ĀTMAN, IDENTITY, AND EMANATION: ARGUMENTS FOR A HINDU ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC

Comparative Philosophy Volume 2, No. 1 (2011): 03-24
Open Access / ISSN 2151-6014
www.comparativephilosophy.org

ĀTMAN, IDENTITY, AND EMANATION: ARGUMENTS FOR A HINDU ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC

CHRISTOPHER FRAMARIN

ABSTRACT: *Many contemporary authors argue that since certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that all living beings are fundamentally the same as* Brahman *(God), these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic. I outline three common versions of this argument, and argue that each fails to meet at least one criterion for an environmental ethic. This doesn't mean, however, that certain Hindu texts and traditions do not provide the basis for an environmental ethic. In the last section of the paper I briefly outline and defend an alternative, according to which all plants and animals have intrinsic value and direct moral standing in virtue of having a good.*

Keywords: *Hinduism, environmental ethics, intrinsic value, direct moral standing*, Brahman, ātman, *sentience*

1. INTRODUCTION

Many contemporary authors argue that since certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that all living beings are fundamentally the same as *Brahman* (God), these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.[1] I outline three common versions of this argument, and argue that each fails to meet at least one criterion for an environmental ethic.

This doesn't mean, however, that certain Hindu texts and traditions do not provide the basis for an environmental ethic. In the last section of the paper I briefly outline and defend an alternative, according to which all plants and animals have intrinsic value and direct moral standing in virtue of having a good.

FRAMARIN, CHRISTOPHER: Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Calgary, Canada. Email: chris.framarin@ucalgary.ca

[1] The authors whose views I consider in sections 2 through 5 are often unclear about which Hindu texts and traditions they have in mind. Where they are explicit, they refer to Advaita Vedānta, Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, and the *Upaniṣads*. In section 6, I focus primarily on the *Manusmṛti*, with the thought that its authority on matters of *dharma* is broadly accepted.

2. THREE ARGUMENTS FOR A HINDU ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC

Most authors who write on Hindu environmental ethics offer a version of the following argument. Certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that all living beings are fundamentally the same as *Brahman*. Therefore these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic. The basic argument can be schematized in the following way:

(SA – 1)
Premise: Certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that all living beings are fundamentally the same as *Brahman*.
Conclusion: Hence these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

In order for a theory to count as an environmental ethic, it must ascribe both intrinsic value and direct moral standing to non-sentient entities in nature (Regan 1981, 19-20, Thompson 1990, 148). To say that something has intrinsic value is to say that it has value independent of further ends towards which it is a means, and independent of the evaluations of valuers. To say that an entity has direct moral standing is to say that there are possible circumstances in which an agent morally ought to consider the entity for its own sake in deciding what to do (Regan 1981, 19-20, Timmons 2007, 511).[2] Hence the basic argument can be elaborated to read:

(SA – 2)
Premise One: Certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that all living beings are fundamentally the same as *Brahman*.
Conclusion One/Premise Two: Hence these texts and traditions claim that non-sentient entities have intrinsic value and direct moral standing.
Conclusion Two: Hence these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

Implicit in this argument are the claims that (1) *Brahman* has intrinsic value and direct moral standing and (2) if all living beings are fundamentally the same as *Brahman*, then all living beings are intrinsically valuable and have direct moral standing. So the full argument reads:

[2] One justification for these criteria is that if non-sentient entities in nature do not have intrinsic value and/or direct moral standing, then environmental ethics is not really a distinct subdiscipline. It is simply one of many areas within the field of ethics (and/or animal ethics), much like medical ethics or business ethics, that deal fundamentally with the ways that human beings should treat one another (and perhaps other sentient entities) (Norton 1984, 131-2). This is why many of those who deny the plausibility of an environmental ethic still define an environmental ethic in this way (such as Thompson [1990]). So 'environmenal ethic' should not be understood here as a success term, equivalent to 'plausible ethic of the environment' or 'adequate ethic of the environment', since authors disagree widely on what constitutes a plausible ethic of the environment.

(SA – 3)
Premise One: Certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that all living beings are fundamentally the same as *Brahman*.
Premise Two: *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
Premise Three: If all living beings are fundamentally the same as *Brahman*, and if *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing, then all living beings are intrinsically valuable and have direct moral standing.
Conclusion One/Premise Four: So certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that each living being is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
Conclusion Two: Hence these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

In what follows, I will refer to this as the 'Sameness Argument' (SA). It is advanced in some form or another by Eliot Deutsch (1970 and 1986), Rajagopal Ryali (1973), S. Cromwell Crawford (1982), David Kinsley (1991), Klaus K. Klostermaier (1991), Lina Gupta (1993), Harold Coward (1998), O. P. Dwivedi (2000), and others.

These authors offer at least three versions of SA, depending in part on which text or tradition they emphasize. According to the first version, which I will refer to as the '*Ātman* Argument' (AA), certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that each living being is an embodied *ātman* (eternal self). Each *ātman* is identical with *Brahman*[3] – in some sense.[4] Since each *ātman* is identical with *Brahman*, each *ātman* has intrinsic value and direct moral standing. And since each living being is an embodied *ātman*, each living being is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing. Hence certain Hindu texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

Crawford advances this version of the argument when he claims that "[t]he general idea behind [relevant passages in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*] is that the individual *ātman* is one with the universal *Brahman*… This *Brahman* force is manifest uniformly in the divinities of heaven, and in human and animal and plant life on earth" (Crawford 1982, 150). Hence "Hindu philosophy can provide the basis for an environmental ethic" (Ibid., 149). Anantanand Rambachan, arguing that Advaita affirms the "[world's] value and the value of life in it" (Rambachan 1989, 289), advances the *Ātman* Argument as well. "As the all-pervasive reality, and as the axis of the universe which intersects all things, God, in *Advaita*, exists at the deepest levels… as the Self (*ātman*)" (Rambachan 1989, 294).[5]

The *Ātman* Argument can be schematized in the following way:

[3] *Bhagavadgītā* 10.20, for example, reads, "I am the *ātman*, O Arjuna, that resides in the heart of all beings (*aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ*/)" (Sadhale 2000b, 234).
[4] I say "in some sense" in order to make the argument consistent with a variety of metaphysical pictures, including Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita. See below.
[5] Ryali also mentions the correlation between *ātman* and *Brahman* in his analysis of Hinduism's conception of "man's relationship with nature" (Ryali 1973: 48). He says, "*Brahman* resides in *atman* and indeed *Brahman* is *atman*" (Ryali 1973, 49). His view, like Rambachan's, is ambiguous – it is not clear if he takes the *ātman* to be identical with *Brahman*, or simply part of *Brahman*.

(AA)
Premise One: Certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that the *ātman* is identical with *Brahman* in some sense.
Premise Two: *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
Premise Three: If each *ātman* is identical with *Brahman*, and if *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing, then each *ātman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
Premise Four: If each *ātman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing, and if each living being is an embodied *ātman*, then each living being is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
Conclusion One/Premise Five: So according to certain Hindu texts and traditions, each living being is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
Conclusion Two: Hence these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

According to the second version of SA, certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that the distinctions between people, animals, plants, and *Brahman* are finally unreal. Hence everything is ultimately numerically and qualitatively identical with *Brahman*.[6] Since everything is identical with *Brahman* in this sense, and since *Brahman* has intrinsic value and direct moral standing, everything has intrinsic value and direct moral standing. Hence these Hindu texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

This seems to be the sense of at least one of Deutsch's arguments for a Hindu environmental ethic. He says, "Vedānta would maintain that… fundamentally all life is one… and that this oneness finds its natural expression in a *reverence* for all living things" (Deutsch 1970, 82).[7] In defense of the claim that Hinduism endorses "treating the creation with respect without harming and exploiting others," Dwivedi claims that "for the Hindus of the ancient period, God and nature were one and the same" (Dwivedi 2000, 5-6).[8]

This second version of the argument can be schematized as follows:

(IA)
Premise One: Certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that the distinction between living beings and *Brahman* is unreal.

[6] *Gītā* 11.20, for example, reads, "All space between heaven and earth is occupied by you [Kṛṣṇa] alone (*dyāvāpṛthivyor idam antaraṃ hi vyāptaṃ tvayaikena diśaś ca sarvāḥ*)" (Sadhale 2000, 293). 18.20 states, "Know that knowledge to be sattvic by which [a person] sees the one eternal being in all beings, the undivided in the divided (*sarvabhūteṣu yenaikaṃ bhāvam avyayam īkṣate* / *avibhaktaṃ vibhakteṣu taj jñānaṃ viddhi sāttvikam* //)" (Sadhale 2000c, 330).
[7] Vasudha Narayanan ascribes this view to Deutsch (Narayanan 1997, 298).
[8] A number of authors outline the implications of Vedāntin "monism," such as Ryali (1973, 49), Kinsley (1991, 239), and Christopher Key Chapple (1993, 75). Presumably they have some version of IA in mind as well.

> Premise Two: *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
> Premise Three: If the distinction between living beings and *Brahman* is unreal, and if *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing, then all living beings are intrinsically valuable and have direct moral standing.
> Conclusion One/Premise Four: So according to certain Hindu texts and traditions, each living being is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
> Conclusion Two: Hence these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

In what follows, I will refer to this argument as the 'Identity Argument' (IA).

According to the third version of SA, certain Hindu texts claim that all of nature is a manifestation of *Brahman*.[9] 'Manifestation of *Brahman'* in this context means that *Brahman* produces or creates nature from its own form, so that the substance of nature is the same as that of *Brahman*.[10] Hence nature is identical with *Brahman* in this sense.[11] Since all of nature is a manifestation of *Brahman*, all of nature is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing. Hence these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

This version of SA is the most popular. Coward, for example, claims that

> Hindus speak of the cosmos (including the stars, the atmosphere, the earth, plants, animals, and humans) as God's body. Since everything is divine, an ethic of reverence and respect is demanded from humans toward all other manifestations of God's body (Coward 1998, 40).

Gupta argues that since "Hinduism speaks of… the essence called 'Brahman' that manifests itself in manifolds of this universe… all parts of this Nature have an intrinsic value" (Gupta 1993, 113). Dwivedi argues for an Indian environmental ethic by citing the claim from *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (2.2.41) that "ether, air, fire, water, earth, planets, all creatures, directions, trees and plants, rivers, and seas, they are all organs of God's body" (Dwivedi 2000, 5). Klostermaier and Patricia Y. Mumme defend this kind of view as well. They explicitly associate it with Rāmānuja and Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified non-dualism), but point out that it has its origins in earlier texts, such as the *Puruṣa Sukta*, *Śatapaṭha Brāhmaṇa*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, *Bhagavadgītā*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Klostermaier 1991, 250-1 and Mumme 1998, 139).[12]

---

[9] *Gītā* 10.8, for example, reads: "I am the source of all. From me all arises (*ahaṃ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṃ pravartate* /)" (Sadhale 2000b, 218).

[10] *Brahman*, on this view, is the material, or what Julius Lipner calls the "substantial cause" (*upādānakāraṇa*) of the world (Lipner 1986, 82).

[11] Note that this sense of identity is different from the sense of identity in IA. One might say that a certain person, plant, or animal is God in the sense that they in part constitute God, without claiming that a certain person, plant, or animal is qualitatively and numerically identical with God.

[12] David Kinsley also claims that everything is a manifestation of *Brahman* as part of an argument for a Hindu environmental ethic (Kinsley 1991, 239). Also see Deutsch (Deutsch 1970, 83).

This third version of the argument, which I will call the 'Emanation Argument' (EA), reads:

(EA)
Premise One: Certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that all living beings are a manifestation of *Brahman*.
Premise Two: *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
Premise Three: If each living being is a manifestation of *Brahman*, and if *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing, then all living beings are intrinsically valuable and have direct moral standing.
Conclusion One/Premise Four: So according to certain Hindu texts and traditions, each living being is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing.
Conclusion Two: Hence these texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

As Klostermaier and Mumme point out, the Emanation Argument is most naturally associated with Viśiṣṭādvaita. The Identity Argument, in contrast, is most naturally associated with Advaita. These associations are helpful as a rule of thumb, but I want to avoid identifying these arguments with these traditions too strongly. Again, as is clear in Klostermaier and Mumme's accounts, these philosophical themes have their origin in texts that precede the distinction between Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita. Both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja defend these systems with extensive references to texts that precede them.[13]

3. OBJECTIONS TO THE *ĀTMAN* ARGUMENT

The third premise of the *Ātman* Argument states that if each *ātman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing, then each living being is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing. At first this inference might seem puzzling. It's not clear how the intrinsic value of one item – in this case, the *ātman* – can transfer to another item – in this case, the living body. Indeed, many contemporary philosophers define intrinsic value in terms of the value an item or state of affairs has independent of its relations with other objects or states of affairs.

G. E. Moore's influential position is that a state of affairs has intrinsic value just in case it has value in complete isolation. Its value must persist even in the absence of everything else (Moore 1903, 187).[14] The body component in the *ātman*/body

[13] It should be no surprise that many of these authors advance more than one version of SA. The *Ātman* Argument, after all, is entailed by IA and EA (so long as the identity cited in AA is qualified appropriately), but does not entail either.

[14] I take Moore's formulation to be equivalent to the formulation of intrinsic value that I offer above, according to which intrinsic value is value independent of both means-end relations and what might be called 'valued-valuer relations'. John O'Neill offers what he takes to be examples of other types of relations that are excluded by Moore's formulation, but which do not reduce to either the means-end or valuer-valued relation. He offers the example of wilderness, and argues that it has value "because it is

composite does not have value in the absence of everything else, however, because it is valuable only in virtue of being inhabited by, or in some way connected with, an *ātman*. The claim that the living body is entirely without value, even though the *ātman* with which it is connected has great intrinsic value, seems consistent.

Indeed, the primary objection to a Hindu environmental ethic advanced by contemporary authors has been just this. Lance E. Nelson, for example, claims that according to the *Bhagavadgītā*, "*ātman* is what is important. The physical, on the other hand, is expendable, and certainly not worth any emotional distress" (Nelson 2000, 141). J. Baird Callicott (Callicott 1987, 124) and Arvind Sharma (1998, 57-8), among others,[15] make the same claim.

Consider the following analogy. Assume that human beings are intrinsically valuable. A certain human being must spend the rest of her life in an Iron Lung. (Suppose it's 1930.) In this situation, it's clear that the Iron Lung has instrumental value, as a means of keeping the person alive. It does not come to have intrinsic value, however, merely because an intrinsically valuable person inhabits it for her entire life. Likewise, it seems, the material body does not come to have intrinsic value merely because an intrinsically valuable *ātman* inhabits it for a lifetime.

One might reply that the intrinsic value of the *ātman* need not establish the intrinsic value of the isolated body. All it must do is establish the intrinsic value of the *ātman*/body composite, and this it does. In the Iron Lung case, when an intrinsically valuable person occupies the Iron Lung, the person/Iron Lung composite is intrinsically valuable, even if the Iron Lung by itself is not, simply because the person is. This is all that is required for AA to succeed. The *ātman*/body composite is intrinsically valuable, even if the body is not, simply because the *ātman* is.

This kind of view, even if it technically succeeds at establishing the intrinsic value of the living being, seems at least to miss some of the spirit of the demands of an environmental ethic. Holmes Rolston III objects to a related argument by saying, "animals need to be valued… as biological agents…" (Rolston III 1987, 175). The word 'agents' here is somewhat misleading in the present context, since an environmental ethic must attribute intrinsic value and direct moral standing to non-sentient entities in nature whether they are agents – that is, whether they are capable of intentional action – or not. So the objection can be revised to read: animals and plants need to be valued as biological entities – and not simply as biological containers for something else that has intrinsic value and direct moral standing. The most plausible version of AA, however, does not value animals or plants as biological entities, but as embodied *ātmans*.

The problem becomes more apparent if we consider the issue of moral standing. Even if living beings are intrinsically valuable, as a consequence of being constituted

---

untouched by humans" (O'Neill: 1992, 125). Yet the relation of being untouched by humans does not reduce to the means-end or valuer-valued relation. The problem with the example is that it is not obvious that the value that wilderness has in virtue of being wilderness is intrinsic. If it is not, then the example does not demonstrate that intrinsic value excludes relations other than the means-end and valuer-valued relations. The same is true of O'Neil's example of rarity (O'Neill 1992, 124).

[15] See also Basant K. Lal (1986, 200-1) and Rita DasGupta Sherma (1998, 95).

in part by the *ātman*, it is not clear that the direct moral standing of the *ātman* transfers to the living being that it inhabits.

In the most famous discussion of the topic within the Indian philosophical tradition, the *Bhagavadgītā* states that the *ātman* is not harmed by the destruction of the body. "Weapons do not cut [the *ātman*], fire does not burn it, waters do not wet it, the wind does not dessicate it… The body being killed, [The *ātman*] is not killed" (2.23, 2.20).[16] That we must, in deliberating over whether to perform a certain action, consider how the *ātman* will be affected does not entail that we must, in deliberating over whether to perform a certain action, consider how the body that is inhabited by the *ātman* will be affected, because the *ātman* is not affected by what happens to the body. As Nelson says with regard to the *Bhagavadgītā*, "physical harm – whether the destruction of war or, presumably, ecological devastation – however regrettable on the empirical level, does not affect what ultimately matters, namely spirit" (Nelson 2000, 142).[17]

So the first two objections to AA might be understood as two different versions of a similar transfer problem. The first objection is that the intrinsic value of the *ātman* does not transfer to the biological being. The second objection is that the direct moral standing of the *ātman* cannot transfer to the biological being.[18]

This second objection can be strengthened. It is not clear that *ātman* or *Brahman* has direct moral standing in the first place. In many classical texts, such as the *Yogasūtra*, the *Sāṃkhyakārika*, the *Gītā*, and various *Upaniṣads*, the *ātman* (or *puruṣa*) is typically characterized as an uninvolved and unaffected witness to the events of the world. In other texts, including some *Upaniṣads*, the *ātman* is described as the agent within the living being.[19] Nonetheless, the *ātman* is unchanging, and untouched by pain and pleasure. The same is true of *Brahman*.[20] In other words, neither *Brahman* nor *ātman* could be affected by any event whatsoever.[21]

---

[16] *nainaṃ chindanti śastrāṇi nainaṃ dahati pāvakaḥ* / *na cainaṃ kledayanty āpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ* /… *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre* // (Sadhale 2000a, 136 and 119). Both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja interpret the verses straightforwardly.

[17] See footnote 21 below for an objection and reply.

[18] Each version of the transfer problem is unique to the present context. Intrinsic value cannot be transferred in the above way because intrinsic value is the value that an entity has independent of its relations to other things, and direct moral standing cannot be transferred in the above way because the initial entity from which direct moral standing is supposed to transfer (the *ātman*) does not have direct moral standing in the first place. I don't mean to say that there is a problem in transferring qualities from one entity to another more generally.

[19] Neither Hindu traditions in general nor Vedāntin traditions are uniform in their characterization of the relations between *Brahman*, *ātman*, and the body, but these are the most dominant conceptions.

[20] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* identifies both *Brahman* and *ātman* as the inner controller (*antaryāmiṇa*) of the body (BU 3.7.1), but also describes the *ātman* as free of hunger, thirst, pain, and delusion (BU 3.5.1).

[21] This is surely the Sāṃkhyan and Yogic view, which the *Gītā*, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and others generally adopt. There are some passages, however, such as *Gītā* 17.6, that suggest that both *ātman* and *Brahman* are indeed affected by the events of the body. The verse reads: "the mindless, causing harm to the body, [which is] the aggregate of physical elements, also [cause harm to] me within the body. Know them as demonic [in their] intentions (*karśayantaḥ śarīrasthaṃ bhūtagrāmam acetasaḥ* /

If neither *Brahman* nor *ātman* could be affected by any event, then there is no possible set of circumstances in which a being must consider how *Brahman* or *ātman* will be affected by an action. If there is no possible set of circumstances in which a being must consider how *Brahman* or *ātman* will be affected by an action, then neither *Brahman* nor *ātman* has direct moral standing, since to say that a being has direct moral standing is to say that there are possible circumstances in which an agent morally ought to consider the entity for its own sake in deciding what to do. And if neither *Brahman* nor *ātman* has direct moral standing, the direct moral standing of the *ātman* cannot transfer to the body or the *ātman*/body composite.

The cogency of AA, however, depends on the truth of the claim that the *ātman* has direct moral standing. Since the *ātman* does not have direct moral standing, the argument is unconvincing. If the argument fails, then AA does not prove that certain Indian texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

4. OBJECTIONS TO THE IDENTITY ARGUMENT

Both the Identity Argument and the Emanation Argument might be thought of as more robust versions of the *Ātman* Argument. AA states that every *ātman* is in some sense identical with *Brahman*. IA and EA state that everything – including every *ātman* – is in some sense identical with *Brahman*. Hence the failure of AA to establish a Hindu environmental ethic need not mean that IA and/or EA fail as well.

The Identity Argument certainly avoids the first objection to AA – the objection that the intrinsic value of the *ātman* does not transfer to the biological organism per se – because according to IA, the biological organism is identical with both *ātman* and *Brahman*. Hence the intrinsic value of the biological organism is not a result of the problematic transfer of intrinsic value from the *ātman* or *Brahman*. The biological organism's value just is the value of *Brahman*.

IA is equally vulnerable, however, to the second objection to AA. The cogency of IA depends essentially on the plausibility of the claim that *Brahman* has direct moral standing (Premise Two). If *Brahman* does not have direct moral standing – as I argue above – then the direct moral standing of *Brahman* cannot establish the direct moral standing of living beings, sentient or non-sentient. Hence IA fails to show that certain Indian texts and traditions (namely those that claim that all distinctions are illusory) provide the basis for an environmental ethic, because IA fails to show that living beings have direct moral standing.

My point here is not that since, according to IA, the living being is identical with *Brahman*, and since *Brahman* lacks direct moral standing, so does the living being. If this were the point, long digressions about the distinction between conventional and ultimate reality would be unavoidable. (See below.) My point is more modest. Since

---

māṃ caivāntaś śarīrasthaṃ tān viddhy āsuraniścayān //)" (Sadhale 2000c, 248). These kinds of passages are overshadowed by the more common and extensive claims to the contrary, which emphasize a radical dualism between *ātman/Brahman* and the body. The former are, however, quite promising as bases for the development of a Hindu environmental ethic. (My thanks to an anonymous referee at *Comparative Philosophy* for this point.)

Brahman does not have direct moral standing to begin with, IA is unconvincing, because IA claims that the direct moral standing of *Brahman* is the basis for the direct moral standing of the living being. This is consistent, however, with the establishment of the direct moral standing of living beings by some other means. (See below.)

IA also faces an objection that AA avoids. Thus far, I have focused on two criteria for an environmental ethic. An environmental ethic must (1) attribute intrinsic value to non-sentient entities in nature, and (2) attribute direct moral standing to non-sentient entities in nature. These criteria are not exhaustive, however. Additionally, an environmental ethic must satisfy what Janna Thompson calls the "non-vacuity requirement" (Thompson 1990, 149). Thompson argues that

> [t]he criteria for determining what things or states of affairs are intrinsically valuable must not be such so that it turns out that every thing and every state of affairs counts as equally valuable. The reason why this requirement must be satisfied should be clear. An ethic is supposed to tell us what we ought or ought not to do; however, it cannot do so if it turns out that all things and states of affairs are equally valuable, for if they are, then there is no reason to do one thing rather than another, to bring about one state of affairs rather than another (Ibid.).

An ethic of any sort is supposed to be action-guiding. It is supposed to tell us what to do under certain circumstances. In order for an ethic to tell us what to do, it must be able to discriminate between what is good and bad. If a theory attributes equal value to everything,[22] however, then it cannot discriminate between good and bad, because everything is equally good or bad. Nothing is any better than anything else.[23]

Consider the example of murder. It might be thought that since a living person is intrinsically valuable, the person should not be harmed (all other things being equal). Hence killing is worse than avoiding killing. If, however, the value of the dead body is equal to the value of the living body, it is not clear why refraining from murder is preferable to murder. In both cases the outcome is equally valuable – a dead body is no less valuable than a living body. Even the sorrow of the friends and family of the murdered is equally valuable to the joy they might have felt if the murder had not occurred. Hence on this view, the distinctions between right and wrong, and good and bad, disappear.

IA, however, entails that everything has equal value. Notice first that Premise One of IA is unnecessarily narrow. If all distinctions are illusory, then the distinctions between *Brahman* and inanimate objects are illusory along with the distinctions between living beings and *Brahman*. Instead, Premise One should read: "Certain Indian texts and traditions claim that the distinctions between all things and *Brahman*

[22] By 'equal value' I mean value that is both of the same kind and of the same quantity.

[23] An objection might go as follows. An ethic is action guiding if it draws the distinction between right and wrong. The distinction between right and wrong, however, might not depend on the distinction between good and bad. This is what Kant, among others, asserts. Yet Kant's view also depends on ascribing intrinsic value to human beings (and denying it to other entities and things).

are unreal." Premise Two states that *Brahman* has intrinsic value. When these premises are combined with Premise Three, which says that if the distinction between *Brahman* and X is illusory and *Brahman* has intrinsic value, then X has intrinsic value, they entail the conclusion "all things are intrinsically valuable." If their value derives exclusively from their identity with *Brahman* – and IA says nothing to suggest that this is not the case – then all things are equally intrinsically valuable. If all things are equally intrinsically valuable, then the distinctions between good and bad and/or right and wrong are lost. Hence IA cannot establish an environmental ethic.

Again, some distinction might be drawn here between ultimate and conventional reality. One might admit that Advaita (as an example) attributes equal value to all things at the ultimate level, but insist that at the conventional level Advaita accepts evaluative distinctions. At the conventional level, a living person, animal, or plant is more valuable than a dead one, and the act of protecting life is better (more right) than the act of killing. Since most human beings live life at the conventional level, it is this level that is relevant to environmental ethics.

The problem with this response is that the proponent of IA argues that the conventional conception of the value of things – according to which there are differences in the value of things, and so on – should be replaced by the ultimate conception of the value of things – according to which all things are identical, and therefore have equal value. The proponent cannot, then, cite aspects of the conventional conception as a means of avoiding the further implications of attributing equal value to all things. The proponent of IA says that we should see all things as identical with *Brahman*. The proponent cannot then reply to the vacuity objection by pointing out that ordinarily we do not see all things as *Brahman*.[24]

5. OBJECTIONS TO THE EMANATION ARGUMENT

Like the Identity Argument, the Emanation Argument entails that the biological entity has intrinsic value, since the biological entity, like the *ātman*, emanates from, and is constituted by *Brahman*. So EA avoids the first objection to the *Ātman* Argument.

EA is just as vulnerable, however, to the second objection to AA. Like IA, EA states that *Brahman* has direct moral standing (Premise Two of both arguments), and this premise is crucial to deriving the conclusion that each living being has direct moral standing. If *Brahman* does not have direct moral standing – as I argue above – then even if Premise Three is true – "If each living being is a manifestation of *Brahman*, and if *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing, then all living beings are intrinsically valuable and have direct moral standing" – it does not follow that all living beings have direct moral standing. Hence EA does not provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

[24] Nelson argues that Advaita and the *Bhagavadgītā* deny that the material world has intrinsic value (Nelson 1998, 2000). I don't think his argument succeeds, but the distinction between conventional and ultimate reality cannot refute it, for the same reasons I outline here.

Additionally, EA seems to face the vacuity objection. Again, Premise One is too narrow. Not only living beings, but non-living things are a manifestation of *Brahman*. Rāmānuja, for example, elaborates *Gītā* 10.8, which reads: "I am the creator of all"[25] as "I am the creator, the cause and origin, of the manifestation of all manifold [things], sentient and non-sentient."[26] Throughout his commentaries on the *Gītā* and the *Brahmasūtra*, Rāmānuja simply says that *Brahman* is the creator of all things, and that both eternal selves and matter constitute God's body (Carman 1974, 115). Likewise, none of the creation stories that Mumme or Klostermaier cite specify that Brahman only creates living beings. Mumme says, citing the best-known analogies for the emanationist perspective,

> [a]s a spider emits a thread (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.* 2.1.20 and *Muṇḍaka Up.* 1.1.7) or as grass arises from the earth, or as hairs arise from the body, so too, from the Imperishable Lord, arises *all of creation* (*Muṇḍaka Up.* 1.1.7) (Mumme 1998, 139, emphasis added).

Hence Premise One of EA should instead read: "Certain Hindu texts and traditions claim that all things are a manifestation of *Brahman*."

Premise Two states that *Brahman* has intrinsic value. When these premises are combined with Premise Three – which says that if X is a manifestation of *Brahman*, and if *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable, then X is intrinsically valuable – they entail that all things are intrinsically valuable. If their value derives exclusively from being a manifestation of *Brahman* – and the argument says nothing to suggest otherwise – then EA entails that all things have equal intrinsic value. If a theory attributes equal intrinsic value to all things, however, it cannot discriminate between good and bad and/or right and wrong. It cannot be action-guiding, and therefore cannot be an ethic.[27]

---

[25] *ahaṃ sarvasya prabhavaḥ…* (Sadhale 2000b, 218).

[26] *ahaṃ sarvasya vicitracidacitprapañcasya prabhava utpattikāraṇam…* (Sadhale 2000b, 219, lines 27-28).

[27] It might be objected that according to some of the texts and systems that imply the Emanation Argument, different things instantiate Brahman to different degrees, and hence that different things have varying levels of intrinsic value and/or direct moral standing. Rāmānuja, for example, explains *Gītā* 2.16, which states, "Existence is not found among the unreal. Non-existence is not found among the real (*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ /*)" (Sadhale 2000a, 102), by quoting *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*: "Consciousness (*jñāna*) is real, whereas all else is unreal (*jñānaṃ yathā satyam asatyam anyat*)" (Sadhale 2000a, 104, line 35). If consciousness is more real than non-consciousness, then perhaps conscious entities are more valuable, or have greater direct moral standing, than non-conscious entities. If this is right, then the vacuity objection might be avoided – a living body is more valuable than a dead body because the living body is conscious.

If this is the argument, however, then proponents of the Emanation Argument must make this case explicitly, and presumably concede that it is not simply the fact that an entity emanates from Brahman that makes it valuable/worthy of consideration, but something more. Additionally, even if this case is made, the account faces some of the other problems I have raised above. In the same passage in which Rāmānuja states that consciousness is more real than non-consciousness, he says that "the real has the nature of indestructibility (*vināśasvabhāvo hy asattvam avināśasvabhāvaś ca sattvam*)" (Sadhale 2000a, 104, line 33). If consciousness is indestructible, then it is not clear that it can be harmed, and hence unclear how it can have direct moral standing. (This is not to say that it cannot be. But some

Finally, EA faces an objection that IA does not. Premise Three of IA states, "If the distinction between living beings and *Brahman* is unreal, and if *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing, then all living beings are intrinsically valuable and have direct moral standing." The premise seems plausible in part because if two items are identical, it is hard to see how one could have qualities that the other lacks. If the capital of Canada is Ottawa, then if Ottawa has over one million people, so does the capital of Canada. Likewise, if a living being is identical with *Brahman*, then if *Brahman* has intrinsic value and direct moral standing, then so does the living being.

Premise Three of EA, in contrast, states, "If each living being is a manifestation of *Brahman*, and if *Brahman* is intrinsically valuable and has direct moral standing, then all living beings are intrinsically valuable and have direct moral standing." There is no corresponding platitude, however, to the effect that if one item is a manifestation of another, the former has all of the qualities that the latter possesses. Consider one of the analogies just mentioned. Assume that a human being is intrinsically valuable. The hair of a human being emanates from the human being. It might even be said to be of the same substance as a human being. From this it does not follow that the hair is also intrinsically valuable. Similarly, the fact that living beings emanate from *Brahman* does not obviously entail that they share in *Brahman's* intrinsic value.

Indeed, there is a precedent in Rāmānuja's work for denying that living beings possess the qualities of *Brahman*. *Brahman* is, among other things, infinite and eternal, unlike any of the entities he creates.[28] *Brahman* is often described as omniscient and perfectly blissful. Rocks, however, are incapable of knowledge or bliss, and even human beings are rarely perfectly knowledgeable or blissful. If a number of *Brahman's* qualities do not inhere in elements of his creation, despite these elements emanating from *Brahman*, then at the very least the proponent of EA must offer an argument for why the intrinsic value of *Brahman* does inhere in the elements of his creation, even though other qualities of *Brahman* do not. Yet proponents of EA do not make this case. And even if there are arguments for the claim that certain qualities inhere in the elements of creation, there must be additional arguments for the claim that the qualities inhere only in certain entities. Again, proponents of EA do not make this case.

6. AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE *ĀTMAN*, IDENTITY, AND EMANATION ARGUMENTS

Arguments for an Indian environmental ethic that rely on some kind of identity between nature and God are unconvincing. It isn't clear, however, that this kind of argument is needed. R. W. Perrett argues that certain Indian texts and traditions

---

case must be made that this is so.) Additionally, it seems to be the conscious entity that resides in the material body – and not the biological entity per se – that is truly real, and hence not the material body that has greater value or moral standing.

[28] So long as 'eternal' is taken to mean always existent in both the past and present.

ascribe direct moral standing to all sentient beings in virtue of their sentience. He offers the following argument:

> It is possible to construct arguments for our direct duty to animals… Thus, consider first the assumption that was erroneously supposed to support the indirect duty view: that we each ought to self-interestedly pursue our own liberation as our primary goal. But why should we pursue *mokṣa* [liberation] at all? Because, says the Indian tradition, life is essentially characterized by suffering and unsatisfactoriness (*duḥkha*). It is the elimination of this suffering that is intrinsically valuable, indeed the ultimate value… But if we admit these claims then we must also come to ask ourselves what is so special about our own suffering. What properties do I possess that make my suffering morally significant without it also being the case that others' suffering is equally morally significant? Rationally we are drawn towards a universal perspective on our own suffering (Perrett 1993, 94).

My attainment of *mokṣa* is intrinsically valuable (at least in part) because my avoidance of suffering is intrinsically valuable. There is nothing about me that distinguishes me in a relevant way from other sentient beings. Therefore the avoidance of suffering is intrinsically valuable regardless of whose suffering it is.

A parallel argument concludes that pleasure or happiness is intrinsically valuable regardless of whose it is: My attainment of *mokṣa* is intrinsically valuable (at least in part) because my happiness is intrinsically valuable. There is nothing about me that distinguishes me in a relevant way from other sentient beings. Therefore happiness is intrinsically valuable regardless of whose it is. Hence we have direct duties to sentient beings. If we have direct duties to sentient beings, then sentient beings have direct moral standing, and presumably intrinsic value.[29]

There is still some space between the conclusion of Perrett's argument and the criteria for an environmental ethic. If Perrett is right, then we might conclude that all sentient beings have direct moral standing and intrinsic value. In order for a theory to count as an environmental ethic, however, it must ascribe intrinsic value and direct moral standing to non-sentient beings, like so-called lower animals, plants and so on.

In a number of Hindu texts, however, lower animals and plants are described as sentient as well.[30] *Manusmṛti* 1.49, for example, reads:

> Those [beings], enveloped by the *tamas* [one of three basic elements (*guṇas*) that constitute the material universe, characterized by darkness and ignorance] with many

[29] If this argument succeeds, then it might be inferred from each of the classical Indian *darśanas* – including, with some modifications, Nyāya, which denies that liberation is pleasurable.

[30] In what follows, I focus on the *Manusmṛti* in particular, although the views of the *Manusmṛti* – along with its authority – are accepted quite broadly. Perrett's argument above, for example, seems to come from Śaṇkara's *Gītābhāṣya* 6.32, which explains that the yogin knows, by analogy with himself, that pleasure is desirable and pain undesirable, no matter whose it is.

> forms caused by [past] actions, are internally conscious, and fully endowed with [the capacity for] pleasure and pain.[31]

If Perrett's argument is convincing, and if all living beings are sentient, then all living beings have direct moral standing and intrinsic value. If all living beings have direct moral standing and intrinsic value, then at least the first two criteria for an environmental ethic are satisfied.[32] The non-vacuity requirement is also satisfied, since some things are non-sentient, and hence devoid of direct moral standing and intrinsic value. Hence, one might conclude, certain Indian texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

There is little doubt that the Indian Law Books are concerned with the matter of causing pain to plants and animals. One passage from the *Manusmṛti* (8.286) advises rulers to punish in proportion to the pain caused: "If a person strikes people or animals to pain [them], just as great as the pain [caused], just that great should the punishment be."[33] This suggests that the quantity of pain is the measure of the wrongness of an action, and that the capacity for pleasure and pain makes the well-being of sentient beings relevant.

In another important passage (5.49), Manu says, "having seen the origin of meat and the binding and slaughter of embodied beings (*dehinām*), [a person] turns away from eating all meat."[34] This might be taken to imply that to the careful observer, the value of animals is self-evident. One thing that is evident to anyone is that animals experience pain and pleasure. All of this implies that sentient beings have direct moral standing and intrinsic value because they are capable of experiencing pleasure and pain.

One obvious objection to this kind of view is that many animals, and all plants, are not in fact sentient. One way to avoid this problem is to argue that certain Indian texts and traditions attribute intrinsic value and direct moral standing to animals and plants because they are alive. Each of the passages cited above might be interpreted in accord with this claim, simply because pain is typically a consequence of harm, and harm often has the consequence of shortening life. The more severe the pain is, the more likely it is that the pain will have a negative consequence on the being's

---

[31] *tamasā bahurūpeṇa veṣṭitāḥ karmahetunā* / *antaḥsaṃjñā bhavanty ete sukhaduḥkhasamanvitāḥ* // (Jhā 1999a, 29).

[32] One small oddity arises here. In order for a theory to count as an environmental ethic, it must ascribe intrinsic value and direct moral standing to non-sentient entities. If the *Manusmṛti* ascribes intrinsic value and direct moral standing to entities in virtue of their sentience, however, then it technically fails to ascribe intrinsic value and direct moral standing to non-sentient entities, even though it attributes sentience to plants and so-called lower animals. In order to avoid this counter-intuitive consequence, the criteria for an environmental ethic ought to be interpreted to read: in order for a theory to count as an environmental ethic, it must ascribe intrinsic value and direct moral standing to entities normally considered non-sentient, such as plants and lower animals.

[33] *manuṣyāṇāṃ paśūnāṃ ca duḥkhāya prahṛte sati* / *yathā yathā mahadduḥkhaṃ daṇḍaṃ kuryāt tathā tathā* // (Jha 1999b, 196).

[34] *samutpattiṃ ca māṃsasya vādhabandhau ca dehinām* / *prasamīkṣya nivarteta sarvamāṃsasya bhakṣaṇāt* // (Jhā 1999a, 441).

longevity. This is why, one might argue, the severity of the punishment tends to correspond with the severity of the pain.

The passage that states "having carefully considered the origin of meat and the tying up and slaughter of living beings [that is the source of meat], a person turns away from the eating of all meat," implies that the reason meat-eating is wrong is self-evident. Even more self-evident than the animal's pain as a result of slaughter, however, is the animal's death.

Elsewhere, Manu warns against hindering a calf from suckling (4.59). To merely hinder a calf's suckling might be painful to the calf and the mother, by producing hunger pangs and anxiety, but to preclude it altogether is deadly. Hence these passages support the view that the criterion of being alive is the basis of the intrinsic value and direct moral standing of plants and animals as well.

The criterion of being alive makes better sense, however, of those passages that describe punishments for killing. If all that is wrong with killing is that it tends to produce pain, killing an animal should be no worse than actions that cause equivalent pain. Yet the Law Books typically single out killing as a special kind of trespass.

The criterion of being alive also has the advantage of explaining why the painless killing of animals and plants is wrong – even if their lives, if spared, will not be more pleasurable than painful. Medhātithi, the most important commentator on the *Manusmṛti*, says clearly that plant life, in particular, is almost exclusively painful.

> Due to an abundance of *tamas*, tied to infidelity to the Vedas, pain, and so on, [plants] are experiencing the fruits of their *adharmic* [acts] for a very long time – [as if] eternally. And from the presence of *sattva* [another of the three *guṇas*, typically characterized in terms of lightness and knowledge] in them, under certain conditions, [plants] also enjoy a little pleasure as well (1.49).[35]

An animal birth, like a plant birth, is also on balance more painful than pleasurable. What could be the fault, then, in killing a sleeping animal, if only pain has disvalue?[36] If being alive is intrinsically valuable, however, then killing an animal is wrong whether it is asleep or awake.

So while the *Manusmṛti* is concerned with pleasure and pain, it is also concerned with killing. The concern with pleasure and pain is better explained by the concern with killing than the concern with killing is explained by the concern with pleasure and pain. Additionally, the criterion of being alive avoids two objections to the criterion of sentience. First, it is simply false that all plants and animals are sentient. It is true, however, that all plants and animals are alive (at least for as long as we want to attribute intrinsic value and direct moral standing to them). Second, the criterion of

[35] *atas tamobahulyān nityaṃ nirvedaduḥkhādiyuktā adharmaphalam anubhavantaḥ suciram āsate / sattvasyāpi tatra bhāvāt kasyāṃcid avasthāyāṃ sukhaleśam api bhuñjate* / (Jhā 1999a, 30, lines 2-3).

[36] I don't mean to imply here that killing an entity allows it to avoid the suffering it would have experienced. A standard view is that this suffering is moral desert, and hence that the entity will experience it in the next life.

being alive explains the emphasis on the blameworthiness of killing, including killing that does not increase overall pain.

By itself, however, the criterion of being alive is problematic as well. One of the more obvious problems is that the reduction of the value and disvalue of pleasure and pain to the value and disvalue of life and death seems implausible. Suppose, for example, that a person has a chronic disease that causes a great deal of pain. Even if there's nothing we can do to prolong her life, we should minimize her pain. If all that matters is the avoidance of death, however, then attempts to minimize her pain should be abandoned with the attempts to prolong her life. Indeed, we should at no point bother to minimize her pain unless there is reason to think it will prolong her life.

Another way to put this point is to say that there's reason to think that pleasure and pain have value and disvalue in themselves, regardless of their contribution to the length of a person's life. This is Perrett's point in the quotation above. According to certain Indian texts and traditions, liberation is valuable in part because it is pleasurable and devoid of pain. Hence pleasure and the avoidance of pain are intrinsically valuable. The criterion of being alive, by itself, does not account for this.

So rather than choosing between the two criteria, both might be adopted. Certain Indian texts and traditions ascribe intrinsic value and direct moral standing to plants and animals both because they are sentient, and because they are alive. Hence certain Indian texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

There are still at least two problems with the combined account. The first is that since lower animals and plants are not in fact sentient, the account is implausible insofar as it attributes intrinsic value and direct moral standing to lower animals and plants because they are sentient. So on the combined account, lower animals and plants have intrinsic value and direct moral standing solely because they are alive. If this is right, then lower animals and plants can be treated in whatever way one chooses, so long as their lives are not shortened. If it turns out that fish are non-sentient, for example, then there is no reason to leave salmon runs open, rather than round them up in pools, where they are fed and allowed to mate. The combined account offers no plausible explanation for the wrongness of such actions.

Second, the combined account cannot explain the intuition that sentient beings can be harmed even if neither their longevity nor their overall happiness is diminished. Imagine that lead poisoning will not compromise a child's longevity or overall happiness. The child will have a mild learning disability, but will be no less happy overall. The combined account has no resource for explaining why the diminution in the child's mental capacities is of disvalue. Yet it is.

A final alternative – and the one I favor – is to interpret these texts as attributing intrinsic value and direct moral standing to certain beings in virtue of their having a good.[37] Human beings, along with animals and plants, can either flourish or languish.

[37] The word 'good' here is shorthand for 'good of its own'. Taylor explains that the difference between living beings and artifacts is that the artifacts' goods "ultimately refer to the goals their human producers had in mind when they made [them]." (They might also simply refer to the goals that the artifacts' users ascribe to them.) The goods of living beings, in contrast, are "inherent to them," that is, they are independent of the intentions of other entities (Taylor 1986, 124).

If something can flourish or languish, then it must have some optimum state. Movement towards the optimum state amounts to flourishing, movement away from the optimum state amounts to languishing. This optimum state is the entity's good.[38]

The distinction between flourishing and languishing covers both the criterion of sentience and the criterion of being alive, since any plausible characterization of the distinction between flourishing and languishing will refer to longevity, and any plausible characterization of flourishing and languishing in sentient beings will refer to pleasure and pain. So the criterion of having a good exhibits the benefits of the combined account.

The criterion of having a good is also no more controversial than the combined account. While it covers both the criterion of sentience and the criterion of being alive, it leaves open the possibility that an entity's good is more complex than this, without asserting that it certainly is.

At the same time, it seems certain that the good of human beings is not reducible to being alive, avoiding pain, and experiencing pleasure. It also seems certain that the Hindu traditions acknowledge this. There is little reason to think that the *Manusmṛti's* prescriptions of Vedic studentship, monogamous marriage, the performance of rituals, dutiful childrearing, retirement to the forest, and so on can be explained entirely in terms of the longevity and balance of pleasure over pain to which these practices lead (other than the assumption at the outset that the worldview is hedonistic). A more plausible interpretation is that these practices lead to a human life of flourishing broadly construed; in raising children, a person flourishes, but not just by increasing his or her longevity and long-term balance of pleasure over pain. If a human being's good is not reducible to being alive, avoiding pain, and experiencing pleasure, then perhaps the goods of non-human beings are not reducible either.

Another benefit of this criterion is that it leaves open the question of what, other than being alive, avoiding pain, and experiencing pleasure, constitutes a specific entity's good – if anything does. This standpoint is appropriate, given the ongoing debate among philosophers of science, environmental ethicists, ecologists, and others over how to determine an entity's good. It is also appropriate given the relative infancy of the field of Hindu environmental ethics, which has yet to consider these questions carefully.

Additionally, the final account is well-supported by the nearly pan-Indian cardinal virtue of *ahiṃsā*. The term is usually translated as 'non-violence' or 'non-harm'. The latter translation is often favored because of its breadth; the word 'non-violence' often suggests physical or explicit harm, whereas *ahiṃsā* refers to the avoidance of any harm whatever – even if that harm is neither painful, nor life-shortening. Theft, for example, constitutes a harm even if it is never discovered, and even if the stolen item would never have benefited its original owner. The same is true for harms of deception, coercion, and so on. If an entity can be harmed without causing it pain or

[38] This kind of argument is advanced by Taylor (1986), O'Neill (1992), Rolston (1994), Norton (1984), Lee (1996), and many others. The claim that certain living beings have a good is controversial, however. I deal with these issues in another paper in progress.

shortening its life, however, then its good is not exhausted by longevity, the avoidance of pain, and the experience of pleasure.

The criterion also avoids the objections mentioned above. Even harms that are neither painful nor life shortening have disvalue, simply in virtue of being harms that cause the being to languish rather than flourish in other ways. This is most obvious in the case of human beings.

Lastly, the criterion of having a good avoids the implication that all things are equally valuable. Anything that is not alive, and lacks a good, lacks intrinsic value and direct moral standing. Hence the account I outline avoids the vacuity objection. There might seem to be additional counter-intuitive consequences to this view, such as the equal intrinsic value and direct moral standing of all living beings (since all have a good). Nothing I have said here entails this, however. It might be, for example, that an entity has some amount of intrinsic value in virtue of having a good, but that the amount of intrinsic value nonetheless varies, as a result, for example, of varying capacities and potentials.[39]

If all living entities have a good, and if all entities that have a good have intrinsic value and direct moral standing, (and if the vacuity objection is avoided,) then certain Hindu texts and traditions – the *Manusmṛti* and many texts and traditions that share its views – do provide the basis for an environmental ethic.

7. CONCLUSION

Arguments that cite some kind of identity between nature and God in support of the conclusion that certain Hindu texts and traditions provide the basis for an environmental ethic are not convincing. Some of these texts and traditions do provide the basis for an environmental ethic, however. They ascribe intrinsic value and direct moral standing to all living beings, in virtue of their having a good.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Mark Migotti, Elizabeth Brake, Dennis McKerlie, Sam Borsman, John Taber, Richard Hayes, Kelly Becker, Stephen Harris, Laura Guererro, Ethan Mills, and three anonymous referees at *Comparative Philosophy* for suggestions that improved the paper. The paper also benefited from input from students in my Environmental Ethics and Hinduism and the Environment courses.

REFERENCES

PRIMARY SANSKRIT SOURCES

[39] Louis G. Lombardi levels this criticism against Taylor, and offers a response like the one I have just outlined (Lombardi 1983).

Bhagavadgītā in Sadhale, Shastri, G. S. (ed.) (2000a and 2000b).
Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad in Sadanand, V. (ed.) (1981).
Manusmṛti in Jhā, Ganganatha (ed.) (1999a and 1999b).
Medhātithi, *Manubhāṣya* in Jha, Ganganatha (ed.) (1999a).
Rāmānuja, *Gītābhāṣya* in Sadhale, Shastri G. S. (ed.) (2000a).
Śaṅkara, *Gītābhāṣya* in Sadhale, Shastri G. S. (ed.) (2000a).

EDITED VOLUMES OF SANSKRIT TEXTS

Jhā, Ganganatha (ed.) (1999a), Manusmṛti *with the* 'Manubhāṣya' *of Medhātithi* vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass).
---- (ed.) (1999b), Manusmṛti *with the* 'Manubhāṣya' *of Medhātithi* vol. 2 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass).
Sadanand, V. (ed.) (1981), Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad Bhāṣya (Chennai: All India Press).
Sadhale, Shastri G. S. (ed.) (2000a), *The* Bhagavad-Gītā *with Eleven Commentaries* vol. 1 (Delhi: Parimal Publications).
---- (ed.) (2000b), *The* Bhagavad-Gītā *with Eleven Commentaries* vol. 2 (Delhi: Parimal Publications).
---- (ed.) (2000c), *The* Bhagavad-Gītā *with Eleven Commentaries* vol. 3 (Delhi: Parimal Publications).

SECONDARY SOURCES

Callicott, J. Baird (1987), "Conceptual Resources for Environmental Ethics in Asian Traditions of Thought: A Propaedeutic", *Philosophy East and West* 37: 115-30.
Carman, John B. (1974), *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).
Chapple, Christopher. K. (1993), *Non-Violence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions* (Albany: SUNY Press).
Coward, Harold G. (1998), "The Ecological Implications of Karma Theory", in Lance. E. Nelson (ed.) *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*, ed. (Albany: SUNY Press), pp. 39-49.
Crawford, S. Cromwell (1982), *The Evolution of Hindu Ethical Ideals* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press).
Dasgupta Sherma, Rita (1998), "Sacred Immanence: Reflections of Ecofeminism in Hindu Tantra", in Lance. E. Nelson (ed.), *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India* (Albany: SUNY Press), pp. 89-132.
Deutsch, Eliot (1970), "Vedānta and Ecology", in *Indian Philosophical Annual* 7 (Madras: The Center for Advanced Study in Philosophy), pp. 79-88.
---- (1986), "A Metaphysical Grounding for Natural Reverence: East-West", *Environmental Ethics* 8: 293-9.
Dwivedi, O. P. (2000), "Dharmic Ecology", in C. K. Chapple and M. E. Tucker (eds.) *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 3-22.

Gupta, Lina (1993), *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (New York: Continuum Press).
Kinsley, David R. (1991), "Reflections on Ecological Themes in Hinduism", *Journal of Dharma* 16: 227-45.
Klostermaier, Klaus K. (1991), "*Bhakti, Ahimsa* and Ecology", *Journal of Dharma* 16: 246-254.
Lal, Basant K. (1986), "Hindu Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science", in T. Regan (ed.) *Animal Sacrifices: Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), pp. 199-212.
Lee, Keekok (1996), "Source and Locus of Intrinsic Value: A Reexamination", *Environmental Ethics* 18: 297-309.
Lipner, Julius (1986), *The Face of Truth* (Albany: SUNY Press).
Lombardi, Louis G. (1983), "Inherent Worth, Respect, and Rights", *Environmental Ethics* 5: 257-270.
Moore, G. E. (1903), *Principia Ethica*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Mumme, Patricia. Y. (1998), "Models and Images for a Vaisnava Environmental Theology: The Potential Contribution of Srivaisnavism", in Lance. E. Nelson (ed.) *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India* (Albany: SUNY Press), pp. 133-59.
Narayanan, Vasudha (1997), "'One Tree is Equal to Ten Sons': Hindu Responses to the Problems of Ecology, Population, and Consumption", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65: 291-332.
Nelson, Lance. E. (1998), "The Dualism of Nondualism: Advaita Vedānta and the Irrelevance of Nature", in L. E. Nelson (ed.) *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India* (Albany: SUNY Press), pp. 61-88.
---- (2000), "Reading the *Bhagavadgītā* from an Ecological Perspective", in Christopher. K. Chapple and Mary. E. Tucker (eds.) *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 127-64.
Norton, Bryan G. (1984), "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism", *Environmental Ethics* 6: 131-48.
O'Neill, John (1992), "The Varieties of Intrinsic Value", *Monist* 75: 119-137.
Perrett, Roy. W. (1993), "Moral Vegetarianism and the Indian Tradition", in N. Smart and S. Thakur (eds.), *Ethical and Political Dilemmas of Modern India* (St. Martin's Press), pp. 82-99.
Rambachan, Anantanand (1989), "The Value of the World as the Mystery of God in Advaita Vedanta", *Journal of Dharma* 14: 287-97.
Regan, Tom (1981), "The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic", *Environmental Ethics* 3: 19-34.
Rolston Holmes, III. (1987), "Can the East Help the West to Value Nature?", *Philosophy East and West* 37: 172-90.
---- (1994), "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value", in Robin Attfield and Andrew Belsey (eds.) *Philosophy and the Natural Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univerity Press), pp. 13-30.

Ryali, Rajagopal (1973), "Eastern-Mystical Perspectives on Environment", in David C. Steffenson, Walter J. Herrscher, and Robert S. Cook (eds.), *Ethics for Environment: Three Religious Strategies* (Green Bay, WI: UWGB Ecumentical Center), pp. 47-56.

Sharma, Arvind (1998), "Attitudes to Nature in the Early Upanisads", in L. E. Nelson (ed.), *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India* (Albany: SUNY Press), pp. 51-60.

Taylor, Paul W. (1986), *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press)

Thompson, Janna (1990), "A Refutation of Environmental Ethics", *Environmental Ethics* 12: 147-160.

Timmons, Mark (2007), *Disputed Moral Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).