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be precluded in the global, environmental context any more than it can in the domestic, social one. Violent coercion should certainly be a very last resort, only employed to the minimum extent necessary and with a full awareness of the serious drawbacks it inevitably contains from both a moral and practical point of view.

13. See Gare 1995, chapters 1 and 2 for a clear exposition of the varieties of Postmodernism.
15. The idea of such ‘hotspots’ is explained in E. O. Wilson, The Diversity of Life (1992), pp. 247–60.
17. This discussion of the possible benefits to ecologism of the spread of liberal ideas does, of course, run the risk of being regarded as another form of cultural imperialism. However, it is very difficult even to state this view without employing ideas central to the liberal tradition, such as respect for individuals’ values and beliefs, the right to autonomy, democratic debate and agreement based on discussion, not force. It also presupposes a reification of cultures which arguably is not sustainable.
18. See Richard Harris, ‘Approaches to conserving valuable wildlife in China’ (1996), p. 304 for an example of how a trained Chinese zoologist retained the traditional Chinese belief that ‘wolves are bad animals’.
20. This distinction between governance and government at the global level is taken from Low and Gleeson 1998, p. 185.
21. See, for example, William Niskanen, Bureaucracy and Representative Government (1971).
26. This is a claim characteristic of conservative and communitarian philosophers. The use of the claim made by the latter is discussed in Chapter 9.
28. See Dryzek 1997, chapters 3 and 6, for an excellent discussion of the problems.
30. Dryzek 1997, chapter 6 is, once again, eloquent on such points.

Ecologism and Contemporary Political Philosophy: Utilitarianism, Rawlsian Liberalism and Libertarianism

I n the previous chapter we considered some of the large-scale issues of political philosophy which involve a distinctive approach on the part of ecologism. However, a great many issues broached by contemporary political philosophy require a more closely focused discussion of the internal socio-political arrangements of human societies than we have so far given. In this chapter, therefore, we will look at some of the more specific issues, largely involving a focus on the domestic rather than the international arena, which have formed the subject of debate in political philosophy since the 1970s so as to indicate the distinctive views of ecologism in these areas.

In order to do this systematically and in a way which will be helpful to those familiar only with mainstream political philosophy, I will follow the sequence of topics in Kymlicka’s excellent recent survey of the subject.1 It is notable that in that book the environment receives only a couple of tangential mentions, which indicates from the outset how lamentably partial and inadequate recent political philosophy is from the point of view of ecologism, sophisticated though it is in other respects.

We need first to note the illuminating thread which runs through Kymlicka’s discussion, namely the claim that the political philosophies which compete with each other for our allegiance are all committed to the same ultimate principle, namely that, in Dworkin’s formulation, ‘each person matters equally’.2 On this view the influential philosophies of recent times – utilitarianism, Rawlsian and Dworkinian liberalism, libertarianism, Marxism, communitarianism and feminism – all attempt to explain what principles,
practices and institutional arrangements are needed to do justice to this ultimate value.

This is a convincing view of the fundamentally egalitarian purpose of all recent theorising, even of theories, such as libertarianism, which, on a superficial reading seem to downgrade many specific egalitarian concerns in favour of various forms of liberty. It is a view, therefore, with which we do not need to take issue. As we have seen, of course, what ecologism seizes on immediately is the purely anthropocentric view expressed in the above statement of the ultimate value, assuming, as everyone does, that only members of the species *Homo sapiens* are persons.

**Utilitarianism, Consequentialism and Ecologism**

What is the general character of ecologism as a moral theory? Is it like classical utilitarianism, concerned to promote certain overall states of affairs, such as the greatest happiness of the greatest number? Or is it merely in some sense consequentialist, concerned with the outcomes for the well-being of life-forms?

Ecologism is well advised to distance itself from classical utilitarianism, plunged as that is by well-known difficulties. Among these is the problem that utilitarianism is incapable of giving a satisfactory account of the particular commitments which people have to particular others – spouse, parents, creditors – which, as Kymlicka says, ‘form the focal point of our lives and give some identity to our existence’. This problem stems from the fact that utilitarianism views people as merely the means to achieving its ultimate aim, which is the creation of a state of affairs – the greatest happiness of the greatest number (of human beings). This has the effect of reducing all moral judgement to a single calculus in which individual human beings are receptacles of the desired property – happiness, pleasure or want-satisfaction. No particular projects or purposes of the kind which give individual lives happiness or meaning are given any particular weight. This, as Kymlicka argues, is to convert utilitarianism from a moral theory to something more akin to an aesthetic one. The overall state of affairs aimed for has lost contact with the well-being of individuals, which is, for a maximally individualised species such as human beings, the essence of morality.

Can ecologism escape similar charges? Can it give an account of the role of particular commitments in individual human lives? Or does it, like utilitarianism, regard moral agents merely as means to the fulfilling of some desired overall state of affairs, such as the maximum preservation of biodiversity?

It is clear that ecologism is not committed to a ‘flattening’ of the moral life in the manner of utilitarianism. It operates instead with a notion of what is owed to morally considerable entities in order to permit them to attain the well-being appropriate to their natures. In the case of human beings, supporters of ecologism have every reason to accept that personal commitments and the associated exercise of autonomy on the part of highly individuated beings are essential to their well-being. The aim to preserve biodiversity is the aim to respect similar considerations with respect to other morally considerable entities.

As noted in Chapter 4, the argument that species and other non-human biological entities are intrinsically valuable because they are wonderful does employ a concept which straddles the moral/aesthetic divide. However, this argument does not commit us to a project of maximising wonderfulness, which would land ecologism in the same predicament as utilitarianism. It rather gives us a reason for according moral considerability to entities which are not moral agents and so lack the usual basis for such considerability.

We have already emphasised that the property of moral considerability admits of degree, allowing discrimination and trade-offs to be made between the interests of beings with different amounts of it. Plainly, the particular commitments of specific human beings will often be of crucial importance for their interests and therefore such commitments have to be considered in making the trade-offs. However, ecologism will want to exercise the same caution with respect to human commitments which Kymlicka and others exercise with respect to human preferences in the course of their consideration of the ‘preference-satisfaction’ version of utilitarianism. The important point with respect to the latter is that only some preferences of human beings have legitimate moral weight. Notoriously, a human racist’s preferences for poorer treatment for members of other races should not be counted when we are seeking to satisfy preferences.

Similarly, human commitments to others are only legitimately countable from the point of view of ecologism if they do not essentially involve ignoring the claims to moral considerability of other life-forms. If human beings find themselves committed to forms of life and/or personal relationships which lead them in serious
ways to ignore such interests of other life-forms, then it is morally legitimate to require them to change their ways, albeit with help and support from their fellows. The end of the slave trade quite properly ended a whole host of commitments of many human beings, putting an end to some lucrative forms of life. So too will the ban on hunting and capture of other species, with equal moral justification. As Kymlicka expresses the point, ‘Part of what it means to show equal consideration for others is taking into account what rightfully belongs to them in deciding one’s own goals in life’.

This of course, raises the question of whether we can specify what rightfully belongs to non-humans in the course of determining how to treat them as possessing moral considerability – in other words, what is required by ecological justice. A general answer to this can be given for many such beings, given that they are usually not extensive environment modifiers, have evolved to occupy specific niches in the physical environment, do not have rich, changing cultures and so on. What they need overwhelmingly for their well-being, and thus what is rightfully theirs from the moral point of view, is enough habitat to be able to flourish and reproduce their kind in viable numbers. How much this is, and how strong a case they have, will depend on specific facts about the species in question. For this we need the expertise of field ecologists and others.

Thus, once again, ecologism is able to demonstrate the way in which considerations which arise in the case of moral interaction between human beings are simply more specific forms of more general considerations which apply between human beings and other species.

To return to the question with which this subsection began, it is clear that ecologism is consequentialist in the sense endorsed by Kymlicka. That is, ecologism espouses the ‘intuitions’ that

(1) the well-being of all life-forms matters
(2) moral rules must be tested for their consequences on the welfare of life-forms.

**Rawlsian Themes: Justice and Moral Considerability**

We have already to a certain degree discussed issues of justice from the point of view of ecologism. We now need to bring the ideas already introduced into direct contact with influential recent discussions of justice, of which Rawls’ are the most interesting.

Rawls’ theory of justice as fairness applies only to human beings. It attempts to determine which rights and liberties must be distributed to human beings in a social arrangement which is going to merit the appellation ‘just’. This means, on the basis of the egalitarian principle noted in the last section, that the society in question treats persons as counting equally, morally speaking.

Once again, ecologism requires that this issue be reformulated in line with its own ultimate value postulate. It requires that an answer be given to the question of what distribution of rights and liberties between human beings and between them and non-humans is needed in order to treat human persons as morally equal to each other and both humans and non-humans as being morally considerable. An answer to this question will provide a theory of justice which will govern both inter-human relations within human societies and the relations between those societies and the non-human realm within which those societies actually exist – a realm which theories such as Rawls’ simply ignore. We are back again with the topic of ecological justice introduced in Chapter 6.

Ecologism also endorses the Rawlsian claim that ‘justice is the first virtue of institutions’, so that injustice cannot be redeemed by appeal to other values. Rather, as Kymlicka expresses the point ‘the legitimate weight attached to these values is established by their location within the best theory of justice’. Since, for ecologism, human political arrangements have to answer to the moral claims of both the human and the non-human, the location of moral values within the ‘best theory of justice’ will be more complicated than it appears even in Rawls’ elaborate theory. But it is an implication of ecologism’s acceptance of the Rawlsian dictum just noted that a political system which is unjust, inadvertently or by calculation, towards the non-human cannot be redeemed by its furthance of other values for humans or non-humans.

The actual theory of justice which Rawls produces in answer to the question he asks intended to be, to use Dworkin’s formulation, ‘endowment insensitive and ambition sensitive’. In other words, it is supposed to permit human beings the opportunity to acquire goods only on the basis of the personal efforts to which their ambitions move them, while excluding their acquisition of goods on the basis of features of their situation which are morally arbitrary. For Rawls, these morally arbitrary features encompass social position, family background and genetically determined features such as race, sex and talents and aptitudes. People are not treated
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Thus, they may only properly acquire holdings of goods on the basis of such a morally arbitrary feature as their genetic endowment of talents if they accept that they will be required, on the basis of what is needed to secure justice, to participate in a redistributive scheme intended to compensate those who have not been as well endowed as they are. Any other arrangement will distribute life-chances in a manner which does not respect human beings’ equality of moral status. The differential rewards to which the more talented may justly aspire must, in turn, only be allocated on the basis of the actual mobilisation of their talents as a result of their personal ambition and preparedness to exercise effort to develop those talents. In other words, they must be open to what Rawls calls ‘fair equality of opportunity’.

We may not, then, discriminate morally between human beings on the basis of a ‘natural aristocracy’ of birth. Can this thought be turned by ecologists in a direction of a theory of justice which encompasses non-human creatures? There are various problems with this. First, social justice applies to human societies, conceived of as being, in Rawls’ formulation, ‘cooperative ventures for mutual advantage’. Non-humans do not and cannot form part of such venture. Some of them may be brought into the venture, but not as a result of their freely choosing to co-operate. Thus the Rawlsian formulation of the issue of justice – to find principles of cooperation within such a venture which pay due respect to the equal moral standing of all the participants – cannot be used by ecologists to encompass the non-human.

It might be thought that the argument for compensation based on the moral arbitrariness of genetic endowment should be extended to non-human non-persons. It is, after all, a matter of genetic luck that human beings have been endowed with the capacities for personhood, whereas other creatures have not. Thus, surely on the basis of Rawlsian reasoning we should say that any advantage accruing to human beings from this fact should be viewed as undeserved and subject to the provision of compensation to those disadvantaged in this respect, namely other life-forms devoid of personhood?

However, this does not work as an argument. It makes sense to suppose, of given human beings, that they might have been born with greater or lesser or different talents from the ones they actually have, and therefore to conclude that the ones they actually have are a matter of genetic lottery. But to suppose that a parrot might have been born as a person is to suppose that it might have been born as a member of a different species. It is not, however, coherent to suppose that something might have been born a member of a different species from the one in which it was actually born, for what could that ‘something’ possibly be?

For this reason, too, the Rawlsian device of the original position could not be adapted by assigning proxies to represent non-humans devoid of personhood in the debate over basic principles of justice. That imaginary debate is conducted behind a veil of ignorance. But, for the reason just given, the device of the veil cannot coherently involve imagining the participants as being ignorant of the species of which they are members.

What these points suggest, then, is that a theory of justice such as Rawls’ is specifically tailored to the issues of how matters of joint activity are to be conducted among persons (who happen, on this planet, to be confined to one species). Taken as such, there is no reason why ecologists should not endorse the basic ideas of the theory, which do seem to pay proper regard to what is needed to give appropriate recognition to the moral considerability of persons. Their capacity for autonomy is given due scope while preserving fairness of treatment between persons who are subject to morally arbitrary differences in initial life-chances.

Non-human beings, however, also have endowments and a life to lead in which their opportunities for flourishing merit moral consideration. Moral agents do not have to be concerned to devise principles which are ambition-sensitive to govern their relations with such creatures, for non-humans do not have ambitions. The endowments of non-humans, however, are a matter of legitimate concern, in two ways. First, the endowments of capacities specific to each species establish its conditions of flourishing, and the adequate recognition of the moral considerability of such species has to attend to those conditions and their maintenance. Secondly, the fact that non-humans, on this planet at any rate, are not persons means that they possess no capacities for articulating and defending their own moral considerability. This is a matter of their lacking an endowment. It is not arbitrary that this is so, as we have just noted, for it is partially definitive of their specieshood. But it does put them at a severe disadvantage in the matter of their interactions with persons.

Utilitarianism, Rawls and Libertarianism

...
There is, therefore, an issue of justice between species which are persons and species which are not which is a more generalised version of the issue of social justice between members of species which are persons and form societies. In fact, there is a series of issues here, of which Rawls (and most traditional political philosophy) has selected only one. For, as we noted in Chapter 5, there are issues of justice between persons who are members of different societies and between persons living at different times. There is also the issue of justice between members of different species who are persons. This is not, of course, a live issue at the moment, but it raises complications concerning the balance to be struck between persons with different kinds of needs arising from their different species characteristics, such as their modes of feeding and reproducing. There are also issues, discussed by Benton, concerning moral connections between human persons and those other species which we have forced to join our societies and play key social and economic roles within them – creatures in our societies but not of them.

What is characteristic of the ecological approach to these issues is the basic concern to discover the conditions of flourishing of each such species and to derive the principles governing the due recognition of such species’ moral considerability from those conditions. As we have seen in Chapter 5, the principles of social justice, which concern the distribution of resources (or resource-equivalents) among human beings so as to permit basic needs for all of them to be met, have priority over principles governing the distribution of resources between humans and non-humans so as to meet basic needs of the latter. However, it will be recalled from that discussion that what is needed to enable non-humans to meet basic needs can trump considerations based on what human beings seek to have to meet their non-basic (instrumental) needs.

Where basic needs clash in this way, however, the requirements of ecological justice put limits on the way in which human basic needs are to be met. The following constraints operate:

(1) when social justice requires the mobilisation of natural resources to meet human basic needs, human beings must seek ways of doing this which allow non-humans as far as possible to retain the conditions necessary to meet their own basic needs – that is, the moral permission to intervene in nature to meet human needs is not a licence to disregard recklessly the moral considerability of the non-human;

(2) if such basic human needs can be met either by mobilising natural resources, or by redistributing among human beings, then the latter should be chosen in those circumstances where the former destroys the conditions necessary for non-humans to meet their basic needs;

(3) human beings must seek to arrive at some conception of ‘enough’ to define the degree of material well-being and consumption which is acceptable for all human beings, so that the resources needed by non-human nature are not eroded by an open-ended increase in the level of material consumption counted as acceptable – this permits such increases only where human ingenuity can provide them without such erosion;

(4) even when the requirements set out in (3) have been met, human beings have the responsibility to limit their numbers so that they do not get into the position of having no alternative, in order to meet the demands of social justice, but to destroy the conditions necessary to the existence and flourishing of non-human creatures.

The third of these conditions reinforces the point that some human ambitions are to be traded off against what is necessary to enable the non-human to meet their basic needs. Some human beings will thus have to forego certain possibilities of self-development. As long as they possess that which is necessary for self-determination they will be treated in accordance with the demands of social justice, and will also be meeting the requirements of ecological justice.

Conditions (1)–(4) above thus seek to put close limits upon what the powerful demands of social justice among the most morally considerable life-forms may be allowed to justify. Human beings have morally justified calls upon natural resources. Ecologism, while fully recognising that, reminds us forcibly that we are not alone in having such morally justifiable claims, and that we cannot justify the morally simplistic view that human needs trump all other considerations. The requirements of ecological justice are also powerful.

Fortunately, some of the requirements essential to human self-determination are institutional rather than primarily material, such as the creation and maintenance of democratic systems, the possession of certain freedoms and so on. The securing of these will usually involve a minimal clash of interest between humans and non-humans.

A clear implication, however, of the approach just outlined to
questions of social and ecological justice is that human flourishing is centrally a matter of securing that which is necessary for self-determination, rather than an open-ended commitment to securing human ambitions, or self-development. The important point to emphasise here is that human talents are invariably multipurpose. If an ambition which involves the use of my talent is thwarted for morally defensible reasons (I might have made a great success of slave-trading, say) then it is likely that some other outlet for that talent may be found which circumvents the moral objection. However, human flexibility is a limited commodity, more readily found in the young. Where old dogs cannot easily be taught new tricks, a case for compensation for the foregoing of a talent or skill is prima facie established, especially where matters of livelihood are concerned.

Libertarian Themes: Property and Self-ownership

The issue between Rawlsian liberals and libertarians revolves around two issues. The first is whether persons should, morally speaking, be regarded as self-owners. This concept implies that a wrong is done to them when the goods they have acquired on the basis of the capacities of which they alone are the rightful owners are removed from them and redistributed elsewhere, in the name of justice or some other moral value. The second is whether human beings should be prepared to regard property rights as absolute, so that persons’ ownership rights may not be properly overridden in the name of some more fundamental moral good.

Nozick’s version of libertarianism derives these claims from an interpretation of the Kantian version of the ‘equal moral standing of persons’ postulate we have already encountered. On this view, to treat human beings as ends in themselves requires regarding them as self-owners, and the property they acquire on the basis of the capacities of which they are the self-owners as absolutely owned by them.

The first of these is intended to flesh out the idea of what is involved in autonomy or self-rule. It is supposed to preclude the Rawlsian idea that we may view the capacities with which a person is endowed as part of that person’s external circumstances, to be interfered with if necessary to pursue an overarching moral aim. Nozick is happy to accept that the capacities in question are bestowed arbitrarily, morally speaking, but denies that this makes them conceptually detachable from the person whose capacities they are. Respecting persons as persons means conceiving them as specifiable, at least in part, in terms of those capacities.

The second claim, that property rights are absolute, is also viewed as what is necessary to maintain the view that persons are ends in themselves. To take away a person’s property in the name of an overriding moral aim is to treat that person as a means alone. This is of course, a principle which would block redistribution of property by the state in the name of social justice.

Is there a distinctive view taken by ecologism on the issues of self-ownership and the nature of property rights? To take the former first, the following argument put forward by Kymlicka against this concept is one which ecologism would find easy to accept. Self-ownership is only a formal notion with no direct implications concerning how the world should be divided up between people. From the fact that I am the only rightful owner of my capacities nothing follows about whether the world should be held in private ownership, communal ownership or any other form. To determine the latter we have to look at other considerations, among which the most important one is to ensure that human beings each have a fair chance to achieve substantive self-determination by having sufficient control over resources to enable them to implement their projects. Hence, property rights cannot be regarded as absolute if this implies the possibility that some human beings will not have access to the resources they need to implement their projects.

This brings us to the difficult area of initial acquisition of property. Kymlicka argues that the key to the moral legitimacy of initial acquisition of property is that such acquisition should not ‘deny other people’s claim to equal consideration’ which is a version of the Lockean proviso that ‘as much as and as good be left for others’. He argues that the way that Locke and Nozick have got round this restriction, by allowing people to acquire access to material goods via wage labour, does not do the job required, because the point of having access to resources to acquire as property is to be able to exercise one’s own autonomy, and this autonomy is diminished or lost when a person can gain resources only by submitting to the will of another in wage labour.

Thus, the question we should address when trying to decide the morally correct form of property rights to establish is not ‘which property rights best protect self-ownership?’, but ‘which property
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rights best protect self-determination? A fair distribution of property is needed for the granting of substantive self-determination to all persons, and this may well involve redistribution from the haves to the have-nots. As Kymlicka says, ‘Liberal redistribution does not sacrifice self-determination for some other goal. Rather it aims at a fairer distribution of the means required for self-determination’.17

This kind of claim has been used to justify an argument for a universal basic income, given to people as a right of citizenship, and intended (on most versions) to cover subsistence needs. Such a solid economic foundation to the lives of human individuals is then supposed to heighten their autonomy by giving them the possibility of choosing to live on that income rather than subjecting themselves, in wage labour, to the will of others. From the point of view of ecologism, this might also have the advantage of taking some of the heat out of the forces producing rapid economic growth, among which recently heightened feelings of economic insecurity have been important. Given the point so forcefully pressed by such environmental philosophers as Leopold and Norton,18 that the speed of economic growth is one of the most important factors threatening to overwhelm the ability of ecosystems to adapt to the human onslaught, anything which can slow development to a more ecologically sustainable rate will be welcome to ecologism.19

However, the question of whether or not a basic income scheme would heighten human autonomy, and thus one of the key elements in human flourishing, and whether it would slow down growth and thus permit ecosystems time to develop responses to human-wrought changes, are both empirical matters. Such a scheme might have no significant impact on these factors. Hence, ecologism is certainly right to give a favourable consideration to such proposals, as many Green Parties have. But since the actual impact of such schemes is a matter of speculation it is unwise for ecologism to make the idea into a cornerstone of its theorising.

To do justice to the moral considerability of the non-human, the question about when initial acquisition is morally acceptable should be framed to take account of the moral claims of other creatures to consideration. It is in this fundamental area of initial acquisition that issues of environmental justice and issues of ecological justice come together. Human beings, on this view, are morally permitted to acquire property, subject to the requirements of distributive, and environmental, justice, as long as enough and as good is left for other creatures to flourish, that is, subject to the requirements of ecological justice. However, as we have noted earlier, different species differ in terms of the degree of their moral considerability. In the case of species whose members are devoid of individuality, human appropriation which leaves the species in conditions of flourishing in viable numbers somewhere will be sufficient. But animals such as the great apes which exhibit high degrees of individuality and approach the condition of personhood need to be considered much more as individuals.

This further implies that, just as redistribution from haves to have-nots is justified within human societies in order to satisfy the requirement to treat all human beings as ends in themselves and as capable of self-determination, so such redistribution from haves to have-nots, when it is the humans who are the haves, and the non-human which are the have-nots, is justified to treat the non-humans as morally considerable, and as having their own conditions for flourishing. Thus, ecologism justifies the redistribution of resources from humans to non-humans so as to achieve a fairer distribution of the means required for flourishing (which involves self-determination in the human case and habitat-related development in the non-human case).

This is not unfair to humans provided that they retain resources to achieve what Kymlicka calls 'effective control over one's life', to cite the formula which he employs to establish that those humans who give up property to other humans are not being treated unfairly.20 This will require fairness of distribution of property between human beings, however, or else it may turn out that redistribution from the human to the non-human would remove from some humans the resources needed to lead a decent life with reasonable amounts of substantive autonomy. That is, since ecologism is committed to fairness in the distribution of resources between humans and non-humans, and to substantive self-determination for human beings (as a species-specific requirement for flourishing) it is also committed to redistribution between human beings.

It is, of course, possible that even when resources are fairly shared between human beings resources cannot be redistributed in favour of non-humans without taking some human beings below the acceptable level for substantive self-determination. Human interests will come first, in such circumstances, but as we have already noted in point (4) above, human beings are required to ensure that their population increase does not go so far as to create such situations unnecessarily.
Of course, when it is non-humans whose increase in population creates a shortage of the necessary resources for other creatures it starts to become possible for humans to justify measures to reduce their numbers. Non-humans are not moral agents and so cannot be expected to act in accordance with considerations of fairness. The issue of when a non-human species is no longer eligible to be given consideration because it is itself usurping resources needed for other creatures, including humans, is a difficult matter. As we noted above, however, human beings are not required to intervene to police relations between creatures which are not moral agents, except when avoidable extinctions are in prospect. When the conflict is between humans and non-humans the interest of humans plainly will carry most weight, but the interests of the non-human are to be counted too. Here we need the impartial human guardianship body, mooted in the last two chapters, to ensure that the tendency of humans to act unfairly with respect to other species is held in check.

Does ecologism, in putting forward such arguments, attack human dignity? Kymlicka argues that redistribution between human beings in order to achieve a fairer share of means for self-determination does not attack the dignity of the better-off who are made to cough up. It would be such an attack, he argues, if it could independently be shown to be morally wrong to redistribute. Since, however, such redistribution can be shown to be morally required, engaging in it cannot be an attack on the dignity of the better-off – treating them as if they were slaves, to use Nozick’s formulation. This argument is also available to ecologism – since it may be morally required to redistribute resources from human beings to the non-human to permit the flourishing of the latter, it cannot be an affront to human dignity to do so.

Self-ownership was designed as a concept to counter the idea that human beings have the right to enslave each other. As we have seen, and as Kymlicka shows well, it is inadequate for that purpose. For even when the concept is accepted by all human beings, this in itself is not enough to prevent other human beings from dominating you via their control of the resources which you need to live a reasonable human life, and this domination can come very close to slavery. However, although human beings may not rightfully enslave each other, it appears to be a proper question to ask whether human beings may enslave non-human creatures.

Slavery of humans by humans is blocked by the moral require-
forms may be properly sacrificed, or even exterminated, in order to preserve the conditions of flourishing of life-forms with greater degrees of moral considerability.

Notes
4. We have already touched on a version of this issue in discussing in Chapter 5 the claim of Lynch and Wells that human beings as such are in a special relationship with other human beings.
8. In what follows the complications created by the point made at the start of Chapter 5, that personhood admits of degrees, are ignored.
12. Rawls 1972, p. 73.
18. See Bryan Norton, Toward Unity among Environmentalists (1991) on this important theme in which he echoes the ideas of Aldo Leopold on the need to adapt human life to the time-scale of biological processes.
19. P. Van Parijs (in Van Parijs ed.), Arguing for Basic Income (1992), p. 27) suggests that the popularity of basic income schemes among Green Parties is to do with the fact that such parties contain disproportionally large numbers of people with a preference structure which privileges leisure over material consumption. This may well be so, but this claim ignores the question of why that preference structure might be deemed more reasonable, from the point of view of environmental theory.

The volume edited by Van Parijs admirably demonstrates the variety of arguments which may be marshalled to support the idea of a basic income. There is not scope in this book to explore these in detail. But one point it may be pertinent to make here is that the idea of an 'income' is not one whose usefulness is restricted to the human case.
Taking an income as 'a stream of resources which permit the maintenance of life-processes', every living thing needs an income. If there is a case to be made for a basic income for human beings there is equally a case to be made for a basic income for non-humans.

Whereas in the human case this requires that societies organise their economic and distributive processes in certain specific ways, in the case of the non-human it is a matter of human beings engaging in certain kinds of forbearance, so as to permit non-humans access to their own income streams. Certain other themes central to the discussion of basic income for human beings also drop out of consideration when we turn to the non-human, such as the issues of laziness, fecklessness and conspicuous consumption.

20. Kymlicka 1990, p. 120.

Ecologism and Contemporary Political Philosophy: Marxism, Communitarianism and Feminism

The first issue to which a discussion of Marxism directs our attention is that of the 'circumstances of justice'. This is the issue of when it becomes a relevant matter to determine rules whereby benefits and burdens are to be distributed within human societies. As Kymlicka points out, the traditional view of this matter is that we need rules of justice only because human beings have conflicting goals, and we are faced with a situation of limited material resources and thus have to determine how it is decided what is done with these resources -- who is to benefit from them and how? The implication is that if we could all agree on goals which we jointly sought to achieve, and if we could attain a situation of super-abundance, so that resource issues did not have to be addressed, then issues of justice would not arise.

Marxists traditionally did believe that these circumstances of justice could be eliminated. Most now realise that this is not possible, and thus some hard thinking about rules of justice is required. What does ecologism maintain on this matter?

As we noted in Chapter 5, Barry has demonstrated that issues of justice arise even outside the circumstances of justice, so that Marxists, along with Hume and Rawls, are incorrect in supposing that the circumstances are a necessary condition of the question of justice arising. It may still be argued that the circumstances are a sufficient condition for such issues to arise. As far as ecologism is concerned, it clearly has no difficulty in accepting the claim that