nature and man, due to the oppressiveness of Western patriarchal industrialization. To that extent, they fight against environmental degradation as part of their mission to alleviate discrimination against women who are lumped together with nature as that which is to be exploited. Norton’s sustainability is distinct from the one I previously described in the section on strong anthropocentrism. Though Norton also emphasizes the obligation we have to future human generations, he does not deny the

⁴² Leopold, 209.

environment intrinsic value – he merely advocates for the most effective ethic given the predominant American attitude towards nature. I close with a short discussion on Norton because he explains the merits of a weak anthropocentric approach and sustainability as an environmental ethic. His arguments, I think, sum up and add to the philosophies of the other weak anthropocentrists I cover in this section.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson both appreciated the natural world and the materialism which threatens to destroy it. On the one hand, Emerson regarded nature as essential to human life and close to the Divine. At the same time, he was a staunch supporter of development and resource use. In Chapter 1 of his 1849 *Nature: Addresses and Lectures*, Emerson describes how experiencing nature allows man to transcend his corporeal self and recognize his place within the whole. He explains the effects of being surrounded by and immersed in nature:

“I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God.”⁴³

This excerpt demonstrates Emerson’s belief in universal holism – that is, his understanding of the human being as a minute part of greater Nature. By looking to ourselves, we gain universal knowledge; by experiencing nature, we come to know ourselves. In this way, the universe is marked by continuity, circularity, and interconnectedness.

⁴³ Emerson, Ralph Waldo. 2009. *Nature*. September 3. Accessed October 6, 2013 <http://www.emersoncentral.com/nature1.htm>.

Emerson also refers to man's "intercourse with heaven and earth," and the "wild delight" of being in nature.⁴⁴ In fact, he states that Nature would say - regarding man's place within the environment - "he is my creature...he shall be glad with me."⁴⁵

Despite such an emphasis on the whole, Emerson uses more anthropocentric language in "The Over-soul," when he discusses the personification of the cosmos through man. Man embodies the collective whole - he has supreme importance. Emerson writes:

"...man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE."⁴⁶

An instrumentalist view of nature is also evident in Emerson's "The Conduct of Life." In the chapter titled "Wealth," Emerson characterizes the world as man's "tool-chest."⁴⁷ Nature is to be conquered; she offers "the elements [in] service" to man.⁴⁸ Indeed, the "forests of all woods; fruits of all climates, animals of all habits" constitute "his natural playmates" and "instruments he is to employ."⁴⁹

Henry David Thoreau

Although Henry David Thoreau was highly influenced by Emerson, his environmental ethic did not so quickly embrace the materialism of modern society. Like Emerson, Thoreau believed that man should be understood as "part and parcel of

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Over-Soul*. September 3, 2009.

<http://www.emersoncentral.com/oversoul.htm> (accessed October 18, 2013).

⁴⁷ Emerson, Ralph Waldo. 2009. *Wealth*. September 3. Accessed October 6, 2013.

<http://www.emersoncentral.com/wealth.htm>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Nature,” not merely “a member of society.”⁵⁰ We are, like the “leaves and vegetable mould,” a mere component of nature.⁵¹ While Emerson seemed to encourage control over nature in accumulating wealth, Thoreau rebelled against the notion of human privatization of the natural world brought on by individualism. In fact, he anticipated the “evil days” when “walking over the surface of God’s earth shall be construed to mean trespassing on some gentleman’s grounds.”⁵² After all, “to enjoy a thing exclusively is commonly to exclude [oneself] from the true enjoyment of it.”⁵³

Thoreau argued for the essentiality of unaltered nature or “Wildness” to the survival of all species, and “preservation of the World.”⁵⁴ He concisely states: “all good things are wild and free.”⁵⁵ In fact, Thoreau, in his essay “Nature,” likens the domestication and use of a horse to the slavery of man. It appears that Thoreau considered society’s treatment of horses an example of moral failure. For, by restricting the liberty of the horse, man has stunted his own morality.

Thoreau took an understanding of nature as vital to a fulfilling human existence. His retreat to Walden Pond allowed him “to live deliberately.”⁵⁶ Thoreau writes that a true human relationship with other species is akin to one between two nonhuman kinds; solitude in nature, then, does not mean loneliness but a transcendental recognition of the companionship offered by the natural world. As Thoreau points out, with such company, we are “no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in the pasture, or bean leaf, or

⁵⁰ Thoreau, Henry David. *The Works of Thoreau*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937, 659-660.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 336.

⁵² *Ibid*, 667.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 667.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 672.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 678.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 304.

a sorrel, or a horse-fly, or a bumblebee.”⁵⁷ Here is an example of how being in tune with nature leads to our understanding that we, just like any insect, animal, or plant, are equally members of the natural community.

Rachel Carson

Rachel Carson was an ecologist and well-known author of *Silent Spring*, a book which made known the dangers of chemicals like DDT and pesticides on the environment. Although as a scientist she recognized that the environment has value outside of its use to humans, Carson appealed to the right of humans to enjoy nature in arguing for better environmental practices. She writes: “to the bird watcher, the suburbanite who derives joy from birds in his garden, the hunter, the fisherman or the explorer of wild regions, anything that destroys the wildlife of an area for even a single year has deprived him of pleasure to which he has a legitimate right.”⁵⁸ Carson believed this harm – such deprivation of pleasure – was legitimate. She thought it possible to achieve “a reasonable accommodation between [nature] and ourselves” by “cautiously seeking to guide [the natural world] into channels favorable” to humans.⁵⁹ Carson seems to argue that human-environment interactions should be facilitated through our use and shaping of nature.

That said, Carson also questioned “whether any civilization can wage relentless war on life without destroying itself, and without losing the right to be called civilized.”⁶⁰

How can we be certain of our morality when we cause such extensive destruction of life?

⁵⁷ Ibid, 336.

⁵⁸ Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994, 86.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 296.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 99.

In other words, “by acquiescing in an act that can cause such suffering to a living creature, who among us is not diminished as a human being?”⁶¹ Carson deemed arrogant the idea of rightful human conquest of nature. That “nature exists for the convenience of man” is only a supposition – an illegitimate one at that.⁶²

Aldo Leopold

A philosopher, conservationist, and “outdoor enthusiast,” Aldo Leopold advocated for a human-nature relationship wherein humans are part of the natural community, and experiencing wilderness nurtures human morality.⁶³ In his foreword to *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold identifies himself as part “of the minority [for whom] the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech.”⁶⁴ He criticizes human obsession with “economic wealth,” advocating instead a deeper understanding of our place in the world.⁶⁵ Ultimately, Leopold asks us to extend our ethics to the environment, to “things natural, wild, and free.”⁶⁶

The most pertinent part of the *Sand County Almanac* for my purposes is the book’s final chapter on “The Land Ethic.” Here, Leopold explains how we should redefine our interactions with and perspectives on the environment. Leopold’s “land

⁶¹ Ibid, 100.

⁶² Ibid, 297.

⁶³ The Aldo Leopold Foundation. *The Leopold Legacy*. n.d. http://www.aldoleopold.org/AldoLeopold/leopold_bio.shtml (accessed March 23, 2014).

⁶⁴ Leopold, vii.

⁶⁵ Ibid, ix.

⁶⁶ Ibid, ix.

ethic” describes a human as “plain member and citizen of” the “land community.”⁶⁷ He encouraged respect for both human members and the community at large. Conservation, for Leopold, does not rely only on economic self-interest because such a system disregards “many elements in the land community that lack commercial value,” but are nonetheless essential to the “healthy functioning” of the “land community.”⁶⁸ Leopold defines the land as “a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals.”⁶⁹ He thus recognized the interconnectivity of ecological processes and species.

At the end of his chapter on the “land ethic,” Leopold summarizes the dualities in man’s role in the environment, his use of science, and characterization or understanding and use of the land. Man or woman can and should choose to be a “biotic citizen,” employ “science as the search-light of his/her universe,” and treat the land as a “collective organism.”⁷⁰ Leopold’s ethic focuses on the principle that “a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”⁷¹

While Leopold demonstrates a genuine love for the environment, his explanation for why we should conserve at times appeals to an anthropocentric justification. In his chapter on wilderness, Leopold forwards “a plea for the preservation of some tag-ends of wilderness, as museum pieces, for the edification of those who may one day wish to see, feel, or study the origins of their cultural inheritance.”⁷² That the motivations for

⁶⁷ Leopold, Aldo. “The Land Ethic.” In *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, by Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren and John Clark, 97-110. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2001, 99.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 104.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 105.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 109.

⁷¹ Ibid, 110.

⁷² Ibid, 188.

maintaining such wilderness areas are the education and enjoyment of future generations strikes me as anthropocentric. He goes on to lament that “no living man will see again the long-grass prairie...the virgin pineries of the Lake States, or the flatwoods of the coastal plain.”⁷³ Leopold also comments on the dwindling population of the grizzly bear. He seems to argue that we must protect these bears so that “youth yet unborn” and “each [subsequent] generation” have the chance to see them.⁷⁴ To an ecocentrist, what makes anthropogenic environmental harms especially problematic is not that it takes away man’s ability to enjoy nature but the wrongful destruction of nature itself. Leopold highlighted the importance of preserving ecosystem integrity, but also considered going out into nature a formative human experience. Asking society to treat nature with “love and respect” goes further than mere preservation of nature for human enjoyment, even though the pleasure derived from wilderness constitutes one significant reason for changing our attitudes towards the natural world.⁷⁵

Ecofeminists

Karen J. Warren introduces ecofeminism as an ethic that connects the oppression of women with mistreatment of the natural world. Since both are dominated by a patriarchal society, liberation of women and the environment are two commensurate goals. According to Vandana Shiva, development, in the Western sense of the word, attributes primitiveness to nature, and renders women inferior to men. This understanding fractures society into the preferred masculine and the undeveloped feminine, justifying a mischaracterization of nature as apart from ourselves.

⁷³ Ibid, 189.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 199.

⁷⁵ Ibid, viii.

Women are many times passionate advocates for environmental protection because they are affected most by environmental degradation. Warren discusses cases in which women have given voice to environmental concerns in their community. For example, women in Reni, India started the Chipko movement as an attempt to save trees. This movement gave voice to two concerns of local women: 1) the damage to unfelled trees “caused by commercial [tree] felling,” and 2) the replacement of “valuable indigenous forests” by “teak and eucalyptus monoculture plantations.”⁷⁶

Ecofeminists like Warren bring to light not only women’s issues, but also the problems affecting the oppressed or disadvantaged in a patriarchal system. In the United States, the placement of hazardous waste sites tends to coincide with Hispanic and African American neighborhoods.⁷⁷ Native American women are at risk due to their proximity to uranium mining.⁷⁸ Minority groups thus affected by such harms are likely to rise up and push back against careless environmental practices.

Another common element of ecofeminist theory is the rejection of the dualism between the rational, superior man and the conquerable, inferior woman. Val Plumwood explains that such a dualism pits ordered civilization against the barbaric, wild nature, “the dangerous shadow place on the other side of” rationality.⁷⁹ According to Carolyn Merchant’s “Western recovery narrative,” this view implies that women – and by extension, nature – should be controlled and guided by “(male) human agency and

⁷⁶ Warren, Karen J. 1997. "Taking Empirical Data Seriously." In *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, by Karen J. Warren, 3-20. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 5.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 11.

⁷⁹ Plumwood, Val. "Wilderness Skepticism and Wilderness Dualism." In *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, by Michael P. Nelson and J. Baird Callicott, 652-690. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998, 654.

science.”⁸⁰ Moreover, dualism of the feminine, virgin wilderness and ordinary land for common use also wrongfully suggests that, despite a culture antagonistic to and tending towards exploitation of the natural world, the environment can still thrive. Environmental protection is more than merely setting aside pristine lands – it requires that we adopt sustainable practices and change the way we interact with nature in general. Dualism underlies the acceptance of nature’s conquest by society, and provides justification for the manipulation and use of nature to suit human wants or needs.

Responding to the problems posed by this patriarchal view, Lori Gruen argues for the inclusion of the natural world in our society. In “Revaluing Nature,” Gruen applies feminist ideas about community to the environment. She argues that since feminists encourage inclusivity in the “dialogic community,” nature should be, consistent with this feminist ideal, part of human society.⁸¹

Explaining the nuances in environmental ethics, Gruen makes a crucial distinction between “pernicious anthropocentrism” and “inevitable anthropocentrism.”⁸² While the former holds that “humans are all that matter,” the latter concedes that humans create values but “nature nonetheless has a place in this process.”⁸³ For Gruen, “much of the problem with the attitudes many have toward animals and the rest of the nonhuman world stems from a removal from them.”⁸⁴ Arguing that “it is presumptuous and misleading to think that we can actually achieve the particular perspective of another,” Gruen does not

⁸⁰ Ibid, 660.

⁸¹ Gruen, Lori. 1997. "Revaluing Nature." In *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, by Karen J. Warren, 356-374. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 361.

⁸² Ibid, 368.

⁸³ Ibid, 368.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 363.

expect humans to understand completely the needs and desires of nonhumans.⁸⁵ She encourages instead direct experience of nature as a means to reconstitute the self and develop an appreciation for the natural world.⁸⁶ Only then would we understand that nature must be included in the human community, and how we should act towards it.

Bryan G. Norton

Norton makes a direct reference to and explains the merits of weak anthropocentrism in “Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism.” For him, an adequate environmental ethic can be weakly anthropocentric so long as our “felt” or immediate preferences are reconciled with a rational world view.⁸⁷ Such a view “includes fully supported scientific theories and a metaphysical framework interpreting those theories, as well as a set of rationally supported aesthetic and moral ideals.”⁸⁸ We should pursue only “considered preferences” about which we have “[carefully deliberated] and [judged] consistent with a rationally adopted world view.”⁸⁹

Contrary to non-anthropocentrists, Norton argues that intrinsic value need not enter environmental discourse. An “ideal of harmony with nature” necessitates only a religious or spiritual justification or support from “a rationally defensible world view.”⁹⁰ For example, Hindus and Jains refrain from killing insects. Their commitment to this

⁸⁵ Ibid, 369.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 369.

⁸⁷ Norton, Bryan G. "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism." *Environmental Ethics*, 1984, 163-174, 164.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 164.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 164.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 165.

proscription is motivated by their own spiritual development as opposed to a concern for “actual lives of these insects.”⁹¹

Weak anthropocentrism also considers those human experiences that play a part in the formation of key values. Nature, as a source of value formation, becomes a “teacher of human values” rather than “a mere satisfier of fixed and often consumptive values.”⁹² Norton is not unique in his claim that interacting with nature yields educational and spiritual benefits. In fact, each of the weak anthropocentrists previously discussed share in this understanding.

Norton concludes that sustainability is the most promising environmental ethic. He wants to do away with the strict dichotomy between anthropocentrists and non-anthropocentrists. Such a divide “block[s] communication and make[s] compromise actions more difficult.”⁹³ He argues instead for a sustainability theory grounded on experience and supplementary to other facets and disciplines involved in environmental decision-making. Derived from and understood in the context of real experiences and other less abstract fields of study, philosophy may be highly theoretical, yet still practical and accessible. More specifically, sustainability allows the meshing of “particular sciences” and “social values” with “public policy.”⁹⁴ It is an integrated approach that takes into consideration the multidisciplinary nature of forming apt solutions to

⁹¹ Ibid, 165.

⁹² Ibid, 165.

⁹³ Norton, Bryan G. *Sustainability : A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 56.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 49.

environmental problems. What sustainability provides, essentially, is “a common language or shared discourse” through which to discuss the environment.⁹⁵

Norton points out that weak anthropocentrism “requires no radical, difficult-to-justify claims about intrinsic value of nonhuman objects, [but] at the same time, provides a framework for stating obligations that goes beyond concern for satisfying human preferences.”⁹⁶ Here, I have identified the main reasoning behind Norton’s defense of weak anthropocentrism, and by extension, sustainability. Overall, Norton questions whether ethicists should prefer a divisive non-anthropocentrism centered on intrinsic value to a pluralistic and adaptable weak anthropocentrism.

THE NON-ANTHROPOCENTRISTS

Ecocentrism

In this last introductory section, I discuss the ethics proposed by the ecocentrists. Ecocentrists recognize that nature has an intrinsic value that does not depend on human valuation. As a result, they defend less intrusive environmental practices – even if this change requires much sacrifice on our part. Of the ecocentrists, I chose deep ecologist Arne Naess and the celebrated John Muir. Naess promotes an ethic that takes into account ecosystem complexity, respect for nonhuman organisms, and the essential relation between human identity and nature. Fighting for the establishment of national parks, Muir truly believed that humans should not meddle with some of God’s natural creations. He began the preservationist movement that has maintained clout in American political discourse.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 49.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 167.

Arne Naess

Responding to the division in environmentalism between anthropocentrists and ecocentrists in the 1960s, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess joined the debate as a proponent of what he calls the “deep, long-range ecology movement.”⁹⁷ His ethic deplores unrestricted industrialization and a “shallow” preoccupation with human-centered environmental problems.⁹⁸ He came up with the term “deep ecology.”⁹⁹ Clarifying the core of deep ecology, Naess condenses the tenets of his ethic into eight main points:

1. Both humans and nonhumans have intrinsic value.
2. Biological diversity supports the idea of intrinsic value – “even lower or primitive species of plants and animals are inherently valuable.”¹⁰⁰
3. Humans are entitled to use of the land only insofar as they must satisfy vital needs.
4. A smaller human population is beneficial to both humans and non-humans.
5. The extensive “human interference with the non-human world” must be reduced in favor of wilderness or “free Nature.”¹⁰¹
6. Policy changes from an economically driven system are necessary.
7. The notion of quality of life should be expanded to include non-materialistic factors.
8. Deep ecologists are responsible for pushing forward each of the eight points on this platform.

Naess makes an important distinction between shallow and deep ecology. Shallow ecologists are occupied mostly with resource use. Human well-being motivates protection of the environment. Ecosystems are divided up among property owners, and conserved so that future human generations may enjoy them. For Naess, the main difference between

⁹⁷ Sessions, George. "Deep Ecology: Introduction." In *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, by E. Michael Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren and John Clark, 157-174. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2001, 164.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 164.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 164.

¹⁰⁰ Naess, Arne. "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects." In *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, by J. Baird Callicott, Michael E. Zimmerman, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren and John Clark, 185-203. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2001, 189.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 189-190.

shallow and deep ecology is ultimately the “willingness to question, and an appreciation of the importance of questioning, every economic and political policy in question.”¹⁰² Naess claims that, whereas shallow ecologists do not inquire into long-term, global implications of environmental policy, deep ecologists are more cognizant of these consequences and seek to develop a holistic, rather than merely human-centered, environmental ethic. A fully rational policy is consistent with philosophical foundations and values.

The process by which one comes to adopt a deep ecology platform is derivational. Naess points out that fundamental “premises and ecosophies” in Buddhism, Christianity, and other philosophical thought can all lead to a recognition of intrinsic value in nature.¹⁰³ Deep ecology is a “conviction” that may develop from “different, mutually incompatible sets of ultimate beliefs.”¹⁰⁴ Naess underlines the important Buddhist principles “of non-violence, non-injury, and reverence for life” which provide a basis for an appreciation of nature.¹⁰⁵ Such principles, Naess posits, make Buddhists much more conducive to deep ecology than are Christians.

John Muir

John Muir, founder of The Sierra Club and renowned as “Father of [the American] National Park System,” was an influential naturalist and preservationist.¹⁰⁶ His writings capture the spirit of preservationism, and I would argue, the modern religious

¹⁰² Ibid, 195.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 197.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 199.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 199.

¹⁰⁶ Sierra Club. 2013. *John Muir: A Brief Biography*. Accessed October 6, 2013. http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/life/muir_biography.aspx.

take on the environment. In Chapter 10 of *Our National Parks*, Muir chastises the government for its ineffective management of American forests. He compares the government to a “rich and foolish spendthrift who has inherited a magnificent estate...and then...left his...forests and parks to be sold and plundered and wasted at will.”¹⁰⁷ Muir saw humans as guardians – rather than exploiters – of nature. In the January 1920 *Sierra Club Bulletin* titled “Save the Redwoods,” Muir seemed convinced that the American people would, “as soon as they see...and understand” what a guardianship of God’s nature means, take responsibility for the environment.¹⁰⁸

In addition, Muir criticized our lack of understanding and responsibility. As “kings of the forest, the noblest of a noble race,” Muir writes, redwoods “rightly belong to the world.”¹⁰⁹ It is deplorable, then, that humans have committed “wrongs of every sort” out of “ignorance and unbelief.”¹¹⁰ That Muir thought trees could be wronged by human conduct distinguishes his environmental ethic from the dominant anthropocentric tradition.

For Muir, both man and environment share the same Creator and deserve the same respect. Muir muses: “the forests of America...must have been a great delight to God for they were the best he ever planted.”¹¹¹ He points out that although “God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand storms...he cannot save them from sawmills and fools.”¹¹² The American people must

¹⁰⁷ Muir, John. 1901. *Our National Parks*. Boston and New York.

¹⁰⁸ Muir, John. 1920. "Save the Redwoods." *Sierra Club Bulletin*.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Muir, “Our National Parks.”

¹¹² Muir, “Save the Redwoods.”

rise up to the challenge of protecting the environment against their own who would exploit nature's limited resources.

Muir's use of religion to justify preservation runs counter to Lynn White's argument that Christian principles are anti-environmentalist. Christianity, according to Muir, serves as a basis for taking ample care of the environment, a justification for stewardship of nature – one of God's most magnificent and wondrous creations.

Biocentrism

Biocentrists also recognize intrinsic value in the nonhuman world – albeit with an emphasis on each individual organism and thing. Paul Taylor's theory encapsulates the main contributions of biocentrism to environmental philosophy. In "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," Taylor summarizes his ethic in four points.

1. Humans are a biological species and belong equally to the Earth community as other nonhumans.
2. The biosphere should be understood "as a complex but unified web of interconnected organisms, objects, and events."¹¹³
3. A single organism is a "teleological center of life" that works towards self-preservation and furthering its own good.¹¹⁴ Humans should judge the goodness or evil of an action by assessing how it impacts a certain organism's good. We must learn to see the world through the lens of nonhuman organisms if we are to make choices that affect them.
4. Our nature does not make us superior to nonhuman organisms.

Taylor's philosophy exemplifies biocentrism as an ethic that recognizes nonhumans as "teleological centers of life" with their own needs and particular good.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Taylor, Paul. "The Ethics of Respect for Nature." In *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, by Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, Karen J. Warren, George Sessions and John Clark, 71-86. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2001, 77.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 77

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 77.

A biocentrist's role is only to support these organisms in their endeavors to achieve this good.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained strong anthropocentrism, weak anthropocentrism, ecocentrism and biocentrism. What sets each ethic apart is the degree to and way in which human interests affect interactions with the environment. Anthropocentrists place human concerns at center stage or on an even plane with environmental problems; ecocentrists and biocentrists base our moral obligation to care for the environment on the intrinsic value of nature. I anticipate that the actors involved in the ANWR controversy will subscribe to a wide variety of environmental ethics. Keeping this chapter's framework and my expectation in mind, I begin an analysis of the ANWR debate.

Creating and Preserving the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

“The Refuge is a place that changes those who visit. It’s a place that is precious to millions who never will. It’s a place whose existence strengthens our awareness of and sense of responsibility for the natural world.”¹¹⁶

--U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The campaign for ANWR started with the 1951 Alaska Recreation Survey headed by National Park Service (NPS) planner George L. Collins and field biologist Lowell Sumner. This survey was launched in response to fast-paced “resource development” prior to the 1950s which “raised concerns about the potential loss of the [North Slope] region’s special natural values.”¹¹⁷ Struck by the “wilderness qualities of the area,” Collins and Sumner published a “Progress Report” advocating for preservation of the Arctic in 1952.¹¹⁸ In November of that year, they completed a twenty three-page report on the various “scenic, recreational, historic, wildlife, ecological, and scientific values of the region” titled “A Proposed Arctic Wilderness International Park: A Preliminary Report Concerning Its Values.”¹¹⁹ The report described the area “as a scientific field

¹¹⁶ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: A Review." In *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Review, Controversies and Legislation*, by Barbara T. Lieland, 1-53. New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2006, 6.

¹¹⁷ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Potential Impacts of Proposed Oil and Gas Development on the Arctic Refuge's Coastal Plain: Historical Overview and Issues of Concern." In *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Background and Issues*, by M. Lynne Corn, Bernard A. Gelb, Pamela Baldwin, Lawrence C. Kumins and Bruce Babbitt, 131-147. Hauppauge: Nova Science Publishers, 2003, 131.

¹¹⁸ Kaye, Roger. *Last Great Wilderness: The Campaign to Establish the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2006, 24.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 38.

laboratory...for the education, enjoyment, and inspiration of all outdoor-minded people.”¹²⁰

In October of 1953, Collins and Sumner also published a twenty four-page report titled “Northeast Arctic: The Last Great Wilderness” in the *Sierra Club Bulletin*. This report soon sparked much local debate when a summarized version appeared in a 1954 Fairbanks newspaper. Both opponents and proponents of the refuge submitted letters to the editor.

Recognizing that they were limited as NPS representatives, Collins and Sumner soon decided to transfer leadership of the ANWR campaign to Wilderness Society President Olaus Murie. Murie wanted to publicize the issue through a trip to the proposed area of northeast Alaska. After heading the 1956 Sheenjek Expedition, and armed with photographs of the range area, Olaus and his wife Mardy Murie started working on getting Alaskans onboard. The Muries “met with the media, various organizations, the Territorial Land Commission, and many individuals to describe their experience of the area and ideas for its future.”¹²¹ In order “to convince Interior Secretary Fred Seaton to take action,” Murie reached out to “many groups and individuals, urging them to write to Seaton’s assistant secretary of the interior for fish and wildlife Ross Leffler.”¹²² Leffler eventually visited the proposed range in July 1957, and wrote a report to the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) director Dan Janzen. Janzen sent a justification to Seaton detailing the reasons for withdrawing the area for the proposed range “from all forms of

¹²⁰ Ibid, 39.

¹²¹ Ibid, 106.

¹²² Ibid, 126.

public appropriation.”¹²³ Leffler then invited Olaus to present his findings from the 1956 Sheenjek Expedition and preservation plans to Seaton and the Interior Department Advisory Committee on Fish and Wildlife. Seaton announced the following week at a press conference his intention “to go forward with the establishment of this wildlife range.”¹²⁴

A May 1, 1959 press release from the Interior Department announced that Seaton “had sent an Arctic Range bill to Congress.”¹²⁵ As requested by Seaton, S. 1899 was introduced to the Senate on May 11, 1959 by Senator Warren G. Magnuson and forwarded to the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. That day, H.R. 7045 was introduced to the House by Representative Herbert Bonner, and later forwarded to the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. Led by Alaskan Senator Bob Bartlett, senate hearings were held for S. 1899 in both Alaska and Washington D.C. However, while H.R. 7045 passed on February 15, 1960 with a unanimous vote, S. 1899 was blocked from full consideration in the Senate by Bartlett, at the time also member of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce.

In an attempt to persuade Seaton against creating a national range, Governor Egan then proposed state management of ANWR, arguing that “the conservation needs of the Nation and the State for an unspoiled Arctic Wildlife management area can only be

¹²³ Ibid, 131.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 132.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 161.

achieved” if the range is under Alaskan control.¹²⁶ Egan received no response from Seaton on the matter.

Months after S. 1899 failed to pass, on December 7, 1960, a press release was issued by the Department of Interior Information Service stating: “Secretary Seaton Establishes New Arctic National Wildlife Range.”¹²⁷ Through Public Order 2214, Seaton withdrew 8,900,000 acres “for use of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.”¹²⁸ He described that he “felt the duty, in the public interest, to move as promptly as possible to take the steps administratively which would assure protection and preservation of the priceless resource values contained in the proposed Arctic National Wildlife Refuge area.”¹²⁹ As wilderness specialist and author of *Last Great Wilderness* Roger Kaye notes, President Eisenhower’s role in the establishment of the range is ambiguous, though he “must have [at least] approved the order.”¹³⁰

Despite the ambiguity of his role, Eisenhower’s position in the ANWR debate seems to align with proponents of the range. In his “Annual Budget Message to the Congress” in January 1961, Eisenhower called “the Arctic, Kuskokwim, and Izembek wildlife ranges in Alaska” “outstanding,” emphasizing the “unique values as waterfowl breeding grounds” and “the scenic beauty” of these wilderness areas.¹³¹ In *Waging Peace*, Eisenhower counted himself among “those...who venerated Theodore Roosevelt’s example [and] were determined that, with...rapidly increasing population and

¹²⁶ Ibid, 204.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 205.

¹²⁸ *Establishing the Arctic National Wildlife Range*, Public Land Order 2214, Executive Order No. 10355. (May 26, 1952).

¹²⁹ Ibid, 205.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 206.

¹³¹ Eisenhower, Dwight D. Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1962. January 1961, 1961. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12078> (accessed January 23, 2014).

proliferating industrialization, [the world's] extraordinary natural resources and national beauty would not be 'civilized off the face of the earth.'"¹³²

Important Legislation

Following the establishment of ANWR, in 1971, President Richard Nixon signed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). ANCSA "granted Natives title to nearly forty million acres of Alaska and provided them one billion dollars in direct compensation, in exchange for the extinguishment of all Native claims to Alaska lands based on aboriginal use and occupancy."¹³³ The Act also established Native corporations through which Natives received additional compensation in the form of stocks. ANCSA awarded the Kaktovik Inupiat Corporation (KIC) "surface rights to 92,160 acres of federal lands adjacent to the village" that could include up to 69,120 acres of ANWR.¹³⁴ As part of the Act, "all reservations in Alaska" were revoked.¹³⁵ Among others, Natives of the Venetie and Arctic Village chose to give up ANCSA benefits in order to maintain ownership of their reservation lands.

In 1980, Jimmy Carter signed into law the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA). ANILCA protects "25 free-flowing Alaskan rivers in their natural state," "[designated] 97 million acres for new parks and refuges," and specifically added 9.1 million acres of land to the Arctic Range.¹³⁶ Through ANILCA, the then 18-

¹³² —. *Waging Peace*. Garden City: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1965, 321.

¹³³ Walsh, John F. "Settling the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act." *Stanford Law Review*, 1985: 227-263, 227.

¹³⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *Time Line: Establishment and management of the Arctic Refuge*. September 12, 2008. <http://www.fws.gov/alaska/nwr/arctic/timeline.htm> (accessed January 21, 2014).

¹³⁵ Sealaska Heritage Institute. "The Road to ANCSA." n.d.: 1-497, 384.

¹³⁶ Carter, Jimmy. *Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act Remarks on Signing H.R. 39 Into Law*. December 2, 1980. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=45539> (accessed January 21, 2014).

million-acre range was renamed as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Subsequently, land was added to ANWR in 1983 when the State of Alaska gave up control of some selected lands, and again through Congress in 1988, making it “the largest Refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System.”¹³⁷ Section 702(3) of the Act also designated 8 million acres as wilderness, to be managed according to guidelines laid out in the 1964 Wilderness Act.¹³⁸

Although a large proportion of ANWR received strict federal protection under ANILCA, Section 1002 left ambiguous the fate of 1.5 million acres in the Coastal Plain.¹³⁹ The Coastal Plain or “1002 Area” “is...the most critical onshore denning habitat of the entire Beaufort Sea polar bear population in the United States and Canada,” and “includes the calving grounds for the Porcupine caribou herd.”¹⁴⁰

Section 1002 of ANILCA required that FWS assess the potential impacts of oil and gas development on the area and present its findings to Congress.¹⁴¹ In 2002, FWS and the U.S. Geological Survey updated the 1986 final report on the Coastal Plain in a document titled “Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain Terrestrial Wildlife Research Summaries.”¹⁴² Currently, the “1002 Area” is classified under “Minimal Management,” “a category...suitable for Wilderness designation.”¹⁴³

¹³⁷ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *Time Line: Establishment and management of the Arctic Refuge*.

¹³⁸ --. *Stewardship of Wilderness within the Arctic Refuge*. September 12, 2008.

<http://www.fws.gov/alaska/nwr/arctic/wildernessman.htm> (accessed January 21, 2014).

¹³⁹ --. *Management of the 1002 Area within the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain*. September 12, 2008.

<http://www.fws.gov/alaska/nwr/arctic/1002man.htm> (accessed January 21, 2014).

¹⁴⁰ Shoshov, Tatiana. 2003. "Factual Overview of the Wildlife Refuge." In *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Background and Issues*, by M. Lynn Corn, Bernard A. Gelb, Pamela Baldwin, Lawrence C. Kumins and Bruce Babbitt, 1-31. Hauppauge: Nova Science Publishers, 15.

¹⁴¹ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *Management of the 1002 Area within the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain*.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ --. *Management of Lands Added to the Refuge in the 1980s*. September 12, 2008.

<http://www.fws.gov/alaska/nwr/arctic/minman.htm> (accessed January 21, 2014).

Congress has previously – and consistently – been presented with legislation that would have designated the Coastal Plain as wilderness. For example, in 2003, 2005, and 2007, bills H.R. 770 and S. 543, H.R. 567 and S. 261, H.R. 39 and S. 2316, respectively, were introduced and referred to committees.¹⁴⁴ To capture the essence of such proposed laws, I quote text from H.R. 770, or the Morris K. Udall Arctic Wilderness Act. H.R. 770 was meant “to preserve the Arctic coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska, as wilderness in recognition of its extraordinary natural ecosystems and for the permanent good of present and future generations of Americans.”¹⁴⁵

Since ANWR’s establishment, Congress has also considered numerous bills on developing the Coastal Plain. However, wilderness advocates and insufficient congressional support have successfully hindered these efforts. Now, democrats and republicans alike are standing up for ANWR. As recent as January 2013, Democratic Representative Edward J. Markey introduced the Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act or H.R. 139, which would designate the Arctic Coastal Plain as a wilderness area. Representatives Rush Holt (D) of New Jersey and Mike Fitzpatrick (R) of Pennsylvania have taken over leadership of the bill since its introduction to the House. Senators Maria Cantwell (D) of Washington and Mark Kirk (R) of Illinois are leading Senate version S. 1695, and introduced the bill early November of last year. What is more, the FWS has conducted a wilderness evaluation of the Coastal Plain as part of its recent Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Environmental organizations like the Sierra Club are very much encouraged by this development.

¹⁴⁴ Billingshouse, Sarah I. 2009. *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Issues and Legislation*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

¹⁴⁵ *Morris K. Udall Arctic Wilderness Act*, H.R. 770, 106th Congress, 1st sess. (2003).

As demonstrated in this chapter, ANWR has attracted a wide array of private and public actors, some who want to protect the refuge and others who push for its development. Expanding on this background account of ANWR, I will now look closely at and critically examine the arguments main players have made for and against establishment of and development in the refuge.

The Battle over ANWR: Actors Involved

“The case of the Arctic Refuge and its stage of actors is an excellent lens through which to view our future history and the coming conflicts between competing worldviews and values that truly cut to the core of diverging and converging human psychosocial belief systems.”¹⁴⁶

--David M. Standlea

In this chapter, I give voice to both anti-development and pro-development actors. While the wilderness advocates from various organizations argue broadly for ANWR’s national, cultural, symbolic, and biological significance, the Gwich’in Natives are inhabitants of the refuge, and speak as protectors of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. Though included in the same section as the Gwich’in, the Inupiat Eskimos, another group of Alaskan Natives, defend oil interests. Along with them, Alaskan officials and oil companies (as well as their mouthpiece Arctic Power) have persistently sought to open the refuge to development. The economic benefits of developing refuge oil, they say, makes development a prudent choice.

WILDERNESS ADVOCATES

The Meaning of Development

In 1959, Olaus Murie, then Director of The Wilderness Society, spoke eloquently in favor of the Arctic Range at a senate hearing on S. 1899, a bill that would have

¹⁴⁶ Standlea, David M. 2006. *Oil, Globalization, and the War for the Arctic Refuge*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 15.

established the Arctic Wildlife Range. Crucial to his argument, and notable for its wisdom and foresight, is Murie's perspective on what it means for a society or nation to progress. He notes:

“All of us have the task of making a living; but we long for something more, something that has a mental, a spiritual impact on us. This idealism, more than anything else, will set us apart as a nation striving for something worthwhile in this universe. It is inevitable, if we are to progress as a people in the highest sense, that we shall become ever more concerned with the saving of intangible resources, as embodied in this move to establish the Arctic Wildlife Range.”¹⁴⁷

For Murie, there were “two things to consider: making a living as a material need, and the urgent need to make our living meaningful and beautiful.”¹⁴⁸ As a wildlife biologist and wilderness explorer, he emphasized the latter. In this statement, Murie used “need” first in its strict economic sense and then, secondly, in a more expansive way to express the necessity of redefining what “living” should mean. Murie advised that “if we are going to amount to anything as a great country we must give serious attention to our mental and spiritual needs – hard to define but of greatest importance.”¹⁴⁹ The construction of a profound national identity requires a kind of development that goes beyond economic value.

A “Wild” American Heritage

“Here,” Murie said, “in the Arctic Wildlife Range...is a wonderful opportunity for this Nation to honestly declare that we mean it when we say we love America ‘Thy

¹⁴⁷ Merchant Marine and Fisheries Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Arctic Wildlife Range – Alaska: Hearing before the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce*, 86th Congress, 1st sess., June 30, 1959, 59.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

rocks and rills,' and all that goes with the true appreciation of the values in our land.”¹⁵⁰

In his 1959 testimony, Murie exposed the inextricable link between American culture and the wilderness. Nature does not merely exist apart from us for our exploitation and management, but has continued to define the American people and the overall identity of the nation. Agreeing with her husband, conservationist Margaret Murie considered the Arctic Range a part of the “American heritage.”¹⁵¹ She was confident that “if we are big enough to save this bit of loveliness on our earth, the future citizens of Alaska and of all the world will be deeply grateful. This is a time for a long look ahead.”¹⁵²

Stewart M. Brandborg, then Assistant Conservation Director of the National Wildlife Federation, delivered a similar testimony at the senate hearing on S. 1899. He cautioned that “when, in our quest for a higher standard of living and eagerness to attain an easier way of life, we permit all of the wilderness to be destroyed, we rob ourselves of the experiences and conditioning that have contributed so much to the inner strength of our people and the achievements of our Nation.”¹⁵³ He reiterated, then, the indispensability of wilderness as a cultural and historical asset.

Value of the Outdoors

Apart from advocating for moral progress and growth, Murie also appealed to anthropocentric notions of recreation and exploring the outdoors. He said: “we, who enjoy hunting and observing these animals, have the opportunity in such a dedicated area, to travel widely and absorb some of the adventure and peace of mind that we associate

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 59.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 60.

¹⁵² Ibid, 60.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 49.

with the thought of Alaska.”¹⁵⁴ Not only did Murie grasp the broader implications of protecting the range, but he recognized the value and benefits of exposure to the wilderness.

In the same vein, Brandborg contended in his testimony that “[the] committee must consider the importance of wildlife, wilderness, and the out-of-doors to our people. It must also consider what these things have meant to us in the past and what they will continue to mean to us in the future – for recreation, for relief from the pressures of our modern living pace...”¹⁵⁵ Brandborg adds to Murie’s argument by discussing the *future* meaning of wilderness to the American public. He may have been alluding to the increasing importance of natural spaces as people become more consumed by modernization and its demands.

Wilderness or Economic Development: Striking a Balance

Giving testimony at a senate hearing in 1991 on S. 39, a bill that would designate the 1002 area as wilderness, Gaylord Nelson, then a counselor at The Wilderness Society, echoed Murie’s concerns with focusing on an economic definition of growth, and the detrimental effects on American society of acting in accordance with such a view. He lamented that “...the ethic of this country...has been maximum exploitation of every single economic resource with minimum consideration for the environmental impacts. That has been our guiding ethic.”¹⁵⁶ Nelson wondered: “is there some place in the United

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 58.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 53.

¹⁵⁶ Subcommittee on Environmental Protection of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, *Designating a Portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System*, 102nd Congress, 1st sess., April 19, 1991, 99.

States...a single place that is so rare and invaluable that we would just set it aside, and not touch it? If there is such a place, isn't it the Arctic coastal plain?"¹⁵⁷

He framed the question that Congress must consider with striking clarity. Quite simply, "do we want to save this rare and remarkable ecosystem with its unique and abundant mix of wildlife in its perfectly natural condition for its intrinsic, esthetic, scientific, and philosophic values or do we want to compromise it for its transitory commercial values?"¹⁵⁸ Given this way of formulating the question, it seems, rather unambiguously, that one should protect the range. Unlike Murie, Nelson does not mention the benefits of exploring the wilderness. He was concerned with questioning the dominant American ethic, and revealing the problematic implications of developing the refuge. Nelson challenged the proponents and dared them to "go into the Bob Marshall in [the] State of Montana... Yosemite and Yellowstone...into all the wilderness areas."¹⁵⁹ Where would the line be drawn? What stands between oil companies and development of other parks and refuges? The opposition of "everybody in the United States," Nelson answered.¹⁶⁰ By comparing ANWR to beloved national parks elsewhere in the lower 48, Nelson censured the relentless expansion of industry and development into fragile and invaluable wilderness areas. If Yellowstone and Yosemite deserve protection, why exempt ANWR? "After all," Nelson added, "we have no other conservation unit as rare or fragile or more important as a world conservation resource than the Arctic Refuge."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 99.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 120.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 99.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 100.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 120.

Similar to Murie and Nelson, Wilderness Society President Jon Roush, in a 1995 *Washington Times* article, advised Americans to “take the long view.”¹⁶² Strongly condemning development in the Arctic Refuge, Roush argued that “we should have the good sense not to sacrifice America’s Serengeti on the altar of oil consumption. Instead, we must protect it for future generations of caribou, other wildlife, American Indians – and every one of us.”¹⁶³ Along with Murie’s proposal for a different kind of growth and Nelson’s cautioning against unrestrained development, Roush’s comments help to complete the picture by identifying the important factors that must be considered in determining whether to open up the refuge to development. In effect, what we lose if oil interests triumph.

Contesting and Adding to the “Facts”

Mike Matz, then Chairman of the Alaska Coalition, laid out several reasons for prohibiting development in the Coastal Plain. The different points that he made in his testimony at the 1991 senate hearing for S. 39 encapsulates arguments still used today.

First, Matz called ANWR “the finest arctic wilderness area remaining in North America,” listing its “complete spectrum of arctic ecosystems” and large numbers of “muskoxen, grizzly and polar bears, wolves, wolverines, and 212 species of birds” as justification for preserving this pristine wilderness.¹⁶⁴ As the “biological heart” of the Refuge, the Coastal Plain should remain free from development.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Roush, Jon. 1995. *Saving America's Serengeti*. July 27. Accessed February 11, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/409430678/abstract?accountid=15131>.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Subcommittee on Environmental Protection of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, 127.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 127.

Second, contrary to what opponents claim, drilling in ANWR will not solve America's energy crisis. Citing the Interior Department, Matz pointed out that the Arctic Refuge "could supply – if there is any oil – only 4 percent of [the] nation's energy demand at peak production."¹⁶⁶ The United States should focus instead on using "what oil does remain much more prudently."¹⁶⁷ Specifically related to oil production, Matz called attention to the potential of "additional [oil] recovery" from existing and producing fields such as Kuparuk, Lisburne, Milne Point, Endicott, and Shrader Bluffs.¹⁶⁸ At the time, discovered but untapped fields including Niakuk, Point McIntyre, Gwydyr Bay, Seal Island, Sandpiper or West Sak were also available for development. The reported estimated reserves ranged from 15 million barrels (in West Sak) to 300 million barrels (Seal Island and Point McIntyre). Matz encouraged the United States to transition seriously to an energy policy based on more efficient use and renewable sources of energy.

Finally, Matz, like other wilderness advocates, stressed the dependence of Alaskan Natives on a well-functioning ecosystem and thriving wildlife. He noted that "caribou, polar bears, migratory waterfowl, and fish" "are vitally important to the aboriginal peoples of the United States and Canada."¹⁶⁹ As a signatory of the Porcupine Management Agreement, the United States has an obligation to ensure the welfare as well as "customary and traditional uses of the Porcupine Caribou Herd by Native residents of Alaska and Canada."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 127.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 128.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 129.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 130.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 130.

To conclude, I reference a statement made by David Yarnold, current President and CEO of the Audubon Society. Reinforcing the importance of the Coastal Plain's inclusion in the Fish and Wildlife Service's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), Yarnold said: "due to its size, remote location, wilderness character, and diversity of values, the Arctic Refuge is an irreplaceable treasure that provides a globally-significant benchmark of ecological integrity in the Arctic."¹⁷¹ He ended with praise for the Eisenhower administration credited with the establishment of the Arctic National Wildlife Range. Creating the refuge "was a visionary act...in its awareness that future generations deserve and need an opportunity to be inspired by the enduring presence of wilderness."¹⁷²

NATIVE VOICES

The Gwich'in: Saving "The Sacred Place Where All Life Begins"

The Gwich'in Nation consists of 7,000 people living in fifteen villages scattered "throughout northeast Alaska and northwest Canada."¹⁷³ Their ancestors have lived many generations "in the areas near to what is now known as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge."¹⁷⁴ The Gwich'in natives are staunch proponents of ANWR because its Coastal Plain provides habitat for the Porcupine Caribou Herd. From their creation story, it is

¹⁷¹ Yarnold, David. 2011. *Audubon President Demands Protection of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*. November 15. Accessed February 10, 2014. <http://www.audubon.org/newsroom/news-stories/2011/audubon-president-demands-protection-arctic-national-wildlife-refuge>.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Resources, *Legislative Field Hearing on H.R. 39, Arctic Coastal Plain Domestic Security Act of 2003, and H.R. 770, Morris K. Udall Arctic Wilderness Act.* " 108th Congress, 1st sess., April 5, 2003, 18.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

clear that the Gwich'in have a deep connection with the caribou. Faith Gemmill, a Neets'aiti Gwich'in,

“told of the time when there [were] only animals, the animals became people...[and] the Gwich'in came from the caribou. There was an agreement between the two that still stands, the Gwich'in retain a piece of the caribou heart and the caribou retain a piece of the Gwich'in heart for all time. [They] are like one. Whatever befalls the caribou will befall the Gwich'in.”¹⁷⁵

Sarah James, also Neets'aiti Gwich'in, is one of the “caribou people.”¹⁷⁶ She elaborates, “Caribou are not just what we eat; they are who we are. They are in our stories and songs and the whole way we see the world. Caribou are our life. Without caribou we wouldn't exist.”¹⁷⁷ James most clearly articulates why the Gwich'in have chosen to speak up. “Our fight is not just for the caribou. It's for the whole ecosystem of Gwich'in country, which covers northeast Alaska, the northern part of the Yukon territory, and the McKenzie Delta. And our fight is a human rights struggle – a struggle for our rights to be Gwich'in, to be who we are, a part of this land.”¹⁷⁸

Every year, the Porcupine Caribou migrate “hundreds of miles each year” to calve in the Coastal Plain of ANWR.¹⁷⁹ Due to the significance of the plain to caribou birthing, the natives call the area *Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit*, or “The Sacred Place Where All Life Begins.”¹⁸⁰ Not just the caribou need the coastal plain. As James notes, “fish come here from the Arctic Ocean to spawn. Polar bears den along the coast. Wolves and grizzlies and wolverines have their young here. And many kinds of birds from different

¹⁷⁵ Lentfer, Hank, and Carolyn Servid. *Arctic Refuge: A Circle of Testimony*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2001, 49-50.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁷⁹ Gwich'in Steering Committee. *A Moral Choice for the United States: the Human Rights Implications for the Gwich'in of Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*. Gwich'in Steering Committee, 2005, 4.

¹⁸⁰ Lentfer, Hank, and Carolyn Servid, 4.

parts of the world come here to nest.”¹⁸¹ James expresses concern over “broader issues” - “Arctic haze and global warming, the hole in the ozone layer over the North Pole...a whole ecosystem that still works.”¹⁸²

In 1988, faced with “proposed oil development on the coastal plain of ANWR” that threatened the welfare of the caribou, the Gwich’in began advocating for preservation.¹⁸³ Elders called for a Gwich’in Niintsyaa, a formal meeting between the Chiefs, to decide what should be done. They reached a unanimous agreement to oppose development, and “work to educate the public and decision-makers of the reasons this sacred area must be protected.”¹⁸⁴ Jonathon Solomon, then Chairman of the Gwich’in Steering Committee, stated in his testimony at a legislative field hearing on the Coastal Plain: the Porcupine Caribou Herd constitutes “the principal means by which the Gwich’in people meet...essential cultural, physical, economic, social, and spiritual needs.”¹⁸⁵ Gwich’in Darius Kassi likewise described the Porcupine Caribou as “what [his people] have lived for and [around which] their lives revolve.”¹⁸⁶

The Gwich’in natives have an appreciation for and understanding of nature. Their existence has always been consciously dependent on and framed in a broad environmental context. As a result, they realize that the importance of Porcupine caribou extends much further than the animals’ utility as sustenance. The natives respect the way the caribou live, and control their own consumption so that both people and caribou may

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 5.

¹⁸² Monitor, The Christian Science. 1991. *Inupiat Eskimos, Gwich'in Indians Disagree About Oil*. July 30. Accessed February 27, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/291192672>.

¹⁸³ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Resources, *Legislative Field Hearing on H.R. 39, Arctic Coastal Plain Domestic Energy Security Act of 2003; and H.R. 770 Morris K. Udall Arctic Wilderness Act*, 108th Congress, 1st session, 2003, 20.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 20.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 18.

¹⁸⁶ Gwich'in Steering Committee., 4.

continue to live in their own ways. Gwich'in Calvin Tritt explained that the natives "only harvest caribou during half of the year...and don't kill for sport or joy, but to sustain [their] people."¹⁸⁷ In fact, "no matter how hungry the villagers may be after a long winter, they allow the first band of caribou that appears each spring to pass undisturbed."¹⁸⁸ Commenting on the caribou's annual migration, Gideon James, a Gwich'in native from Arctic Village, admirably noted: "when it's time to go back to the calving grounds, they all come together. Nothing stops them...it's amazing the way they do these things. We need to respect that."¹⁸⁹

Apart from working to protect the caribou and ecosystem, the Gwich'in are also fighting to preserve their human rights. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulates that "ethnic minorities 'shall not be denied the right...to enjoy their own culture.'"¹⁹⁰ A 2005 report prepared by the Gwich'in Steering Committee stated that "because the spiritual connection with the [caribou] herd is so central to the Gwich'in culture, damage to the herd would endanger the very identity of the Gwich'in as a people."¹⁹¹ The report also referred to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as a reminder that "a people [may not] be deprived of its own means of subsistence."¹⁹² Finally, the report pointed to the "right of the Gwich'in to practice their religion" as guaranteed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹⁹³ Since the caribou "is one of the most potent and critical spiritual symbols in the Gwich'in religion,"

¹⁸⁷ Bass, Rick. *Caribou Rising*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2004, 15.

¹⁸⁸ Lentfer, Hank, and Carolyn Servid, 21.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 22.

¹⁹⁰ Gwich'in Steering Committee, 18.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 20.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 20.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 22.

damage to the herd would also hinder “the ability of the Gwich’in to practice and manifest their religion.”¹⁹⁴ The controversy over ANWR, then, constitutes both an important human rights and serious environmental issue for the Gwich’in.

The Inupiat Eskimos: Advocates for Development

Not all Alaskan natives are pro-wilderness like the Gwich’in. The Inupiat Eskimos are another Native community that lives near (and in) the Arctic Refuge. They depend on subsistence hunting of “marine mammals, land mammals, fish, and migratory birds.”¹⁹⁵ Unlike the Gwich’in, however, the Inupiat accepted the terms of ANCSA, and own the oil-based Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC). For the most part, they are pro-development.

Present for the 1991 hearing on S. 39, a bill that would have designated the Coastal Plain as wilderness, Jacob Adams, then President of the ASRC, reiterated strong Inupiat support for development. Enumerating the many benefits of the Prudhoe Bay industrial tax base, Adams explained that “for the first time, [the] eight Villages [were] able to provide...people [with] electricity, police and fire protection, communications, medical services, schools and decent education.”¹⁹⁶ Adams claimed that the “best economic resource” for the Inupiat natives was Kaktovik Village, located on the Coastal Plain.¹⁹⁷ Enacting S. 39 “would render these lands valueless.”¹⁹⁸ Oil development has

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 23.

¹⁹⁵ Jr., Brower Harry, and Hepa Taqulik. 1998. *Subsistence Hunting Activities and the Inupiat Eskimo*. Accessed February 27, 2014. <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/united-states/subsistence-hunting-activities-and-inupiat-es>.

¹⁹⁶ Subcommittee on Environmental Protection of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, *Designating a Portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System*, 102nd Congress, 1st sess., April 19, 1991, 115.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 115.

“opened new educational, employment and economic opportunities for...young people.”¹⁹⁹ The Inupiat people would have “a much brighter future” if the Coastal Plain was developed.²⁰⁰

For Adams, the benefits of oil development far outweigh “the enjoyment of so few” – in fact, less than “175 people a year...[visited] the Coastal Plain” at that time.²⁰¹ Given that “there are many other areas of Alaska’s North Slope which have far higher wildlife, habitat and wilderness value,” sacrificing the “huge oil potential of the flat, bleak Coastal Plain area” would make little sense.²⁰² Adams neither identified the other areas to which he referred nor how to measure and compare wilderness value.

Towards the end of his testimony, Adams claimed that the environmental impacts on the area would be minimal. “We have been Prudhoe Bay’s most careful observers and critics since 1968,” Adams asserted, “if the Coastal Plain on-shore area could not be safely developed, we would not support this course of action.”²⁰³

Beyond ANWR, the Inupiat natives prefer onshore drilling in general because it does not disturb the bowhead whales that they hunt. Former ASRC executive Oliver Leavitt said, “the more the environmentalists lock up the land where the oil may be, the more they’re going to have to go offshore...there’s more danger there.”²⁰⁴ Inupiat natives like Thomas Napageak Jr., former mayor of Nuiqsut village, “are concerned that noise from seismic research and boat engines [would] scare off the bowhead, pushing them

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 115.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 115.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 116.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 116.

²⁰² Ibid, 116.

²⁰³ Ibid, 116.

²⁰⁴ Dlouhy, Jennifer A. 2012. *Can arctic culture survive oil?* November 23. Accessed February 26, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1220477714?accountid=15131>.

further away from shore and making the annual hunts an even more dangerous pursuit.”²⁰⁵ “We live off the land,” Napageak said, “we live off the ocean. That’s our natural resource. We want to protect what we eat.”²⁰⁶ Inupiat whaler Ron Saganna warned, “if they have a catastrophe like in the Gulf of Mexico...it’s going to hurt our hunting, going to ruin our source of food.”²⁰⁷ I must mention that the Gwich’in are in the same position as the Inupiat with regards to the caribou. They, too, face similar threats to their environment and need “to protect what [they] eat.”²⁰⁸

While the Gwich’in want to maintain a traditional way of life, the Inupiat want to hold onto the privileges that have accompanied oil development. Inupiat Eskimo Warren Matumeak argued that “now [they] have roads, airports, firefighting equipment, schools, senior centers, and a lot of things [the villagers] never thought [they] could enjoy.”²⁰⁹ “We also have better hunting equipment,” he remarked, “like aluminum boats with outboard motors and rifles with scopes, so we’ve got the best of both cultures here.”²¹⁰ The Gwich’in see modernization as a threat to their culture; the Inupiat welcome the material, education, and health benefits of Westernization.

Since oil drilling in ANWR shifts attention away from offshore sources, and also provides benefits to Inupiat villagers, it is not difficult to understand why the Inupiat have sided with oil interests on this issue. At the same time, modern hunting technology, new services, buildings, and upgrades have taken the Inupiat far from their traditional subsistence culture.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ The Christian Science Monitor 1991.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

ALASKAN OFFICIALS

Representatives of Alaska have been consistently and publicly supportive of opening the Coastal Plain to development. I include in this section three prominent Republican Alaskan officials who have actively worked to open up ANWR to development: Senator Lisa Murkowski, Governor Sean Parnell, and Congressman Don Young. While they make similar arguments in favor of development, each emphasizes a different benefit that oil brings to the Alaskan and American people. Anticipating concerns that the officials I have chosen may be unrepresentative because they all belong to the same political party, I add that Democratic Senator Mark Begich, though not featured in this study, shares his Republican counterparts' pro-development position. Whether democrat or republican, Alaskan officials seem to speak with one voice when it comes to ANWR.

Senator Lisa Murkowski

Born in Ketchikan, Alaska and raised in Wrangell, Juneau, Fairbanks and Anchorage, Lisa Murkowski is the “first Alaskan-born Senator.”²¹¹ In 2004, she was elected to the U.S. Senate for a six-year term, and then re-elected in 2010 through a write-in campaign. She currently serves as a “Republican member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and...on the Senate Appropriations Committee, where she is the ranking Republican of the Interior and Environment Subcommittee.”²¹²

²¹¹ *United States Senator Lisa Murkowski for the State of Alaska*. n.d.

<http://www.murkowski.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=Home> (accessed February 4, 2014).

²¹² *Ibid.*

Murkowski is an ardent supporter of development in ANWR. She has introduced to the 112th Congress two bills, S. 351, or the No Surface Occupancy Western Arctic Coastal Plain Domestic Energy Security Act, and S. 352, or the American Energy Independence and Security Act. S. 351 would permit “extraction of oil and natural gas from ANWR using underground directional drilling from locations outside the exterior boundaries of the refuge.”²¹³ S. 352 would open “the coastal plain to development, while limiting activities within ANWR to 2,000 acres.”²¹⁴

Testifying at an oversight hearing in 2011 on “ANWR: Jobs, Energy and Deficit Reduction,” Murkowski framed the ANWR debate around the question of “when and how to develop” rather than “whether to develop.”²¹⁵ She characterized the creation of ANWR as a “somewhat insulting” endeavor by “federal agencies...to look for ways to lock up additional wilderness in Alaska when Alaska doesn’t want it.”²¹⁶ The federal government is, according to Murkowski, finding “more ways to twist the law just to keep money buried in the ground.”²¹⁷

Murkowski expressed animosity towards “federal obstructionism,” first raised as an issue by proponents of Alaskan statehood in the 1950s.²¹⁸ In fact, Article 8 of the Alaskan Constitution reiterates that “it is the policy of the State to encourage the settlement of its land and the development of its resources by making them available for

²¹³ ANWR. n.d. <http://www.murkowski.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=ANWR> (accessed February 4, 2014)

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Murkowski, Lisa. "Testimony before the United States House of Representatives ." *Committee on Natural Resources*. September 21, 2011. <http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/murkowskitestimony09.21.11.pdf> (accessed February 4, 2014).

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

maximum use consistent with the public interest.”²¹⁹ In the words of former Alaskan Senator Ernest Gruening, this interest at the time of statehood (and arguably now) involves the attainment of “greater freedom [from federal control] and greater economic opportunity.”²²⁰

Responding to ANWR proponents’ argument that the refuge has “symbolic value” and gives “satisfaction, inspiration, and even hope” to people, Murkowski warned that “our priorities have escaped the realm of common sense if we are spending taxpayer money to rationalize the sterilization of a resource of this value for the sake of some undefined form of ‘satisfaction’.”²²¹ She argued that the advancement of technology allows for responsible, “minimally intrusive” development of the Coastal Plain.²²² That the federal government has not yet approved such development is an “ongoing federal failure.”²²³ In short, Murkowski maintained that the 1002 area should be developed to “create tens of thousands of new jobs, generate hundreds of billions of dollars in new tax revenues, reduce the nation’s dependence on foreign oil and improve the trade balance, strengthening the dollar.”²²⁴

Though her strong stance on opening ANWR to development implies disregard for the environment, Murkowski has worked to push forward research for alternative forms of energy, passed legislation on clean drinking water, and helped to pass a ban on overseas mercury exporting that could lead to health problems. What should one make, then, of Murkowski’s position? I argue that although Murkowski publicly endorses “the

²¹⁹ Alaskan Constitution, art. 8, sec. 1.

²²⁰ Kaye, 46.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ *United States Senator Lisa Murkowski for the State of Alaska.*

importance of protecting the land and the wildlife [of]...the Great Land,” her commitment to environmental causes are often coupled with and motivated by economic concerns.²²⁵ She wants to “protect the health of Alaska’s lands and waters both to protect the beauty of the Last Frontier, but also” – and here, a long list of economic factors begins – “because...about 60,000 earn their living from the seafood industry, more than 20,000 earn their living from tourism that often is centered around the wildlife and scenic wonders of Alaska, and because subsistence hunting and fishing is vital for the economic survival of so many in rural Alaska.”²²⁶ Murkowski created the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area to “help protect the history of the Kenai Peninsula” (as stated on her official website).²²⁷ Yet, the provision in the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act that stipulates creation of this area lists promotion of local tourism as the purpose of establishment.²²⁸

Governor Sean Parnell

Sean Parnell was elected Governor of Alaska in 2009, and was re-elected in 2010. Just May of last year, Parnell submitted a letter to Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell, recommending that the U.S. Geological Survey team up with the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) to conduct 3D seismic exploration of the Coastal Plain. Parnell included a “pledge to request up to \$50 million from the Alaska

²²⁵ *Energy*. n.d. <http://www.murkowski.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=Energy> (accessed February 4, 2014).

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Dillon, Robert. *Murkowski applauds signing of omnibus lands bill*. March 30, 2009. <http://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/republican-news?ID=9e4f30ef-f80f-4292-a0b1-9981102d6169> (accessed February 4, 2014).

State Legislature during its 2014 legislative session to help fund the...program.”²²⁹ Sally Jewell rejected this request, standing by the Obama Administration’s opposition to drilling in ANWR. She writes: “the Refuge is a vast, intact ecosystem and continued protection of this ecologically important area is taken very seriously by the Service. Clearly, future management of the Arctic Refuge, and especially the Coastal Plain, is of vital importance not only to Alaskans but also to the Nation as a whole.”²³⁰

At the 2011 oversight hearing on “ANWR: Jobs, Energy, and Deficit Reduction,” Parnell stated that “no citizens are more directly invested in keeping the Alaska environment pristine than Alaskans themselves.”²³¹ Yet, he continued, “we need not choose between a vibrant economy, and a safe and clean environment. We can have both.”²³² Discussing the potential of oil development in ANWR, Parnell concluded “it’s accessible. It’s extractable. And oil production and wildlife in ANWR are compatible.”²³³ Parnell cited the relatively minimal impact of oil development on the Coastal Plain, claiming that “today’s technology ensures that the footprint for development in ANWR would be less than 2,000 acres [out of the 1.5 million that makes up the Coastal Plain]...and allows for almost ‘zero impact exploration’ through the use of ice roads, ice pads, and the like.”²³⁴ Following this comment, Parnell reiterated that “protecting the

²²⁹ Parnell, Sean. *Governor Rolls Out ANWR Exploration Proposal*. May 18, 2013. <http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell/press-room/full-press-release.html?pr=6486> (accessed February 4, 2014).

²³⁰ Jewell, Sally. *Letter to Governor Parnell*. June 28, 2013.

²³¹ *Gov. Testifies in Support of ANWR Development*. n.d. <http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell/press-room/full-press-release.html?pr=5899> (accessed February 4, 2014).

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ Parnell, Sean. *Governor Sean Parnell Testimony to House Resources Committee Oil Development in the Coastal Plain of ANWR*. September 21, 2011.

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/parnelltestimony09.21.11.pdf> (accessed February 4, 2014).

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

environment is as important to Alaskans as it is to all Americans. This Great Land is our home, and we have to be good stewards of air, land, and sea to live here.”²³⁵

With regards to impact on wildlife, Parnell contended that “environmental stipulations can be used to protect caribou during their six-week calving season each summer,” and “appropriate restrictions” applied to “protect migratory birds and fish.”²³⁶ He referenced the increase in the population of Central Arctic Caribou (CAH) at Prudhoe Bay to support his claim that responsible development “can be done.”²³⁷

Like Senator Lisa Murkowski, Governor Sean Parnell appears superficially dedicated to good stewardship of his Great Land. He also strategically omits dispositive information when assessing impact of oil development. For one, arguing for compatibility of oil production and wildlife, Parnell ignores expert opinion and scientific studies proving otherwise. According to retired research biologist Kenneth R. Whitten, the CAH “that spent more time in or near the oilfields gained less weight during the summer growing season and had lower pregnancy rates and lower calf survival than other members of the herd that seldom encountered development.”²³⁸ Only thanks to “favorable weather” did the population manage to increase to 27,000 in 2000.²³⁹

The CAH, moreover, cannot be compared to the Porcupine Caribou Herd (PCH). While the CAH were displaced “to other coastal plain habitats with few predators,” the PCH would be forced to “foothills and mountains with more abundant predators, [such as

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Whitten, Kenneth R. "Caribou and Oil Development on the North Slope." In *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Background and Issues*, by M. Lynne Corn, Bernard A Galb, Pamela Baldwin, Lawrence C Kumins and Bruce Babbitt, 47-50. Hauppauge: Nova Science Publishers, 2003, 48.

²³⁹ Ibid, 48.

wolves, grizzly bears, and golden eagles], and/or low quality forage.”²⁴⁰ Due to the “somewhat lower calf production and adult survival rates” of PCH when compared to other caribou herds, “viability of the Porcupine Herd population depends on the high calf survival rates experienced on the Coastal Plain.”²⁴¹

Whitten does not stand alone in his concern for the welfare of the PCH in the face of oil development. Five hundred scientists from the United States and Canada signed a letter in 2001 urging President Bush “to support permanent protection of the coastal plain’s significant wildlife and wilderness values.”²⁴² They pointed out that “the 110-mile-long coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 1.5 million acres of key wildlife habitat vital to the integrity of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge” whose “biological diversity and wilderness character” should be preserved.²⁴³

Furthermore, Governor Parnell’s Oil and Gas Resource Evaluation and Exploration Proposal for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge 1002 Area sent to Secretary Sally Jewell is conveniently ambiguous about the potential impact on wildlife. According to the proposal, “seismic activity that occurs in winter *may* disturb denning bears.”²⁴⁴ These “bears *may* tolerate changes without negative impacts to denning or litters.”²⁴⁵ Due to the “high fidelity” of muskoxen “to particular habitat areas,” “displacement from

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 48-49.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 48.

²⁴² *More than 500 Scientists Call on White House to Halt Plans to Drill in Arctic Wildlife Refuge*. March 20, 2001. <http://www.defenders.org/press-release/more-500-scientists-call-white-house-halt-plans-drill-arctic-wildlife-refuge> (accessed February 4, 2014).

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Oil and Gas. *The Oil and Gas Resource Evaluation & Exploration Proposal for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge 1002 Area*. Anchorage: Alaska Department of Natural Resources, 2013, 109.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 109.

preferred habitats *could* have a negative effect on muskoxen populations.”²⁴⁶ The report claims that conducting exploration and development activities during the winter minimizes disturbance to wildlife because populations are at “*reduced* numbers” in their “winter habitats.”²⁴⁷ The Porcupine caribou “will *generally* not be present in the area during the proposed drilling program.”²⁴⁸ What do the terms “reduced” and “generally” indicate exactly? At such crucial moments, the report does not complement its findings with empirical evidence. Given the ambiguities associated with effects on wildlife, it is no wonder that Secretary Jewell turned down Parnell’s proposal.

Congressman Don Young

Don Young is currently serving his 21st term as Alaska’s sole Representative in the U.S. House of Representatives. He has served in the Alaskan State House, State Legislature, and State Senate. Young was a leading proponent of the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline. Now, he serves as a senior Republican on the House of Natural Resources Committee. In January 2011, Young introduced H.R. 49, or the American Energy Independence and Price Reduction Act, to the House. This Act would open up the Coastal Plain to competitive oil and gas leasing, exploration, development, and production. It would also allow for directional drilling, a technique “that allows oil and gas resources to be tapped a long horizontal distance away from the well site.”²⁴⁹ While

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 116.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 123.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 124.

²⁴⁹ Molvar, Erik M. *Drilling Smarter: Using Directional Drilling to Reduce Oil and Gas Impacts in the Intermountain West*. Laramie: Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, 2003, 4.

acknowledging that directional drilling may be “less damaging,” the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance added a caveat in their report on this technique.²⁵⁰

“Directional drilling does not prevent all environmental impacts of oil and gas exploration and development...As a result, some lands — including national wildlife refuges, parks, wilderness areas and monuments; roadless and wilderness-quality lands; and other sensitive lands — contain resources incompatible with oil and gas development and should remain withdrawn from all types of drilling.”²⁵¹

H.R. 49 would authorize use of this technology in up to 45,000 acres of the Coastal Plain designated through the Act as a Special Area.²⁵²

Young’s testimony at the oversight hearing on “ANWR: Jobs, Energy and Deficit Reduction” provides a clear example of an argument for oil development based on energy security. Young agrees with Murkowski and Parnell, but the congressman expressed his views with more cogency and detail.

Young called attention to the \$333 billion spent in 2010 on importing “oil from insecure sources of the world, including the Persian Gulf.”²⁵³ More recently, he highlighted the “shameful” spending of “more than \$433 billion” on overseas oil in 2012.²⁵⁴ That the U.S. depends heavily on foreign oil means that opponents of ANWR are necessarily supporters of “increasing...reliance on foreign suppliers.”²⁵⁵ Oil produced in the U.S. is, argued Young, subject to “more stringent” “environmental safeguards,”

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 1.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 1.

²⁵² H.R.49 - American Energy Independence and Price Reduction Act. February 10, 2011. <http://beta.congress.gov/bill/112th/house-bill/49> (accessed February 6, 2014).

²⁵³ Young, Don. 2011. *Statement of Congressman Don Young, House Natural Resources Committee: Oversight Hearing on ANWR Jobs, Energy and Security*. September 21.

²⁵⁴ Young, Don. Energy Independence. n.d. <http://donyoung.house.gov/issues/issue/?IssueID=5005> (accessed February 6, 2014).

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 2.

whereas imported oil “sometimes are not up to our standards.”²⁵⁶ Skeptical of the recent partnership between Exxon and Russia, Young asked: “do we really trust that Russia can protect the Arctic better than we can?”²⁵⁷ Young criticized President Clinton’s veto of pro-development legislation, claiming that the American people would have been “enjoying the economic benefits of...jobs created, increased revenue...and a more certain energy supply” had Clinton approved.²⁵⁸

Furthermore, Young stressed that “less than 2,000 acres would actually be necessary to tap the region’s vast resources through ultra-modern, environmentally sensitive drilling technology.”²⁵⁹ He elaborated: “to give some perspective on size, if the State of Alaska were a 1,000 page phone book, the 2000 acre drilling area would be equal to one-half of a square inch on one page of the 1,000 page phone book.”²⁶⁰ Young made no reference to the wilderness values of ANWR, and did not address the issue of environmental impact. It is possible to ascertain, however, that Young’s views are strongly anthropocentric, centered on the economic gains made possible by oil development. He adopts, then, a materialistic and almost purely rational justification for opening the Coastal Plain.

Similar to other proponents of development, Young diverts public attention away from the biological significance of the Coastal Plain by instead emphasizing the small proportion of land that would (supposedly) be developed, and referring to the plain as the “1002 area.” Given Young’s conviction that developers would only drill 2,000 acres of

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 2.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 2.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 3.

²⁵⁹ Young, Statement of Congressman Don Young, House Natural 2011, 2.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 2.

the Coastal Plain, I bring up another inconsistency in his position. Why would Young push for a Special Area of up to 45,000 acres in the Coastal Plain if development is limited to 2,000 acres? It appears that development infrastructure may take up more land than Young is willing to admit.

THE OIL GIANTS

Fighting against pro-wilderness actors and with the Alaskan officials, Big Oil – most prominently British Petroleum (BP), Exxon Mobil, and ConocoPhillips - “have controlled virtually all of the Alaskan oil production and transportation through the trans-Alaska pipeline” since 2001.²⁶¹ In 1992, BP and ConocoPhillips joined Arctic Power, a “grassroots, non-profit citizens’ organization” that lobbies for opening ANWR to development.²⁶² ChevronTexaco was also a member of this group. From its establishment, Arctic Power has contributed mightily to the pro-development public relations campaign.

What role does Arctic Power play in the controversy? David M. Standlea, author of *Oil, Globalization, and the War for the Arctic Refuge*, explains the not-so-apparent connection between the roles of Arctic Power, oil companies, and the Alaskan state in opening ANWR to development:

“...publicly the state of Alaska, its congressional delegation, its governor, and its public lobbying group, Arctic Power, are, in the words of one expert environmental activist, “carrying the water” for the oil companies. The state of Alaska politicians [are some of] the front men and women for the powerful companies that remain

²⁶¹ Standlea, 45.

²⁶² Arctic Power. n.d. *About Us*. Accessed February 27, 2014. <http://www.anwr.org/About-Us.php>.

silent except for their marketing efforts to appear “green” and sensitive to social justice....”²⁶³

On its website, Arctic Power enumerates ten major reasons that ANWR should be developed. I summarize them below:

1. Development would only affect “less than half of 1% of ANWR’s total area,” specifically the 2,000 acres of the oil field footprint.²⁶⁴
2. It would add “billions of dollars from bonus bids, lease rentals, royalties and taxes” to federal revenues.²⁶⁵
3. Oil production would “create hundreds of thousands of manufacturing and high skilled service jobs nationwide.”²⁶⁶
4. Since the equipment needed to produce oil is provided by lower 48 states, development would boost the national economy.
5. According to the 1998 United States Geological Survey (USGS), the Coastal Plain “has the highest potential for a super-large oil field of any other place on the North American continent.”²⁶⁷
6. Production of the North Slope oil fields is declining. ANWR could compensate for this drop, and save the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.
7. Importing oil is costly, and sends hundreds of billions of dollars abroad. Relying on oil in ANWR would ensure that “the jobs, the money, and the infrastructure stay at home.”²⁶⁸
8. Development would have “no negative impact to animals” due to constant monitoring by “State and Federal wildlife specialists.”²⁶⁹ In fact, the oil fields “are home to a very healthy brown bear, fox, musk oxen, bird and fish populations equal or better to the surrounding area.”²⁷⁰
9. More advanced drilling technology can be used to minimize impact on the environment.
10. Both a large majority of the Alaskans and state officials favor development – “it is strongly supported by all.”²⁷¹ Citing a 2009 poll conducted by the Dittman Research Corporation, Arctic Power reported that “over 78% of Alaskans support exploration and production on the Coastal Plain.”²⁷² It also stated that votes on

²⁶³Standlee, 50.

²⁶⁴ Arctic Power. n.d. *Top ten reasons to support ANWR development*. Accessed February 17, 2014. <http://www.anwr.org/ANWR-Basics/Top-ten-reasons-to-support-ANWR-development.php>.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Arctic Power. n.d. *Alaskans Strongly Support ANWR Development*. Accessed February 17, 2014. <http://www.anwr.org/People/Alaskans-Strongly-Support-ANWR-Development.php>.

resolutions pertaining to ANWR development “have always been nearly unanimous with only 1 or 2 legislators dissenting.”²⁷³

Arctic Power does not include Inupiat support of ANWR drilling in this list. However, in a separate link, the group discusses benefits that Kaktovik residents receive from North Slope production. Oil and gas development has provided “a tax base for the local government...jobs, [as well as] funding for water and sewer systems and schools.”²⁷⁴

Although Arctic Power expresses clearly its reasoning in favor of and complete support for development, oil companies themselves, as Standlee points out, are not so vocal about their positions. Public statements regarding ANWR are rare, and strategically brief and uninformative if released. Nonetheless, various quotes from pertinent oil companies seem to validate Standlee’s observation that the corporate world continues to support development of the Coastal Plain, albeit in a subtle manner.

Openly supportive of Arctic Power when it first joined, ChevronTexaco, “the company that drilled ANWR’s [only oil] well” in 1985, dropped out of the organization in 2000.²⁷⁵ Two years later, BP withdrew its membership. ConocoPhillips followed suit in 2004. Denying that the company had previous plans to drill in the refuge, BP stated that “ANWR has never been a part of [its] investment portfolio,” because of the legal, environmental, and economic issues surrounding ANWR’s potential development.²⁷⁶

ConocoPhillips spokeswoman Dawn Patience issued the following statement on the

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Arctic Power. n.d. *Residents of ANWR Support*. Accessed February 17, 2014. <http://www.anwr.org/People/Residents-of-ANWR-Support.php>.

²⁷⁵ Ragsdale, Rose. 2005. *Final ANWR push under way*. March 6. Accessed February 17, 2014. <http://www.petroleumnews.com/pntruncate/600717870.shtml>.

²⁷⁶ 2002. *ALASKA: BP quits group lobbying for oil drilling in ANWR*. December 5. Accessed February 16, 2014. <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/alaska-bp-quits-group-lobbying-oil-drilling-anwr#sthash.Dbv7ExW4.dpuf>.

company's termination of membership: "we have not been involved in the ANWR debate in many years and have focused our investment attention in Alaska toward the gas pipeline and development of other North Slope satellite fields. Since ANWR is currently closed to development, we feel that any resolution or pledge on our part would be moot."²⁷⁷

Other evidence suggests, however, that the oil companies are not so disinterested. Despite ChevronTexaco's withdrawal from Arctic Power, spokesman Mickey Driver maintained that "opening up ANWR is an important step forward in meeting our nation's energy needs."²⁷⁸ He also reiterated: "ChevronTexaco and Arctic Power continue to strongly support opening the ANWR Section 1002 area (coastal plain) to environmentally responsible oil and gas exploration and development."²⁷⁹ Moreover, shareholders wrote a letter to then BP chief executive Lord Browne of Madingley warning him against "operating in protected and sensitive areas."²⁸⁰ They counted the damage to company "reputation and brand image" as a major reason for leaving protected areas alone.²⁸¹ Such cautioning and the perspective of ChevronTexaco corroborate lobbyist Roger Herrera's claim that "the oil companies...lack of [transparent] support for the effort to open ANWR are wholly political."²⁸²

²⁷⁷ Pemberton, Mary. 2005. *ConocoPhillips axes ties with ANWR lobbying group Arctic Power*. January 17. Accessed February 17, 2014. <http://www.alaskajournal.com/Alaska-Journal-of-Commerce/January-2005/ConocoPhillips-axes-ties-with-ANWR-lobbying-group-Arctic-Power>.

²⁷⁸ Ragsdale 2005.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Johnson, John. 2004. *Victory for Arctic Drilling Opponents at BP General Meeting*. April 15. Accessed February 17, 2014. <http://library.episcopalchurch.org/article/victory-arctic-drilling-opponents-bp-general-meeting>.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ragsdale 2005.

Comments from Robert J. Allison, Jr., then Chairman and CEO of Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, demonstrate more open support for development by oil companies. Expressing approval of Bush's national energy policy in 2001, Allison contended that:

“we need to open the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the ‘1002 planning area,’ which represents just 8 percent of the total area of ANWR. The new Alpine field that we developed with Phillips on the North Slope of Alaska -- just 60 miles west of ANWR -- demonstrates that oil can be developed safely and responsibly in sensitive Arctic environments with very little impact on the environment and no damage. At the Alpine field, new technology has allowed us to develop the 40,000-acre field from two gravel pads totaling 100 acres.”²⁸³

Similarly, the American Petroleum Institute gives four reasons on its website for opening ANWR to development. First, “oil reserves under the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge comprise a vital national energy resource.”²⁸⁴ Production could replace oil imports from Saudi Arabia, at a rate of “1 million barrels per day for as much as 30 years.”²⁸⁵ I calculated how much this 1 million barrels would contribute to daily national oil consumption. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reports that in 2012 18,490,214 barrels were consumed per day – ANWR oil would make up even less than 0.001% of this total.

Second, the institute claims that “only a small portion of the [refuge] would be affected by exploration and production of oil and gas,” citing the “federal legislative

²⁸³ Wong, Teresa. 2001. *Anadarko Petroleum Chairman Praises National Energy Policy Initiative*. May 17. Accessed February 17, 2014.

<http://www.anadarko.com/Investor/Pages/NewsReleases/NewsReleases.aspx?release-id=176554>.

²⁸⁴ American Petroleum Institute. 2008. *Strategic Energy Resources: ANWR, Alaska*.

http://www.api.org/~media/Files/Policy/Exploration/Energy-Resources/08_04_21_Strategic_Energy_Res_ANWR.pdf.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

limit” of 2,000 acres on such activity.²⁸⁶ Considering the sprawl of ice roads and pipelines, a footprint of 2,000 acres captures little of reality. The Natural Resources Defense Council points to “the oil field industrial sprawl on the North Slope” as an instance where actual area employed in production exceeded footprint by more than 600,000 acres.²⁸⁷

The 2,000-acre limit also only applies to “surface acreage covered by production and support facilities” as specified in an amendment to energy bills H.R. 4 and H.R. 6.²⁸⁸ As a result, the restriction does not include seismic exploration, roads, pads and other needed equipment that may occupy an area in excess of the limit.²⁸⁹ In other words, “it [merely] includes the area where oil facilities actually touch the ground.”²⁹⁰

Third, the advancement of technology would reduce the footprint of oil development in ANWR. On his *Blog for Economics and Finance*, Mark J. Perry, a “scholar at the American Enterprise Institute” and economics professor at the University of Michigan, described how old technology used in the 1970s (when Prudhoe Bay was developed) has given way to better, modern techniques and less damaging equipment.²⁹¹ Despite improved technology, however, according to a report by The Wilderness Society, development would still require “permanent gravel roads and/or busy airports” as well as

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Natural Resources Defense Council. 2005. *Drilling in the Arctic Refuge: The 2,000-Acre Footprint Myth*. March 15. Accessed February 17, 2014. <http://www.nrdc.org/land/wilderness/artech/farc2000.asp>.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Perry, Mark J. *Today's Drilling Leaves A Tiny Footprint vs. 1970s*. June 23, 2008. <http://www.aei-ideas.org/2008/06/todays-drilling-leaves-a-tiny-footprint-vs-1970s/> (accessed March 6, 2014).

pipelines to connect “production well sites.”²⁹² Exploration also requires “intrusive, noisy and damaging seismic surveys on the surface.”²⁹³

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Wilderness advocates from various organizations point out the recreational and ecological value of ANWR. They want policymakers to think of future generations and come up with long-term solutions to America’s energy crisis. Critically examining the claims of their opponents, advocates have countered misinformation with their own research and facts on environmental impact. The Gwich’in natives add an exceptional voice to the dialogue, invoking their own experiences and ties with the Arctic Refuge to explain the significance of the Coastal Plain.

On the opposite end, Alaskan officials and the oil giants argue that, because development would have minimal impact on wildlife, the benefits of developing refuge oil – including new jobs and energy security - outweigh the environmental costs by far. The Inupiat Eskimos side with these actors because they have an investment in the oil industry through the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation.

For environmentalists, ANWR is part of the American (“our”) heritage and identity. Interestingly, when these advocates say “us,” they are typically not talking about Native populations. This fact suggests a rift in viewpoints among the proponents of ANWR between modernization and tradition, and, most importantly, a static view of nature as outside civilization and the Native concept of nature as integral to society.

²⁹² Ibid, 4.

²⁹³ Ibid, 4.

The anti-development and pro-development groups have incompatible views on what should be done about ANWR. Wilderness advocates say: constructing ice roads, pipelines, and drilling pads would mar the largely untouched Arctic landscape and ruin its exceptional wildness. Development proponents insist: development will not (severely) harm the environment and benefit us more than protecting the refuge. The two sides present two contrasting worldviews: one that prioritizes economic and human interests over preservation and another that acknowledges the environment has a higher, unquantifiable value to - and beyond - us.

CHAPTER 4

Lessons from ANWR

“To know the wilderness is to know a profound humility, to recognize one’s littleness, to sense dependence and interdependence, indebtedness and responsibility.”²⁹⁴

--Howard Zahniser

What has so durably protected the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge? In answering this question, I focus on assessing what moves the American people. It is reasonable to assume that constituents influence the position that their representatives take in Congress. Typically however, public opinion only makes a difference on highly visible issues. The environmental ethics I recommend in this chapter should boost ANWR’s visibility in national politics as people come to understand and respect the importance of the refuge to Arctic wildlife, Alaska, and the nation. As a result, if constituents strongly favor preservation of ANWR as wilderness, politicians are hard-pressed if they vote for pro-development legislation (and want to be reelected for another term). With this in mind, I assess below the weight of each approach wilderness advocates have taken in fighting for ANWR.

First, an argument based on recreational value may not be compelling to most because of ANWR’s location in the Arctic and the difficulties with visiting the refuge. Second, scientific value constitutes a practical, direct explanation for the biological significance of the refuge ecosystem, but may appear detached from society at large and

²⁹⁴ Zahniser, Howard. "The Need for Wilderness Areas." *The Living Wilderness*, 1956-1957.

thus irrelevant to the typical American. Third, that the refuge would not yield sufficient oil to solve the American energy crisis does not explain why the area itself should be protected. If any amount of oil could at least alleviate this problem, why not develop the refuge?

I speculate that, despite the persuasiveness of these arguments, the concept of wilderness and acceptance of its inseparability from the American identity is instead largely responsible for the refuge's continued pristine existence. Appreciation of wilderness bridges the gap between environmental ethics and practice – through recreational use of and exposure to the natural world, people come to understand the philosophical values of an uncultivated wilderness. They may not be swayed by the opportunity to hike through wild arctic tundra; they may not fully appreciate the scientific worth of the refuge's vast and diverse ecosystem (although some do). There is, however, something about maintaining the essence of a collective identity, preserving a piece of land because of its cultural salience, which appeals to a nationalistic American public.

The Alaska Arctic constitutes “a living museum of the qualities that forged the nation.”²⁹⁵ It is, among others, the setting for “the first successful attempt to follow a northwest passage,” the 1918 “demarcation of the international boundary between the United States and Canada,” and a reminder of “early whaling days.”²⁹⁶ Given such historical import, Olaus Murie worried that America “[was] losing the last vestiges of [the] precious frontier atmosphere which helps to build a strong civilization.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Kaye, 51.

²⁹⁶ Collins, George L., and Lowell Sumner. "Northeast Arctic: The Last Wilderness." *Sierra Club Bulletin*, 1953: 13-26, 22-24.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 51.

Public polls reveal a similar appreciation of and desire to protect wilderness. A 2001 *National Survey on Recreation and the Environment* (NSRE) poll reports that 96.7% of Americans “support the values of preserving wilderness so that future generations will have the option to visit them.”²⁹⁸ 89.1% “support protecting wilderness just so they will always exist in their natural condition, even if no one were to ever visit or otherwise benefit from them.”²⁹⁹ While the first poll indicates that Americans consider wilderness important to their legacy, the second hints at a deeper respect for nature. Already young children are exposed to natural areas because their parents have, in their upbringing, been likewise raised with at least some exposure to the wild. Wilderness values rooted in heritage perpetuates a human connection with the natural world from one generation to the next.

To explain further how I came to the conclusion that a connection with nature fosters a care-taking attitude, I discuss the most illustrative example of the integration of environment into Gwich'in culture. According to Gwich'in activist Faith Gemmill, the Gwich'in believe that they are “spiritually connected to the caribou.”³⁰⁰ This connection fostered the belief “that what befalls the caribou will befall the Gwich'in and vice versa.”³⁰¹ Through observing the life of the caribou, the Gwich'in became aware of their place in a wider ecosystem, as one single part of a greater whole. From that understanding, the Gwich'in developed a responsibility to protect the caribou.

²⁹⁸ Campaign for America's Wilderness. *A Mandate to Protect America's Wilderness*. Washington: Campaign for America's Wilderness, 2004, 33.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 34.

³⁰⁰ Dinero, Steven C. 2003. ""The Lord Will Provide": The History and Role of Episcopalian Christianity in Nets'iii Gwich'in Social Development - Arctic Village, Alaska." *Indigenous Nations Studies Journal* 3-24, 23.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 23.

The Gwich'in also learned to exercise restraint in their consumption of the caribou. No organization, professor, or textbook explained to them the detriments of excessive hunting to either their people or the animals. I distinguish, then, the kind of formal, systematized education I have received from an observation-based, experiential learning process carried out by many generations of Gwich'in natives. From hunting the caribou, and studying its movements, vulnerabilities, and characteristics, the Gwich'in understand that, for the very reason that they depend on the caribou for subsistence, they have a responsibility to protect the animals, and ensure that their need to consume meat does not destabilize the Porcupine Caribou Herd or the ecosystem of which they are part. I am not here referring to some right the caribou has to exist, or that we should think they have interests. Rights theory in itself is problematic when applied in this case, and, I would say, overall unnecessary in environmental ethics. Arguments for extending rights to nonhumans are often mired in egocentric appeals to sentience, underscoring the misconception that likeness to human beings justifies moral consideration.

The Gwich'in and the caribou have a reciprocal relationship wherein the caribou provide a substantial, nutritious source of meat, and the Gwich'in, in turn, do not take more than they need as protectors of the herd. Gemmill wrote that the Gwich'in "believe...a birthplace is sacred and cannot be disturbed. Even during famine long ago, we wouldn't invade the birthplace."³⁰² If the Gwich'in did not respect the caribou and their biological needs, they would have already hunted on the Coastal Plain. Famine is akin to the United States' energy predicament as a potential justification for risking harm to the caribou population. One need not think the Coastal Plain is sacred to understand

³⁰² Ibid, 23.

that development would be incredibly detrimental to the Porcupine Caribou Herd. In urban communities, despite an awareness of serious environmental problems related to overconsumption, restraint is hardly practiced, and definitely not to the same degree.

The Gwich'in way of life and perspective adds insight to environmental ethics. Respect for nature comes with acceptance of what the environment means in the context of a community's culture, history, and traditions – ultimately, the role of nature in defining a particular people. I have heard a strikingly similar saying to Gemmill's about the *dipterocarpus alatus* trees, or “ton yang na,” from Chiang Mai locals in Thailand. These people likewise believe that if the “ton yang na” fall, Chiang Mai falls. Although these residents live in an urban area, they have retained their cultural ties to the century-old trees as a symbol of historic importance and community identity. A group of locals are currently working to protect the trees from real estate interests. They are reminiscent of the Gwich'in and, perhaps, show that nature can be valued in modern culture over development.

Although one can come to respect nature in a variety of ways, interaction seems to solidify our relationship with and responsibility towards the environment. Agrarian farmers learn to distinguish between poor and rich soil, identify plant diseases, and determine the optimum conditions for plant growth. Often subsistence fishermen become familiar with different kinds of marine life, and many recognize the limits of what the ocean can provide. Environmental care as a cultural practice ties ethical principles to the way we live.

Attributing worth to wilderness areas will hopefully result as an extension of realizing nature's indispensable part in human culture. When a society deems a practice

or custom valuable to it, members will actively work to keep this tradition alive. Using the same logic, people will advocate for the environment as one such element. I contend that respect, as the very basis, in human society, for letting others alone and maintaining cultural traditions, with regards to the environment leads to a respectful interaction with nature, as well as a broader understanding of our place in and responsibilities to the ecosystem. This realization allows us to dissolve the notion of clear dichotomy between humans and nature. We begin to see that, just like any nonhuman organism, we depend on the services and resources the environment provides.

The Alaskans who favor drilling in ANWR have an overpowering consumerist mentality. Oil development and materialism have led to the devaluation of wilderness, further deepening the divide between “wild” nature and human civilization. I include quotations around “wild” because the natives have somehow always been considered within instead of outside wilderness. This fact suggests that human presence in undeveloped areas can be considered a part of wilderness as long as these inhabitants do not seek to dominate, manage, disrupt, or affect the natural functions of the ecosystem.

According to the official definition in The Wilderness Act of 1964, wilderness

“generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; and may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”³⁰³

Refuges and parks are one possible example, but they constitute only a subset of areas to which “wilderness” refers. For the Gwich'in, wilderness is not designated – it

³⁰³ *The Wilderness Act of 1964*, Public Law 88-577, 88th Cong., 2nd sess. (September 3, 1964), <http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/legisact>.

exists even without name. Gwich'in culture offers a counterexample to urbanization and embodies fully the ideals of living harmoniously with nature. I am not proposing that we revert back to subsistence hunting, but only that we should scale back on economic development so as to reduce our impact on the ecosystem. We should strive, like the G'wichin natives, to form a mutualistic rather than exploitative relationship with the natural world in general.

As a significant step towards achieving this reality, preservation of the refuge has long-term implications for sustainability. The American mindset must change to embrace a less economically oriented way of looking at nature. What could be a better transition to this more enlightened viewpoint than fighting to save a wilderness area because of its profound importance to the nation? Successful protection of this one area provides evidence of something with at least equal or higher value than the material benefits of development. As a result, that ANWR has remained free from development for over fifty years suggests it is time for the United States to broaden its definition of "progress" to include moral, spiritual, and other non-economic components as Olaus Murie proposed in 1959.

Countercultural Environmentalism: A Way Forward

Holmes Rolston III in "Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World" argued that the environment will cease to be secondary to human needs only when we start asking "questions not merely of prudential use but of appropriate respect and duty [towards the natural environment]." ³⁰⁴ For the purpose of this paper, and in

³⁰⁴ Regan, Tom. 1992. "Does Environmental Ethics Rest on a Mistake?" *The Monist* 161-182, 161.

agreement with Rolston, I posit that an environmental ethic seeks to explain the *moral* (as opposed to solely practical) reasons for why it is necessary to protect nature. This ethic should capture the essential bases and characteristics of a morally good human relationship with nature, and ultimately, I argue, fundamentally transform both the way we think about *and* act with regards to the environment. I note, however, that I am not assessing the merit of an environmental ethic on its utility. I hope to answer which environmental ethics, demonstrated already on ethical grounds to be right, have the potential to bridge the gap between theory and practice. I advocate for environmental ethics which promote a long-term, respectful attitude towards nature by describing environmental problems as heavily linked to social concerns. I then explain how this particular kind of ethics also has the power to influence debate and change societal attitudes towards nature.

I begin first by showing that countercultural environmentalism provides a self-perpetuating system wherein exposure to the natural world cultivates respect for the land or ecosystem. That is, humans interact with nature, come to understand its importance, continue such interactions until they become integral to human culture, and thus protect nature because it is essential to communal/national identity. The ultimate realization is this: we rely on nature for subsistence, a sense of place, and enjoyment. The environment does not serve us – it *sustains* us, and we have a duty to protect the ecosystem of which we are part. Now, I anticipate that many environmental ethicists would feel uncomfortable that my account does not rest on a conception of intrinsic value. I will explain briefly why I believe environmental ethics can offer moral grounds for protecting nature without invoking a highly speculative, unsettled, and stand-alone concept of

intrinsic value. Building on this explanation, I will make a case for abandoning the traditional framework used in environmental discourse.

Arguing for New Grounding in Environmental Ethics

The Gwich'in do not base their respect of the caribou and Arctic ecosystem on some vague intrinsic value. What compel them to act in environmentally conscious ways are their deep connection with nature and understanding that they are one small part of the ecosystem. Must they recognize that the polar bears or musk ox have value completely independent of the Gwich'in to protect them? I would say no. Environmental ethics should not be about proving the intrinsic value of this organism or species, but encouraging respect for the integrity of the whole which, as an overarching system, includes human society. If we are a part of this ecosystem, it would make little sense to attribute intrinsic value to "nature" as a concept free from human valuation.

I also note a puzzling fact of the ANWR case study to expand on my reasoning. Wilderness advocates and Americans in the lower 48 states fought to protect ANWR when Alaskans themselves pushed for oil drilling. How is this possible? The Gwich'in want to protect the caribou and Arctic ecosystem, and the Chiang Mai locals organize to save their trees. Why do Alaskans have such a different attitude towards ANWR, a unique feature of *their* home? One explanation could be that Alaskans do not consider ANWR part of their identity because it is far and markedly removed from Alaska proper. Yet, if this is indeed the reason, should not actors located even further away from the refuge have the same pro-development position?

Though not linked to ANWR by proximity, I suggest that those acting to protect the refuge see the necessity and worth of doing so because they have had a formative experience with nature, whether during their childhood years or a particularly memorable venture into the wilderness. Nature is important and valuable to them – its beauty breathtaking, its ways fascinating, and presence vital. Wanting always to come back to the wilderness, and mindful of human impacts on nature, they work to constrain human activities that may irreparably harm the environment. The general understanding that nature everywhere should flourish and thrive extends from a personal connection with the environment. In coming to respect nature, I have also gone through this gradual process. Knowing about intrinsic value did not increase how much I appreciated the natural world – it gave me a way, in short, to enunciate the various reasons I already had for caring about and valuing the environment.

Instead of taking for granted an ambiguous intrinsic value in nature, I begin by asking: in what ways is nature valuable? I do not assume that “intrinsic” or “instrumental” values constitute the only legitimate characterizations of nature’s worth. By contrast, a proper response to this question is more nuanced, and requires an in-depth exploration into why we recognize nature has value. As part of Gwich’in culture and a symbol of the American frontier, ANWR has expressive value. It is also aesthetically and epistemologically valuable. In “Northeast Arctic: The Last Wilderness,” George Collins and Lowell Sumner describe the scenery they witnessed in ANWR:

“Vivid white ice floes draped about the jagged blue-black peaks against a background composed of great weaving shafts of light and a violet sky filled with patterns of bronze and copper and vermilion clouds; and as a final almost unbelievable note, a full

moon seemed to change from orange to green as it rose farther and farther above the horizon.”³⁰⁵

Experiencing such a uniquely beautiful Arctic landscape would enrich and inspire. Mostly undisturbed by man, ANWR would also give scientists an insightful look into the ecology of Arctic wilderness. Collins and Sumner suggest, specifically, that

“the region offers science probably the best opportunity in Alaska, if not in the whole of North America, for studying the processes by which ...Arctic animals maintain their numbers through the natural checks and balances of climate, food supply, and predation.”³⁰⁶

In describing these other values, I do not wholly reject intrinsic value as a concept, but simply encourage a revision in the way it is discussed and understood by ethicists and people in general. By itself, “intrinsic value” cannot fully articulate why nature deserves respect. It does not express the meaningful and necessary influence of human-nature *relationships* on environmental ethics. However, if we recognize that an “intrinsic value” encompasses, non-reductively, many types of other values derived from a connection with nature, more of us will, I think, get closer to regarding nonhuman life and ecosystems as intrinsically valuable. A defining component of both ecocentrism and biocentrism, intrinsic value has, for a long time, been known to set apart the “truly” ecological ethics from the “pseudo,” human-centered theories. Deconstructing intrinsic value allows for a freer discussion among ethicists, and opens the possibility of adopting a new way of conducting environmental philosophy. I want to take that deconstruction further, and propose that we move beyond dichotomized ethics. Let me explain why.

Dichotomization frames the debate around questions like: does a thing or system *x* have interests? Once the concept of interests is introduced, however, the discussion

³⁰⁵ Collins and Sumner, 15.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 21.

becomes about either proving that only conscious beings have interests, or demonstrating that, say, trees or mountains also have interests which must be considered.

Even among non-anthropocentrists there is disagreement on whether “holism,” which takes “biotic communities as the unit most appropriate for moral consideration,” or “individualism,” which regards individual organisms as the focus of moral consideration, rings more true.³⁰⁷ Dichotomy, then, does not only characterize and reinforce the divide between conflicting theories, but within the same perspective as well.

I forward an alternative, and I would argue, more important question: how should human society define its interests? In the long-term, protecting wilderness should be in our interest because it is, like us, an integral component of the ecosystem. Operating from a purely non-anthropocentric viewpoint perpetuates the false dichotomy between human society and nature by emphasizing the intrinsic value of the “non-human world” or life.³⁰⁸ In a sense, treating the environment as if it can be isolated from us ignores the fundamental reality that we are *a part* of nature.

Moving past these fixed, polarized lenses is also necessary if we are to fully understand the Gwich’in point of view. To the Gwich’in, both reliance on subsistence hunting *and* concern for ecosystem integrity are, together, viable justifications for saving the caribou. They fight to defend their human and legal right to preserve a culture. They also fight to protect the caribou as part of the ecosystem. Given that the caribou define Gwich’in identity, I argue that the Gwich’in environmental ethic reflects a kinship with nature that is intimately linked to and sparked by reliance on the caribou for subsistence. Ethicists often consider any hint of human-centered reasoning as antagonistic towards the

³⁰⁷ Evanoff, Richard. 2011. *Bioregionalism and Global Ethics*. New York: Routledge, 99.

³⁰⁸ Naess, 189.

environment. This criticism does not always hold. In fact, as is the case for the Gwich'in, cognizance of both directly visible and more subtle ways in which the environment has shaped culture allows humans to transcend the limited view of nature as a mere resource to satisfy our needs.

I advocate for an environmental ethic based on a weakly anthropocentric respect and appreciation for nature. Through interacting with nature, people form a connection with it. Participating in restoration and conservation projects facilitates our understanding of how the environment works. To experience firsthand the negative impacts human development can have on the land, water, and air instills in us a sense of responsibility and impetus to assess our actions more cautiously. Here, I have described bioregionalism in action.

Bioregionalism: A Synergistic Relationship with Nature

In *Bioregionalism and Global Ethics*, Richard Evanoff describes an interactions-based approach to environmental ethics. His writing illuminates many core beliefs and foundations of bioregionalism. Evanoff first argues that the coevolution of nature and culture implies a mutualistic basis for protecting the environment. Such a “coevolutionary perspective”.³⁰⁹

“...recognizes that nature provides the resources necessary for human life and the flourishing of human culture, and therefore must be conserved and cared for (the conservationist or stewardship ethic). At the same time it does not seek the complete colonization and domestication of nature by human culture; rather it allows for the flourishing of nonhuman life and supports the

³⁰⁹ Evanoff, 58.

continuous unfolding of natural diversity (the preservationist or ecocentric ethic).”³¹⁰

This basis arises from the fundamental understanding that “organisms do not simply occupy the environment but...both constitute and are constituted by the environment of which they are part.”³¹¹ In other words, humans affect their environment and the environment also affects them because both are a part of each other. Consequently, “an organism cannot be understood apart from its environment and environments cannot be understood apart from the organisms which constitute them; the two co-create each other.”³¹² Nature and society inspected through a coevolutionary lens demonstrates the problem with dualisms. According to bioregionalism, portraying human culture as isolated from the environment, and the environment as separate from us, leads to misguided environmental ethics. I grant that cultural values are inevitably derived from human loci, but they should be informed by a holistic and ecologically-conscious understanding of nature.

How, then, should philosophers construct their framework for interacting with the environment? In other words, what is the bioregionalist principle in environmental ethics? Evanoff points to the interconnectedness of society and nature in justifying moral consideration for the non-human world. “That is,” he elaborates, “moral obligations can and should be plausibly extended to anything which is affected by the consequences of our actions.”³¹³ These consequences can be as far-reaching as contributing to the drowning of the Maldives Islands through collectively emitting too much carbon dioxide

³¹⁰ Ibid, 58.

³¹¹ Ibid, 48.

³¹² Ibid, 48.

³¹³ Ibid, 101.

in the United States.³¹⁴ The “attention [is]...on *our own actions*, both as individuals and as societies, and the effects these actions have on others. Such a focus implies living a fully conscious and deliberate life in which we reflect on how we act to whatever we come into contact with...”³¹⁵ Evanoff clarifies, however, that immediate contact is not necessary in his sense of relationship. We have responsibilities to the future generation because the choices we make today impacts the world we leave behind. “By involving ourselves with” protecting Siberian tigers we have never seen, we can also establish a relationship with these animals.³¹⁶

Bioregionalism calls for a heightened mindfulness of the impact of one’s actions on the environment. Grounded on responsibility, this environmental ethic necessitates a transformation of human attitudes and perspectives. An ethical person would not act in a way that seriously harms the environment because his or her relationship with nature forms “an obligation to act in a moral and responsible way with regard to it.”³¹⁷ One ought to act, as Norton puts it, only on “considered preferences” deemed congruent with a rational world view.³¹⁸

Likewise, a society should adopt a culture in which modification of “the environment is kept at a reasonable degree without diminishing the diversity of life, both human and nonhuman, or having an adverse effect on larger evolutionary processes.”³¹⁹ Rather than molding the environment to satisfy our desires, our “...cultural aspirations

³¹⁴ Ibid, 101.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 102.

³¹⁶ Ibid, 101.

³¹⁷ Ibid, 102.

³¹⁸ Norton 1984, 164.

³¹⁹ Evanoff, 57.

[should be] brought into line with what our natural environment [can] actually provide.”³²⁰

I note that such cultural remaking will look different when realized according to the type of environment, the number of inhabitants, available food sources, and other features that define a place. Bioregionalism recognizes that an environmental ethic must be adaptable to specific cultures but also remain broad enough to guide action generally. That is, respect for nature as a principle may lead to conservation in many shapes and forms, with various foci and limits on consumption. Each community must have an open dialogue on what is essential and how they can reduce environmental impact.

Bioregionalism also offers radical but much needed insight on the content and focus of environmental ethics. Evanoff emphasizes the importance of identifying “...what forms of culture can be created which allow both for human flourishing and for the flourishing of nonhuman forms of life.”³²¹ He advocates for societal change in the way we live, and respective adjustment of our beliefs and practices. Social ecologists like Stephen M. Wheeler agree with Evanoff. In *Climate Change and Social Ecology*, Wheeler argues that “social change...means reshaping our learning environments, institutions, and value systems so that we can begin healing ourselves, our communities, and the planet...this sort of social change means learning to see the world differently, in terms of dynamic, co-evolving systems and radical interdependency.”³²²

Apart from pushing for social transformation, Evanoff considers necessary a reframing of environmental discourse. Citing Richard Sylvan and David Bennett, he

³²⁰ Ibid, 57.

³²¹ Ibid, 75.

³²² Wheeler, Stephen M. 2012. *Climate Change and Social Ecology*. New York: Routledge, 1.

argues that “the onus of proof [for justified interference with the natural world] should shift away from those who seek to preserve life towards those who seek to destroy it” – that is when “a radical critique of industrial civilization becomes possible.”³²³ Such a critique would then lead to the rise in sustainable forms of culture. Instead of taking a “defensive position, environmentalists can adopt a proactive position which critically asks the adherents of unlimited industrial expansion to justify their proposed course of action.”³²⁴ Environmental groups like The Wilderness Society and the Natural Resources Defense Council have challenged pro-development authorities to justify drilling in ANWR, pointing out that there are other alternatives not only to the site, but also to oil as a source of energy. Fittingly, in the ANWR case, a pristine Coastal Plain is the status quo while oil development requires congressional authorization.

Evanoff’s bioregionalism describes an “ethical relationship between the self, society, and nature...which acknowledges the various ways in which each is dependent upon the other and which simultaneously provides each with an appropriate measure of autonomy.”³²⁵ Evanoff writes that “human life can be sustained and forms of culture can be created which do not require humans to control and manage the *whole* of nature.”³²⁶ Not only should we set limits on and rules for how we manage the areas we need, but we should also exempt certain areas from management altogether.

In preserving wilderness, humans should not seek to “*manage*...but rather attempt to intentionally limit the extent to which humans interfere with nonhuman life-forms.”³²⁷

³²³ Evanoff, 109.

³²⁴ Ibid, 109.

³²⁵ Ibid, 78.

³²⁶ Ibid, 75.

³²⁷ Ibid, 75.

By that logic, we should use “only those parts of nature which provide the necessary resources for human well-being. The rest can be left alone.”³²⁸ Nature’s ability to continue functioning absent human interaction suggests “that a measure of autonomy for nature can and should be both preserved and respected.”³²⁹ Self-sustaining wilderness areas like ANWR should not be lost to development interests – drilling in the refuge is not necessary to the survival of Alaskans or Americans in general.

Bioregionalists like Evanoff ask us to reconsider our role and place in the ecosystem and learn to restrict, not seek to expand, our influence on the natural world. Similarly, Wheeler contends that “what’s needed is...a way of looking at the world that allows us to learn from [existing theories] and continually refine our understanding of reality – a way, further, that moves smoothly from our personal lives to larger social systems and back again.”³³⁰ Both social ecology and bioregionalism provide a moral framework through which to address environmental problems in the context of modern society; they demand a change in human perspective and societal structure as a significant step towards harmonizing our lives with the rest of nature.

Environmental Virtue Ethics:

Defying the Mainstream through Identity Redefinition

In addition to bioregionalism and social ecology, I also explore virtue ethics as another form of countercultural environmentalism. As a Thai Buddhist, I have always been intrigued by the unique cultural role Buddhism plays in environmental conservation,

³²⁸ Ibid, 75.

³²⁹ Ibid, 74.

³³⁰ Wheeler, 93.

and its emphasis on redefining the self. In this section, I sketch out what an environmental Buddhist virtue ethic might entail, and discuss another theory of virtue ethics that, I think, adds depth to this framework.

I begin with Steven M. Emmanuel's *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy* for a compelling argument in favor of a Buddhist virtue ethic. Emmanuel includes indiscriminate compassion for humans and non-humans as a key Buddhist virtue.³³¹ Other virtues could include *mettā* or "the settled disposition to wish sentient beings happiness," *muditā*, "the tendency to take pleasure in their happiness," or *sati*, "mindfulness."³³² I draw a parallel between *sati* and the bioregionalist idea that one ought to think carefully about the consequences of our actions because we are responsible for them. Emmanuel writes that "the good person is supposed to exercise [mindfulness] not just in her relations with her fellow humans, but in her dealings with her fellow non-humans, and indeed in her relations with the environment as a whole."³³³ She must consider "the implications of her actions."³³⁴ Buddhism, like bioregionalism and social ecology, provides guidelines for developing a respectful relationship with nature, albeit by highlighting those characteristics which enable this development. An environmentally virtuous character leads to environmentally sound choices.

Thomas E. Hill, in "Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments," argues for an environmental virtue ethic reminiscent of the one forwarded by Emmanuel. Buddhism, Emmanuel suggests, encourages selflessness or humility. Emmanuel describes "unselfing," to borrow Iris Murdoch's expression, as

³³¹ Emmanuel, Steven M. 2013. *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 607.

³³² Ibid, 607.

³³³ Ibid, 607.

³³⁴ Ibid, 607.

being “released from the tendency to see all things in terms of human interests.”³³⁵ Hill, too, advocates for such a release.

Hill posits that we feel uncomfortable with environmental destruction because we find those who engage in such destructive acts lacking in “human traits that we admire and regard morally important.”³³⁶ Identifying what exact traits are absent in anti-environmentalist actors, Hill highlights humility, self-acceptance, and a “disposition to cherish what has enriched one’s life” among the essential, and missing, virtues.³³⁷ He observes that the complexity and interrelatedness of the “cosmic scene” reveals that “we are a speck...a brief stage in the evolutionary process, only one among millions of species on Earth, and an episode in the course of human history.”³³⁸ “Could one who had a broad and deep understanding of his place in nature,” Hill asks, “really be indifferent to the destruction of the natural environment?”³³⁹

Virtue necessitates not only recognition but appreciation of “[our] place in the natural order.”³⁴⁰ Consequently, “as we become more and more aware that we are parts of the larger whole we come to value the whole independently of its effects on ourselves.”³⁴¹ Those who lack humility have a very narrow sense of what counts as important “insofar as it encompasses only what affects beings who, like us, are capable of feeling.”³⁴² “Self-importance” serves our “tendency to measure the significance of

³³⁵ Ibid, 608.

³³⁶ Hill, Thomas E. 1983. "Ideals of Human Excellence." *Environmental Ethics* 211-224, 215.

³³⁷ Ibid, 216.

³³⁸ Ibid, 217.

³³⁹ Ibid, 217.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, 218.

³⁴¹ Ibid, 218.

³⁴² Ibid, 219.

everything by its relation to oneself and those with whom one identifies.”³⁴³ Toning down our egoism in line with Hill’s virtue ethics would mean that a thing need not resemble us to have value. It can be valuable in its own way, in its uniqueness.

Hill brings up self-acceptance as another facet of humility. “Experiencing nature,” he says, “causally promotes such self-acceptance...those who fully accept themselves as part of the natural world lack the common drive to dissociate themselves from nature by replacing natural environments with artificial ones.”³⁴⁴ They see themselves “as one among many natural creatures,” both aware of similarities with nonhumans and appreciative of diversity.³⁴⁵

Briefly, Hill finally contends that when one enjoys something, “it is a common (and perhaps) natural response to come to cherish it.”³⁴⁶ As a result, “one simply wants the thing to survive and (when appropriate) to thrive, and not simply for its utility.”³⁴⁷ In other words, we “cherish what enriches our lives.”³⁴⁸ Both self-acceptance and this tendency to cherish nature are in accord with bioregionalism, social ecology, and Buddhist virtue ethics. Bioregionalists and social ecologists believe that spending time in and getting to know one’s natural environment reaffirms the connection one has with nature, and fosters an attitude of respect and care. They stress, as Hill does, our dependence on and place in nature.

A major goal in Buddhism and Hill’s virtue ethic is the deconstruction of the self to allow for a more holistic view of human existence, and by extension, the world. As

³⁴³ Ibid, 220.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, 222.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, 222.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 224.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 224.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 224.

David Kinsley writes: “Buddhist meditation seeks to liberate a person from the endless cravings of an ego-centered identity.”³⁴⁹ These cravings are the cause of environmental destruction because we must take from nature to fulfill our needs and countless wants. Learning to control our desires makes “internal self-mastery,” and thus “environmental responsibility,” possible.³⁵⁰ Likewise criticizing a myopic view on identity, Hill argues that lack of self-acceptance and humility lead to irresponsible actions. In simple terms, what Buddhism and Hill’s virtue ethic want to foster in individuals is an open-minded, environmentally-conscious perspective and way of living.

Buddhism as a Case in Point: Transforming the Self and Society

Having defended countercultural environmentalism on ethical grounds, I attempt now to demonstrate, by example, the impact such a perspective can have on alleviating environmental concerns. I mentioned briefly the affinity Chiang Mai locals in Thailand have with the *dipterocarpus alatus*. To ensure protection of these trees, the people “ordained” them long ago with sacred robes associated with monkhood. This ritual, called “*buat ton mai*,” is a widespread practice used by “ecology monks.”³⁵¹ These monks “are...actively engaged in environmental and conservation activities and respond to the suffering which environmental degradation causes.”³⁵²

Susan Darlington, in *The Ordination of a Tree*, describes a 1991 formal tree ordination in Nan Province led by monk Phrakhru Pitak. At the end of the ceremony,

³⁴⁹ Kinsley, David. 1995. *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 86.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, 88.

³⁵¹ Darlington, Susan M. 1998. "The Ordination of a Tree: The Buddhist Ecology Movement in Thailand." *Ethnology* 1-15, 1.

³⁵² Ibid, 1.

“two monks quickly wrapped orange robes around the tree’s trunk, marking its consecration.”³⁵³ The purpose of such a ritual is to “remind people that nature should be treated equal with humans, deserving of respect and vital for human as well as all life.”³⁵⁴ Nailed to the tree before ordination, a plaque read “*tham lai pa khue tham lai chat*” or “to destroy the forest is to destroy life.”³⁵⁵

The word “chat” could mean “life, birth (as in rebirth), or nation.”³⁵⁶ If taken to mean “life,” the statement “implies the Buddhist idea that one should respect and care for all life as everything is interconnected” – we share the same fate.³⁵⁷ The second meaning has to do with karma, and the cycle of rebirth. Since destroying the forest is a demerit, committing such an act negatively affects how one is reborn. One should, then, keep the number of trees one chops down at a minimum. Understood in the national sense, “chat” invokes nationalist feelings, linking the condition of the forest with the state, and reminds the nation of “its moral responsibility to preserve the forest.”³⁵⁸

The ordination ceremony represents a collective promise to protect the now sanctified trees. It blurs the line between humans and nature because orange robes are typically used only by monks. “Through treating nature as human,” Darlington posits, “[the monks] changed the rules that applied to both, particularly reframing the ways in which people tended to assume nature was there to serve them. The use of ordination ceremonies in particular shifted the hierarchical relations between humans and nature.”³⁵⁹

³⁵³ Darlington, Susan. 2012. *The Ordination of a Tree*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 74.

³⁵⁴ Ibid, 74.

³⁵⁵ Ibid, 75.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 74.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, 74.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 76.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, 58.

Thai tree ordination exemplifies how ethics can influence practice. As Darlington points out, “for years [Phrakhru Pitak] preached about ecological conservation, stressing the [relationship] between social and natural environments and humankind’s responsibility to each” – to no avail.³⁶⁰ Yet, through caring for community forests, establishing “fish sanctuaries,” and working “to conserve...Nan River” as part of Phrakhru Pitak’s “merit-making” projects, the villagers came closer to understanding the interconnectedness of their community and the natural environment.³⁶¹ Active engagement in conservation efforts, promoted and explained through Buddhist teachings, makes people more aware of their impacts on and more willing to care for nature. In a sense, Buddhism gives legitimacy to Thai environmentalism, allowing individuals to adopt an ethical stance through a localized understanding of its validity.

Buddhism calls for an expansion of self and community to include the natural world. Incorporating the environment into human culture facilitates this process of integration. As Buddhists recognize their place in a larger, interconnected ecosystem, environmental responsibility becomes more intuitive. It is the religious culture, I emphasize, which forms the roots of respect for nature. Reverence for the forest or wildlife, fostered through religious Buddhist practices such as tree ordination, shows that maintaining cultural values may prove more important to a community than reaping economic benefits from development.

The villagers in Nan Province rely on the forest as a source of livelihood. Nevertheless, the demerit of cutting too many trees down became clear to them when demonstrated through the tenets of Buddhism, a major influence in Thai culture. More

³⁶⁰ Darlington 1998, 6.

³⁶¹ Darlington 2012, 49.

generally, to be effective, an environmental ethic must be culturally relevant, explainable in terms particular societies can understand. I see Thai tree ordination as an example of Buddhist virtue ethics in action, and a bioregionalist approach to environmental stewardship.

Now, I am certainly not advising that American ethicists should all of a sudden adopt Buddhist justifications for preserving and/or conserving nature. I am simply encouraging them to defend the environment in a way that makes sense to the American public. As I have argued in this chapter, I believe bioregionalism, social ecology, and virtue ethics are all possible avenues for developing and promoting a moral relationship with nature.

A Countercultural Analysis of the ANWR Controversy

Evanoff argues that dichotomization “shifts attention away from the root causes of both social insecurity and environmental degradation.”³⁶² He brings up the example of logging old-growth forests to show that such shortsighted practices are detrimental to both the environment and people. “In the final analysis,” he writes, “the argument offered by business interests is that we must modify our environment and worker aspirations to meet the demands of our economic system rather than modify our economic system to meet genuine environmental and human needs.”³⁶³ Like the logging companies, pro-development actors such as the Alaskan officials and oil companies have framed the issue in ANWR as one that pits jobs against the environment. As Evanoff observes, “the implication is that those who are pro-jobs are anti-environment and those who are pro-

³⁶² Evanoff, 89.

³⁶³ Ibid, 89.

environment are anti-jobs.”³⁶⁴ Yet, pro-development actors are actually “both anti-jobs and anti-environment.”³⁶⁵ In the logging case, jobs disappear when there are no trees left to cut down. Similarly, the jobs created by the oil industry will cease to exist as soon as the last barrel of oil is extracted. In a way, ANWR serves as a more extreme example than the logging case because it raises the more controversial question of *whether* – in place of *to what extent* – one should develop.

Alaskans must reconnect or build a connection with ANWR by traveling through, experiencing, and enjoying the wilderness offered by this refuge. It is easy to advocate for drilling when one remains detached from ANWR, and know of the refuge only by its name, size, or location. Most likely, many Alaskans are content to stay within Juneau or Anchorage, and find no need to venture up north to visit – what must seem to them – a harsh, bleak Arctic. Even if they get a chance to hike through ANWR, they worry that their oil-dependent economy would crumble without drilling in the refuge. As long as Alaskans do not understand or choose to overlook the non-economic value of the refuge, advocacy against development will continue to come from outside states, groups, and individuals, at the cost of local resentment.

Environmental problems, Evanoff - and bioregionalists in general - claim, “cannot be solved without also addressing the social conditions which produce them.”³⁶⁶ The materialistic and economically-oriented nature of the American (and capitalist) lifestyle fuels antagonism towards nature, and constitutes the root cause of environmental degradation. In the ANWR case, oil is fundamental to the Alaskan economy, and

³⁶⁴ Ibid, 89.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, 89.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, 90.

continues to be so despite the environmental problems caused by development in the Arctic.

The reality is that oil pays. Big business benefits, Alaskans benefit, the state of Alaska benefits. The “oil culture” in Alaska has turned wilderness into a commodity, and oil into the supreme good. For an Alaskan to speak out against drilling in ANWR means undermining his or her own community. Changing how Alaskans view ANWR requires altering what the state depends on for revenue. The solution is not entirely environmental, and it is not entirely social. As Evanoff puts it: “society cannot be transformed unless there are also appropriate changes in individual consciousness and individual consciousness cannot be transformed unless there are also appropriate changes in how society is structured.”³⁶⁷ Through both an understanding that ANWR is part of Alaskan culture, and a reduction in Alaska’s economic dependence on oil, locals will learn to respect the wilderness as a part of who they are.

Perhaps most notable among the wilderness advocates, Olaus Murie argued for such a non-economic cultural identity. His words are reminiscent of Sulak Sivaraksa, a prominent Thai social critic and Buddhist thinker. In *Seeds of Peace*, Sivaraksa describes “a truly developed city” as “determined by the values attendant in its growth” rather than “by [the number] of skyscrapers.”³⁶⁸ He points out that “the educated, more enlightened people in the West are beginning to realize that development is not purely material...they feel respect for nature.”³⁶⁹ Given Sivaraksa’s ideas, it seems that Murie would be one of these “people in the West” who share in the understanding of a moral and spiritual

³⁶⁷ Ibid, 124.

³⁶⁸ Sivaraksa, Sulak. 1992. *Seeds of Peace*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 45.

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 51.

development based on transformation and maintenance of societal values.³⁷⁰ It is this type of development that I highlight as the crux of wilderness advocacy, a movement in which preservation of the Coastal Plain plays a symbolic and practical role.

Like Murie, Barry Lopez, a writer who has extensively studied and explored the Arctic, values greatly the transformative potential of natural areas. Lopez regards “encounter[s] [with] the land” as “redemptive in the sense of clearing and expanding perception, inducing wisdom and understanding, and encouraging, perhaps demanding, the cultivation of human dignity.”³⁷¹ For him, “the land exhibits extraordinary beauty, mystery, complexity, and perfection that completely transcend human devising.”³⁷² Others share in his appreciation of the Arctic. According to a 2009 study conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 92% of ANWR visitors listed “components of wilderness” and “a sense of vastness” as “their greatest positive influence” on their experiences in the refuge.³⁷³ People who have visited ANWR are indeed humbled by and appreciate the large expanse of wilderness. The next, most crucial step, bioregionalists, social ecologists, and virtue ethicists would say, is to encourage Alaskans to see for themselves that ANWR should be cherished, not destroyed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the beginning of my study, I considered Arne Naess’ deep ecology the best environmental ethic because, according to this view, nature has intrinsic value. I have since found problematic Naess’ definition of this value. Naess posits that “the presence

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 51.

³⁷¹ Ibid, 222.

³⁷² Ibid, 222.

³⁷³ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2010. *Public Use Summary*. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

of inherent value in a natural object is independent of any awareness, interest, or appreciation of it by any conscious being.”³⁷⁴ He takes what is called an absolutist stance on intrinsic value. While I agree that human beings do not place intrinsic value in the natural world, I endorse the objectivist view that such a value is only meaningful when there are conscious beings around to recognize it. The concept of intrinsic value, at least in the way *we* use it, simply gives an overarching title to the ways nature is non-instrumentally or expressively valuable. We say nature has intrinsic value because we cherish our connection with it, because we *respect* it. The essence of intrinsic value lies in conscious valuation. Naess, then, shows us that we should eventually view nature as intrinsically valuable, but does not explain how we should reach this understanding. Having seen that a moral relationship with nature can exist absent Naess’ absolutist notion of intrinsic value, I no longer believe deep ecology is necessarily preferable over other environmental ethics.

For similar reasons, I am also critical of Paul Taylor’s biocentrism. One does not have to regard each organism as a “teleological-center-of-life” to treat it with respect.³⁷⁵ In fact, although it may be easy enough to give caribou and polar bears such a designation, Taylor’s theory remains ambiguous about whether the Arctic tundra or Brooks Range mountains can be characterized as centers of life. How would biocentrism apply to ecological regions? Furthermore, if all living organisms – including us – have equal intrinsic worth, how are we to reconcile our own good with those of non-humans? Unless biocentrism addresses these issues, it is insufficient as an environmental ethic.

³⁷⁴ Naess, 189.

³⁷⁵ Brennan, Andrew, and Yeuk-Sze Lo. *Environmental Ethics*. January 3, 2008. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/> (accessed March 2, 2014).

Conducting a case study of ANWR has demonstrated to me the need to look at environmental ethics both as a philosophical discipline and as relatable guidelines for action. Countercultural environmental ethics such as Buddhist and Hill's virtue ethics, bioregionalism, and social ecology explain most completely and accurately why we ought to reject an instrumental view of nature, our grounds for protecting the environment, and what ethics translates to in practice. Weak anthropocentrists Emerson, Thoreau, Carson, Leopold, and Muir all had deep and complex relationships with nature. Their environmental ethics stemmed from this connection, thus reflecting the inseparability of humans from the natural world. If anything, these individuals prove that the more one interacts with the wilderness, the more one wants to protect it.

Dichotomies and ambiguous concepts aside, environmental ethics has the ability to fundamentally change societal attitudes towards the environment. The more we experience, the deeper our understanding, and the stronger our moral resolve becomes. In learning to appreciate nature, we see beyond ourselves.

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