

The Land Ethic and Ecomodernism Discipline: Philosophy

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Abstract. This essay explores alternative ways of applying the land ethic, a branch of environmental ethics with the supreme deontological principle: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community.” The land ethic challenges anthropocentric views by emphasizing the intrinsic value of nature. It also analyzes the welfare of the environment taken as an integral whole instead of considering the sum of individuals’ welfare. By examining the supreme principle of the land ethic more closely, this essay further clarifies that people should practice the land ethic by minimizing effects that reduce the biodiversity of an ecosystem, especially rapid ones. Advocates like J. Baird Callicott and Paul Shepard look for solutions in our pre-agricultural prehistory and argue for a way of life in which people live much closer to the land. But this may not be the sole or the best way of applying the land ethic. This essay introduces ecomodernism as a practical alternative, suggesting that technological advancements can “intensify” human activities to increase efficiency and reduce land use, thereby reducing human reliance on land and resources and minimizing environmental impacts. Surprisingly, by comparing these approaches ecomodernism seems to meet the land ethic’s goal of minimizing environmental impacts at least as effectively as the approach that Callicott and Shepard advocate without necessitating a fundamental restructuring of society.

Keywords: Land ethic, ecomodernism, environmental impacts.

1. Introduction

In the 1960s, the increasing global population was putting heavy pressure on the environment, which led people to start rethinking the relationship between humans and the environment. Environmental ethics, a sub-discipline of philosophy that studies the moral relationship between human beings and the environment, was thus gradually formed. Early milestones of environmental ethics included Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* [1] and Lynn White, Jr.’s essay, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis [2].” By pointing out the detrimental effects of pesticides on the environment as well as other environmental concerns, Carson drew the public’s attention to ongoing environmental harms. White highlighted the problematic dualism between humanity and the natural world and argued that Christian theology had justified humans’ exploitative attitude toward nature.

Supporters of environmental ethics also drew inspiration from American literature on the environment from earlier in the twentieth century. Specifically, Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* had a profound influence upon later theoretical developments in environmental ethics. Leopold celebrated the beauty of the natural world and advocated the adoption of a “land ethic,” asserting 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 [3].” However, Leopold did not provide a systematic theoretical framework to support his ethical ideas about the environment, presenting an opportunity for subsequent moral theorists. J. Baird Callicott thus advocated a holistic environmental ethics based on Leopold’s principle of a land ethic [4]. The land ethic challenges the prevailing individualism in ethics, which gives consideration to individuals separately, and emphasizes the intrinsic value of an ecosystem or biotic community considered as a whole.

Most advocates of the land ethic, such as Callicott and Paul Shepard, have a clear idea of how to practice the land ethic. Their visions involve a kind of primitivism, and sometimes even a fundamental shift of the social structure, which make them highly impractical to follow. But it isn’t obvious that this primitivism is the only form of practice that’s consistent with the theory of the land ethic. This

essay will explore the practical side of the land ethic, showing that some practical aspects of a very different theory, namely ecomodernism, could also be compatible with the theory of the land ethic.

In the second section of my essay, I will discuss the land ethic, defending its conception of the ultimate measure of moral value and explicating its holistic view. In the third section, I will examine more closely the three key criteria for the land ethic, namely, integrity, stability, and beauty. In the fourth section, I will introduce the most common vision for putting the land ethic into practice as proposed by its supporters. In the fifth section, I will introduce ecomodernism as an alternative approach to thinking about putting the land ethic into practice and compare it with the currently dominant approach, arguing that ecomodernism is equally compatible with the theory of the land ethic and more practical to implement. In the sixth, concluding section, I will reexamine the criteria of the land ethic and evaluate the approaches mentioned in previous sections.

2. The Theory of the Land Ethic

Every theory of ethics needs an ultimate measure of moral value, setting a clear standard to determine the morality of different courses of action. For instance, in utilitarianism, this ultimate measure is the maximization of happiness and minimization of suffering, where suffering is taken to be the ultimate evil. Correspondingly, the ultimate measure of the land ethic is the good of the biotic community. Leopold's succinct slogan captures the essence of the land ethic: "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 [5]."

For most of its history, ethics has served as a basic set of principles that help to stabilize interpersonal relationships. Hence, most ethical theories are anthropocentric. They only take humans' experiences into ethical consideration and recognize only humans as having moral standing. Since only human beings are regarded as moral agents, they don't hold other animals morally responsible for what they do. These principles seem to line up with our natural moral intuitions. By contrast, the land ethic appears more revolutionary, extending ethical consideration to the whole biosphere, the collective consisting of all animals and plants, as well as abiotic factors like soil and water.

It should be noted that not all ethical theories are anthropocentric, especially in environmental philosophy. For example, Peter Singer's animal welfare ethics extends moral consideration to other animals. Most advocates of anthropocentric theories have utilized various criteria to draw a distinction between humans and other animals, such as humans' highly developed cognitive ability, to specify the conditions for moral standing. However, Singer argues that "such set of characteristics which covers *all* humans will not be possessed *only by humans*," [6] as some chimpanzees have higher cognitive capacities than many human children and developmentally disabled adults. If it is legitimate to give moral consideration to human children and developmentally disabled adults, philosophers would have to include chimpanzees as well. Therefore, instead of limiting the sphere of ethical consideration to the species of *Homo sapiens*, Singer asserts that we should use the capacity to experience happiness and suffering as our sole criterion for moral standing. In order to determine the morality of an action according to Singer's animal welfare ethics, all sentient organisms' interests should be taken into consideration.

Still, the land ethic is different even from non-anthropocentric theories like Singer's. While traditional animal ethics puts its emphasis on the welfare of individual animals, the land ethic has a holistic view. It considers the welfare of the environment taken as a whole rather than considering the sum of its constituent individuals.

To better understand how the land ethic determines the welfare of the ecosystem as a whole, let us analyze the case of honeybees based on both Singer's animal welfare ethics and Callicott's land ethic. On a utilitarian reckoning, bees are lower organisms with simple nervous systems, meaning that they have limited capacities for happiness and suffering. Therefore, their interests probably count for less than the interests of more advanced mammals, which possess a more complex nervous system and brain. But seen from the perspective of the land ethic, bees are a keystone species that are crucial to

the health of the biotic community as a whole, as a wide range of plants require bees as their pollinator. Hence, for the well-being of the whole ecosystem, bees are a lot more important than some mammals like hares, however advanced their capacity to experience happiness and suffering are. In the land ethic, factors that contribute more to the holistic welfare of an ecosystem should count for more.

We can gain a further understanding of this holistic view through an analogy. Callicott invites us to reflect on the body as a system, which consists of organs and numerous cells. Because of the complex networks of relations among organs and cells, the body becomes a “second-order whole,” [7] a system of different integrated and interconnected parts. Individual cells can be destroyed without the body as a whole suffering. All we focus on is the welfare of the integrated system: the body. According to the analogy, it is the same when we view the environment as a larger body, a “third-order organic whole.” [8] Just as different cells cooperate in our bodies, different parts of an ecosystem, such as various organisms, rocks, rivers, and mountains, also function together to sustain the whole system. For example, numerous rivers shape plains and valleys through erosion, which creates diverse habitats for organisms. At the same time, gases generated by the metabolism of organisms have also transformed the composition of the atmosphere significantly, most notably in the Great Oxidation Event over two billion years ago. Being made up of various organisms, rocks, rivers, and mountains, it is reasonable to recognize the environment as a unified system of integrally related parts. Just as different people form an entire society and different cells form a body, various biotic and abiotic factors form a biosphere. Hence, according to the land ethic, instead of being the owners of nature, humans are merely residents, or components, of the biotic community.

But why should we set the welfare of the biotic community as our ultimate measure of value? In other words, how is the ultimate measure of value in the land ethic justified? In most traditional moral theories, there seems to be a formal and logical connection between a community and moral responsibility. People will have strong moral intuitions that direct them to support the welfare of their community instead of being merely selfish. Although people normally think of this community only as the human community, the land ethic encourages us to see ourselves also as members of a larger biotic community. Therefore, from the analogy above, as a component of a larger system (the environment), we ought to give moral consideration to the harms and benefits to the environment as a whole.

3. The Foundational Criteria of the Land Ethic

The ultimate measure of value in the land ethic is quite different from more common anthropocentric beliefs because of its emphasis on the holistic welfare of the environment. Therefore, in order to apply the land ethic in practice, we need to have a better understanding of what kind of environment is desirable. In other words, we need to have a way to assess and compare the holistic welfare of the environment. We should return to the ultimate measure of the land ethic: “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.” [9] This statement of the principle includes three crucial criteria for the welfare of an ecosystem—integrity, stability, and beauty. Examining and clarifying these criteria more closely will help to understand the exact requirement of the land ethic better.

Firstly, the criterion of beauty seems to be problematic, as it is not related to the overall welfare of the environment. Among all species in the world, humans are the only ones that are known to have the ability to appreciate beauty. Therefore, from a holistic view, the criterion of beauty is actually anthropocentric and should not be included in the criteria of assessment.

Instead, let’s turn our focus to the criterion of integrity, which means the state of being whole and not divided. However, it’s not immediately evident what this means in the context of the land ethic. If the land ethic invites us to consider the ecosystem as a whole, and integrity means remaining whole, an ecosystem has integrity by definition. From the perspective of the land ethic, the ecosystem cannot lack integrity and the criterion of integrity thus doesn’t have a clear sense.

We might get a clearer picture of what Leopold meant if we consider the sorts of harmful effects might undermine the integrity of an ecosystem. These might be disruptions that undermine the unity of an ecosystem, such as a highway through a forest that divides the forest in two. Animals thus need to cross a highway to reach different areas of their habitat, and plants might not be able to interact in the way that they previously had. Ultimately, though, this sort of harm can be categorized into a harm to the stability of the ecosystem, which I will discuss in the next few paragraphs. When a large habitat is broken apart, the resulting habitats become smaller and more segregated. Without a larger genetic and species biodiversity, the ecosystem becomes less resistant to external disturbances, and so external shocks can result in greater damage to the ecosystem.

So let us consider the criterion of stability, which means the quality of being steady and not easily disturbed. We can assess the level of stability based on the environment's resistance to external pressure. Under the same level of pressure, the more resilient environment will be the one with higher stability. For example, if a sudden temperature rise hit two distinct ecosystems, the one with less species mortality and less ecological changes would have greater stability.

Still, no ecosystem is ever entirely stable, and we can't make the environment perfectly stable by simply secluding the Earth from any external disturbances. By constantly applying selective pressures on organisms and balancing the complex relations between all kinds of biotic and abiotic factors, nature can adapt to most gradual disturbances successfully. Therefore, even though it might seem as if the natural adaptation to gradual changes means the system is not stable, these changes actually play a crucial role in enhancing the welfare of the environment in the long run. In contrast, what really hurts the stability of an ecosystem are relatively rapid changes in the environment, as they cause strong disruptions that exceed the environment's capacity to adapt. Hence, it will be more suitable and efficient for humans to concentrate on resisting more rapid changes and allowing nature to adapt automatically to more gradual changes.

It should be noted that rapid changes in the environment are not necessarily anthropogenic, even though most of them are. Examples of rapid changes with natural causes include asteroid impacts or large volcanic eruptions, which were the causes of several pre-human mass extinctions. Humans are not the cause of those natural changes, but this fact does not exempt us from ethical responsibility of concerning them. Since our ultimate goal is to enhance the welfare of the environment, both natural and artificial rapid changes should be viewed equally as possible threats that need to be tackled. Still, those natural rapid changes occur far less frequently even if they can still have strong negative impacts.

Beyond intervening merely to minimize harms to nature, some might argue that humans should also positively intervene in ecosystems to enhance nature's inherent ability to resist harms. For example, modern ecological studies have mostly confirmed that biodiversity serves as an effective indicator of environmental stability, which gives a somewhat practical approach for us to enhance the resilience of an ecosystem. From this point of view, it might seem desirable for humans to deliberately introduce additional species to an ecosystem in order to enhance its biodiversity.

However, positively intervening is much riskier than minimizing harms or resisting disturbances as people can hardly estimate the consequences of their intervention. An ecosystem is interconnected in such a nuanced way that a small initial change may trigger large downstream effects, a phenomenon known as the butterfly effect. For instance, transplanting African desert plants to Mexico can definitely increase the biodiversity of the region, but an introduced species may take up the niche occupied by other species, eventually leading to a distortion to the whole food web. Hence, if the present ecosystem has a certain degree of stability, simply preventing its deterioration and allowing it to evolve naturally would be a better choice.

To summarize, from this clarification of the land ethic's criteria for the welfare of an ecosystem, the conclusion is that people should work to minimize effects that reduce the biodiversity of an ecosystem, especially rapid ones. As I noted above, the majority of those rapid changes, though not all of them, are anthropogenic. For instance, people are responsible for overfishing in many areas and have depleted many of the existing fish stocks. Many fish species adapt to heavy predation by producing more offspring to offset predators' consumption, but the efficiency of humans' fishing

methods has increased so quickly that there has not been enough time for fish to adapt to such a large pressure on their population levels. Therefore, in this case, the increased efficiency of human fishing practices is considered a rapid change, and we should instead choose to carry out fishing under sustainable methods that allow fish to adjust to less rapidly increasing human consumption.

4. The Land Ethic in Practice

Now that we understand the criteria for assessing the welfare of the environment better, we can ask how we might apply the land ethic in practice. That would require reevaluating the world around us from the perspective of the land ethic, especially human civilization. Since humans are also components of the natural environment, the land ethic requires us to live a life that can contribute to the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community effectively. Based on this principle, many aspects of our present society would have to be changed.

Most advocates of the land ethic are highly critical of our present society, and there are two prominent reasons for their critical attitude. Firstly, humans occupy too much land, especially because of our practices of agriculture and animal husbandry. Our use of the land deprives a large number of wild organisms of their native habitats, and the resulting pollution causes further harm to the environment. Some may argue that the Earth already has a large amount of empty space, but this alleged empty space is an illusion. The land that is unused by humans preserves and sustains the rich biodiversity of Earth and is therefore not empty at all. Hence, advocates of the land ethic believe that present human civilization is too heavily reliant on extensive land use.

Secondly, many advocates of the land ethic also argue that our society is on the wrong track. It is obvious that the direction of the development of our present society is mainly to advance technology and improve people's living standards. This goal gives no consideration to the welfare of the biotic community. Instead, our society is trying to reach the goal of an anthropocentric utilitarianism—maximizing the happiness of humans. For these two reasons, advocates of the land ethic believe that our society needs a substantial change.

Those advocates shop for ideas in our pre-agricultural prehistory for solutions. If the artificial legalities and rights that we have established in our present society stray from the ultimate goal of nature's welfare, we might instead find some wisdom from our ancestors. A tribe-based life of hunting and gathering takes up a big part of our evolutionary history. Large-scale civilization has existed for only about eight thousand years. Through the lifestyle of hunter-gatherers, *Homo sapiens* managed to foster a viable and mutually beneficial relationship with nature, which is definitely a desirable achievement from the perspective of the land ethic.

Many environmental philosophers have thus proposed alternative structures for the future of society. In his essay "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair," Callicott not only revises Leopold's land ethic to give it a more rigorous philosophical framework, but also mentions his own view about a future in which the land ethic is put into practice. Callicott admits that it is impossible for us to return to the primitive state of tribal existence. Instead, he argues that some of the concepts of hunter-gatherer life can be "abstracted and integrated with a future human culture,"[10] aligning with some of our natural biological principles and innate instincts. A more intricate model of this hunter-gatherer lifestyle society is thoroughly explored by Paul Shepard. In *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*, he imagines a new kind of society based on a "New Cynetics." [11]

First, according to Shepard, humans should develop technology that can help separate food production from extensive land use. Second, people should rethink their relationship with other organisms. We should not only abandon animal husbandry but also abandon pet keeping. Hunter-gatherer life is the appropriate lifestyle that satisfies people's emotional needs. The underlying intention for people to keep pets is to satisfy their emotional needs, says Shepard, and results from the isolation caused by modern society and its sick relationship with the natural world. Third, for public education, children should learn extensively about plants and animals before learning abstract

concepts in science and art. Fourth, the new society should be grouped in tribal units, preparing and eating food together, as well as living near true wilderness.

Thus, advocates of the land ethic envision their new social structures by drawing inspiration from prehistoric societies.

5. An Ecomodernist Alternative

From Callicott's and Shepard's perspectives, to follow the ideal of the land ethic means to live closer to nature and to shrink our impact on the land. They take early hunter-gatherer communities as their model. However, though the proposals of Callicott and Shepard seem consistent with the theory of the land ethic, it's not obvious that this is the only way of life that's consistent with the land ethic. Surprisingly, ecomodernism may be a possible alternative.

Ecomodernism, as proposed by Asafu-Adjaye et al. in "An Ecomodernist Manifesto," [12] may also provide a practical approach to benefitting the natural environment as a whole. Ecomodernists propose that continuing to develop technology and applying it with wisdom are the most suitable ways of addressing the environmental crisis. They believe that more advanced technology can "[intensify] many human activities," [13] thereby increasing efficiency and reducing humans' land use. For example, cities can accommodate millions of people in a relatively small amount of space, and more advanced agricultural technology allows people to produce more food without increasing land use. Therefore, accelerated modernization makes humans less reliant on nature or extensive land use. What's more, ecomodernists assert that by developing substitutes, recycling necessary materials, and using resources more productively, humans can in fact *decouple* from environmental impact, which means that human well-being will become less dependent on environmental impact. As technology develops, for each unit of economic output, less environmental impact, such as deforestation and pollution, will result. Even if humans cannot totally eliminate their reliance on nature, technological advancement will make our material dependence upon nature less destructive.

It should be noted that ecomodernists don't make any reference to the land ethic in articulating their position. Still, ecomodernism also seems to promote the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community even though it involves decoupling from nature rather than integrating with it. As humans shrink their impact on the environment by applying advanced technology, more land would be left to non-human species. Ecomodernism benefits the welfare of human society and wild nature, as well as harmonizing the relationship between the two. Therefore, the practice of ecomodernism will ultimately benefit the environment as a whole, which fits the theory of the land ethic.

Although both Shepard and ecomodernists argue that people need to make less heavy use of the land, there are three distinct differences between ecomodernists and Shepard. Firstly, ecomodernists seem to be more sanguine about the current direction of society, proposing slight alterations to our present trajectory instead of devising a drastically new social system. While Shepard urges us to radically change our way of life, ecomodernists believe that such a reform of our social structure is improbable and unnecessary. They do this by identifying and explaining several ongoing trends that have already been making people's lives less reliant on the environment. One prominent example of these trends is urbanization. Due to the development of agricultural technology, food production has become more land- and labor-efficient, allowing more people to live in large cities. The increasing trend of urbanization thus frees up much of the land which used to be put to agricultural use, returning a greater portion of land back to nature for reforestation. People living in cities also have decreasing fertility rates, contributing to the peaking of human population. Hence, for ecomodernists, all humans need to do is to keep on with these current trends.

Secondly, the different visions of social structures thus result in different perceptions of people's relationship with nature. Shepard suggests that people ought to preserve some of the traditions of hunter-gatherer societies, intimately interacting with nature while reducing land use. He argues that his "New Cynegetics"[14] aligns with humans' natural instincts and will thus benefit humans' psychological health. In contrast, ecomodernists' ideas are less radical. While they also think people

should place less strain on the planet, they argue that people should instead leave nature on its own and simply appreciate its beauty. When discussing people's relationship with the wild environment, they focus on our emotional connection to and deep love of the natural world. From a practical perspective, humans can indeed survive in an environment with less biodiversity and wilderness, or even without nature, with the help of advanced technology. However, from a spiritual or aesthetic perspective, this would not be a world that people want. Therefore, ecomodernists argue that, by shrinking people's impact on nature, we can restore and preserve nature for the beauty it provides.

Thirdly, their different perceptions of people's relationship with nature thus account for their differing views of technology. Although they both recognize the key role of technology in fulfilling their visions of the future, technology seems to be in service of different goals. Shepard argues for people's integration with nature, which means that people should separate their technology from land use and live closer to the land. If people only imitate the primitive lives of our ancestors without any modifications, though, problems may emerge due to the conflict between the low efficiency of food production and a large population. Shepard affirms the ritual and spiritual value of hunting and gathering, but he recognizes that it cannot be the main source of food production. Some technological solutions should be employed to produce enough food without intensive land use so as to support people who live a mostly hunter-gatherer life. For example, Shepard raises the example of synthesizing artificial food by farming microbes, which is an approach that can both provide sufficient food and requires less land use.

In contrast, while Shepard wants to use technology to support a way of life that makes limited use of technology, ecomodernists envision a way of life that is deeply embedded in technology. They strongly favor continuing to develop technology as a long-term way to tackle the current environmental crisis, as more advanced technology can increase efficiency and shrink humans' reliance upon nature. Ecomodernists list examples of modern cities and agriculture with advanced technology, which support a large population with only a small amount of land use. To summarize, while technology is used to give assistance to Shepard's vision of hunter-gatherer lives, ecomodernists consider developing technology as central to a way of life that decouples human development from extensive environmental impact.

After fully considering the difference of these two approaches, the next step is to evaluate them according to the criteria discussed in section 3, namely that we should minimize rapid impacts that reduce the biodiversity of an ecosystem. In this case, however, both of the approaches show promise. The more primitivist approach that Shepard advocates provides an obvious model for a more harmonious human interaction with nature that has been tested by prehistoric societies, while ecomodernism seems to provide an alternative model that's just as good by decoupling humans' influence from nature. So, which should we prefer? Given that the possible effects of the two approaches are similar and can meet the requirements of the land ethic, the better option will be the one that is more practical for us to realize. The futuristic vision of ecomodernism requires humans to continue on our current trajectory with some adjustments. In contrast, Shepard wants a fundamental change in the social structure to achieve his vision of "New Cynegetics." Therefore, in addition to its compatibility with the theories of the land ethic, ecomodernism is also more practical.

6. Conclusion

The land ethic is a branch of environmental ethics that takes its supreme deontological principle as Leopold's statement: "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." It holds a view that is not anthropocentric and holistic. Instead of considering the sum of individuals' welfare, the land ethic directly analyzes the welfare of the environment taken as an integral whole. Through Callicott's analogy of the environment as a "third-order organic whole," the way that various biotic and abiotic factors form a biosphere is similar to the way that various people form a society or various cells form a body.

Advocates of the land ethic, like Callicott and Shepard, argue that human civilization occupies too much land and causes widespread natural habitat destruction and environmental pollution. These advocates look for solutions in our pre-agricultural prehistory. With a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, *Homo sapiens* managed to foster a viable and mutually beneficial relationship with nature, which is desirable from the perspective of the land ethic. Specifically, Shepard explicates his vision of a new society based on his “New Cynegetics,” which fosters a closer relationship to the land while making use of technology to support this non-agricultural way of life.

However, this route may not be the sole or the best way of applying the land ethic. I have argued that ecomodernism may also offer a practical approach. Ecomodernists believe that more advanced technology can “intensify” human activities through increasing efficiency and reducing land use. Humans can gradually decouple from environmental impact, becoming less dependent on environmental impact as technology develops.

Perhaps surprisingly, ecomodernism seems to meet the land ethic’s goal of minimizing environmental impacts at least as effectively as the approach that Callicott and Shepard advocate, with the further advantage that it is more practical to implement. Therefore, this essay has shown that ecomodernism is compatible with the theory of the land ethic, thereby increasing its viability and reliability.

If more than one theory can be compatible with the land ethic, this encourages us to dig even further into what the land ethic implies. While both ecomodernism and Shepard’s “New Cynegetics” seem to support the aim of the land ethic, both presuppose a clear distinction between wilderness and human civilization, asking people to shrink their impact on nature. But it is mistaken to treat human communities and wilderness as two separate things. Many landscapes are fundamentally shaped by human activity, and no part of nature remains entirely untouched by human activity. For example, agricultural landscapes in many areas of Europe, the Middle East, India, and China have been shaped by human activity for thousands of years, and the urban environment can also be viewed as a new kind of ecosystem. Even though cities are occupied mainly by humans, plenty of wildlife like raccoons and mice also interact with one other in this ecosystem. What’s more, nature is continually changing, setting no original baseline for us to return nature to. The existence of humans has already shaped the environment greatly and may even serve a crucial role in the sustenance of the environment. Thus, since humans have already become an integral part of the ecosystem, simply withdrawing human involvement may not be the most suitable choice. Instead of viewing the influence of humans as necessarily harmful, we may acknowledge our present roles in the natural system and continue occupying those roles. Furthermore, because of humans’ ability to reason and communicate, by utilizing our knowledge of ecology to regulate our home environment when it is necessary, we could possibly create far more contributions to the welfare of the biotic community.

Instead of being fixed and clear, its requirement is more flexible and ambiguous. Hence, by reconsidering the optimal social structure and readjusting our perception of civilization, there might be other ethical approaches that are even more suitable than ecomodernism. This essay is only a starting point for thinking more deeply about these questions.

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