

The Wild Ember Within

A Study of the Hunting Ethos in Norway and the U.S.A.

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Abstract

The thesis starts from the supposition that hunting has become a morally contested practice in the Western world. It identifies a challenge to the moral legitimacy of hunting in the perspectives of animal rights theorists, and takes the hunter's response to this challenge as its subject. The thesis oscillates between cultural analysis and moral philosophy in an investigation of the arguments given by Norwegian and American hunters in justification of their sport. A pluralist-pragmatic framework for studying ethical issues is presented, and its application to animal studies suggested. From this framework, a minimal animal ethic is sketched which elaborates on two common sense beliefs about the moral status of animals. This position is then brought to bear on three central groups of arguments commonly given by hunters to justify the hunt; firstly, the hunt as a game played by the hunter and his quarry, justified by the game's character of being fair chase; secondly, the hunt as an expression of the human hunting instinct and as re-enactment of human origins; lastly, the hunt as a means of management of nature or as the nexus of an ecologically integrated lifestyle. Hunters' arguments are reviewed and related to relevant ethical principles.

1 Introducing Hunting

(...) this is no laughing matter but rather, however strangely, a deep and permanent yearning in the human condition.

– José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting*

Is it a contradiction in terms to speak of a *hunting ethos*? Taking recent efforts in animal ethics as our guide, it would apparently seem so. For instance, ecofeminist Marti Kheel contends that “the textual discourse on hunting ethics has functioned both to camouflage and to legitimate violence and biocide” and she rejects the notion that hunting “may provide a sound conceptual ‘resource’ for an environmental ethic, or any ethic at all” (1995: 87). But hunting, we are told, is a complex experience. When hunters go afield, they seek not only the kill, but a whole myriad of impressions that come together in a greater whole. As the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset has argued, “one does not hunt in order to kill, on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted” (1995: 105).

From the outset, we must acknowledge that hunting is a very composite activity; history and evolution, myth and ritual, laws and regulations, meat, camaraderie, fascination with weaponry, interaction with game and environment, and many other components, are all part of the hunting complex. Such complexity makes it quite impossible to deal with hunting in a way that satisfies everyone’s image of what hunting is. Luckily, the object of this study is neither the whole called “hunting”, nor any one of its parts; it is the *values* that permeate all of them. Values, however, do not exist in a social and cultural vacuum, and in this thesis I will be intent not to leave that aspect out of the equation. Today, by far the most interesting context for the values that attach to hunting is the ongoing debate and conflict over our use of animals, what sociologist Adrian Franklin calls “the increasingly contentious and conflictual nature of human-animal relations (...) in the twentieth century” (1999: 2). Most notably, the values of hunters are posed in opposition to a considerable

group of hunting skeptics and *antis*, who are most likely to consider hunting a “heinous crime”, as one hunter puts it (McIntyre 1988: 2).

Although other practices, like medical and cosmetic experiments, industrial meat production, and breeding for fur, have instigated the most agitated opposition, hunting has also been designated a legitimate target for those concerned with the wellbeing, and even the rights, of animals. Of this, hunters are becoming increasingly aware. Norwegian hunter Ole Kirkemo admits: “Hunting is not something that solely concerns hunters. In the future, the framework for hunting will increasingly be defined by the attitudes of society at large” (2004: 170). American hunter Chas S. Clifton elaborates: “When we look at hunting’s place in the modern world, we see that for a large number of people – whether they hunt or not – the old “domination” rationale is no longer adequate to guide our relations with wild animals” (1996: 148). Hunters apparently realize that traditional attitudes to animals have been challenged, and they feel compelled to justify their sport anew in the face of opposition and criticism.¹

It is against this background of hunting as a morally controversial social practice that I want to investigate *how American and Norwegian hunters argue in defense of their sport, why they phrase their arguments like they do, and lastly, how plausible these arguments are*. The thesis will concentrate on the hunting ethos of those two countries as it has been propounded in books, articles, and other written material since around 1970, which was when the modern hunting opposition gained real momentum. These countries have been chosen primarily for practical reasons, but also because their hunting ethos comes across as slightly different from that expressed by hunters in the rest of the Western

¹ In a study of American attitudes to hunting, 15% of the respondents disapprove of “traditional native hunting”, 62% disapprove of the hunting of mammals for “recreation and sport”, and 59% disapprove of the hunting of waterfowl for “recreation and sport”. Further, 14% disapprove of “hunting for meat”, while 34% disapprove of “hunting for recreation and meat”. Finally, 80% disapprove of “hunting for a trophy” (Kellert 1979: 106). In a study of Norwegian attitudes to hunting, 14% of the respondents are either “negative” or “very negative” to hunting, while 54% are either “positive” or “very positive” (Stokke 2004: 47). Significantly, this leaves a rather large group (29%) who respond that they are “neither positive nor negative” to hunting (Stokke 2004: 47). In Norway, though, the population is split in two about the hunting of large predators like wolf, bear, and lynx (Stokke 2004: 63). Another survey of Norwegian attitudes to hunting concludes with a somewhat clearer opposition to hunting; here, 32% respond that they are generally negative to hunting, while 65% are generally positive (survey by TNS Gallup, in Stokke 2004: 24). These surveys are not in any way unequivocal, but they show that there is a substantial opposition against hunting in both countries, though the majority of Norwegians are still positive to hunting. Further, the surveys demonstrate that the hunter’s motives are important in people’s assessment of hunting. Lastly, we should note that these statistics are dubious; many assumptions go into each question which can not be accounted for in a questionnaire. In this thesis, numbers will be secondary, so I will not be troubled much by these concerns. The important aspect of hunting opposition is that it exists, and that it is supported by more or less serious arguments. Numbers are included here simply to give some indication of the lay of the land.

world; firstly, Norwegian and American hunters seemingly lack the historical class divisions which are endemic to hunting in many other European countries. Closer scrutiny will surely reveal that class has been an aspect of hunting even in these countries, but the important point in this context is that Norwegian and American hunters so proudly assert the democratic history of hunting in their respective nations (see Punsvik and Storaas 1998 for a statement of the Norwegian experience, and Posewitz 1999 for the American). Besides the class aspect, it seems that the hunting ethos of these countries, even more unashamedly than in most other Western countries, asserts hunting as reinsertion of humans into nature.² Although there are some significant differences between the Norwegian and the American hunting traditions (and their moral arguments), this study, for several reasons, cannot deal much with those differences. The comparative aspect is brought forth where a distinction is considered necessary; for the most part, however, such a distinction is not seen as essential to the objective of the thesis, which is to consider the arguments hunters give to justify hunting. But before we turn to the hunter, we must look into the context of critique that presses forth his defense.

The Charge against Hunting

To kill an animal, although not the sole goal of the hunter's endeavor, is certainly its consummation. Hunters of Maryland, USA were surely disappointed then, when on the opening day of bow hunting season of 1989, not a single deer was brought to the ground. As hunters, they were accustomed to the occasional empty handed return, but on this day their lack of success was due to an unusual circumstance. Rather than scarcity of game, poor target practice, or plain inattention, their failure was caused by a new tactic of animal rights activists, known in England since the 1960s as hunt sabotage. Before hunters could take aim on their prey, protesters flushed from the bushes, disturbing both hunters and hunted.³

The tactic of hunt disruptions has been remarkably effective, and it remains but one of several approaches in the attempt to end sport hunting in the Western world. Rallies, web

² We can speculate that this is due to a notion, prevalent in both countries, of being "nature's nation" (see Witoszek 1998 and Skirbekk 1981 for the Norwegian case, and Nash 2001 and Schama 1995 for the American).

³ National director of the Fund for Animals, Heidi Prescott, tells the story of her first hunt disruption on: http://www.farinc.org/newsletter/v8_n3-4_94/hunt_sabs.html (Accessed: August 27, 2005).

pages, protests, ad campaigns, and legal initiatives are all part of the contemporary arsenal of hunting critics. Of course, it is no coincidence that such systematic and institutionalized opposition against hunting appears at this point in time. Hunt obstructions, together with a whole range of other developments, are symptoms of a more general change in our attitudes towards animals and the natural world. This change is by no means uniform and one-directional, and opposition to the general trend certainly exists, but speaking in broad terms, there is an increasing willingness to acknowledge animals as beings worthy of moral consideration. To borrow concepts from philosopher Mary Midgley, an “absolute dismissal” of the claims of animals is being replaced by a “relative dismissal” (1983: 13), and sometimes even by an assertion of the moral rights of animals. In this context, it is perhaps not puzzling that some people are upset by hunting, which on the assumption of animal rights appears to be a deliberately violent and apparently needless breach of the rights of wild animals.

We should note that the charge against hunting did not begin with animal rights. As historians of hunting have demonstrated, hunting has been a contested practice since the dawn of civilization, though for other reasons than today. In the archaic Mesopotamian, Sumerian, Hittite and Assyrian civilizations, hunting was the supreme privilege of the almighty king. In these societies the image of the king fused with the image of the herdsman, producing the peculiar “Shepard-King” (Hobusch 1980: 34). Through the hunt, the king was seen to protect society’s herds of domestic animals against predators as well as his people against enemies. Thus the hunt took on a likeness to war, which incidentally has been attached to it ever since (Hobusch 1980: 34, Cartmill, 1993: 31).⁴ The king sought, in “his hunting (...) to assert his absolute power over all beasts, people and countries” (Hobusch 1980: 36), and hunting became both a symbol and a tool of the supreme power of the sovereign.

In ancient Greece, hunting was seen first and foremost as a character building exercise and as a preparation for war; Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon were among those who praised the hunt for this reason (Cartmill 1993: 30-32). Hunting had by this time assumed a more democratic character⁵, and its execution was fairly unrestricted with

⁴ For an indication that this connotation still lives, see Cleveland Amory’s indictment of hunting in *Man Kind? Our Incredible War on Wildlife* (1974). Cleveland Amory was a writer and the founder of the American animal rights organization Fund for Animals.

⁵ Though not democratic in our sense; ancient Greek democracy excluded rather large groups (slaves, foreigners, women) who were not designated “citizens”.

regards to laws, seasons and ownership (Hobusch 1980: 66). However, with this democratization came the first critical voices. Though we do not know his position on hunting specifically, the philosopher Pythagoras held that “all living beings belong to the same kind”, and hence, he thought it wrong to eat animal flesh (Porphyry, in Preece 2002: 40). For the greater part of European history, however, the controversy over hunting had little to do with the moral status of animals and all to do with the privilege that regulated their execution.

Matt Cartmill argues that during the Middle Ages, European forests were transformed into “exclusive aristocratic playgrounds” in which: “The ruling class’s exclusive hunting privileges were tyrannically exercised and savagely enforced” (Cartmill 1993: 59, 61). This caused views on hunting to diverge in several directions; while the aristocracy considered hunting a symbol of their elevated class status, peasants saw hunting as rebellion against that same hierarchy (as well as a sorely needed source of food). Lastly, with the arrival of the Renaissance, more critical voices were heard. Erasmus, Montaigne, Shakespeare and others were all critical of the hunt, but no one more so than Thomas More in his *Utopia*, where he refers to hunting as “the lowest and vilest part of butchery” (quoted in Cartmill 1993: 77). These Renaissance critics were more like the *antis* of today, since their critique revolved around the suffering experienced by hunted animals.

Despite the infamous Cartesian interlude, this tendency continued during the Enlightenment, when “animal suffering came to be seen for the first time as an important evil” (Cartmill 1993: 100). Still, “reason” and “rationality” were the buzzwords of this period, and their main function was to elevate the human above the animal. Only the Romantic counter-movement, followed by the impact of Darwinism, could rock the boat of human uniqueness and privilege in relation to the natural world. During the 19th century, an organized opposition against animal abuse emerged, especially in urban centers (Tester 1991, Ritvo 1987). Alongside this development, however, emerged the “sport” or “recreation” rationale for hunting (Søilen 1995, Mighetto 1991), and it is the remnants of these two phenomena we can detect in today’s conflict over hunting.

The reasons for civilized humanity’s ambiguous relationship to hunting are many and complex. Firstly, hunting was instituted as a privilege at an early point in history, and as with all privileges, it benefited only a small group. Secondly, the likeness of hunting to war was an obvious source of controversy; although done to creatures whose moral worth was largely dismissed, hunting consisted in deliberately seeking out a living creature and

killing it with violent force. If the violence of the hunt was not always found repulsive in itself, than the hunter's desire to inflict such violence was sometimes seen as a sign of a dubious moral character. Finally, through history there runs a strand of thought in which the suffering of animals is seen to weigh heavier against human privilege. However, despite the friction that hunters have encountered since humanity left the hunter/gatherer mode of life⁶, hunting has never been seriously challenged as a social practice. That is, until recently.

With the publication of the book *Animal Liberation* (1975), the Australian philosopher Peter Singer launched an entire movement of pro-animal activism in the Western world. Some say that by the time Singer published his book, such a movement had already been underway for more than half a century. They cite the work of the Englishman Henry Salt, who professed animal rights and obligatory ethical vegetarianism as early as 1892 (see Tester 1991). Predecessors aside, the animal liberation movement born in the 1970s was unlike anything the world had ever seen, not least because of its considerable following.

Singer's main argument was that current practices unjustifiably discriminate against animals on the basis of species membership, and that they amount to "speciesism" – a form of discrimination analogous to racism and sexism. Singer builds his argument on the moral principle of equality, which states that to justify a difference in consideration there must be a difference in relevant ethical qualities. What makes our current use of animals unfair, according to Singer, is that there is no such ethically relevant difference between humans and animals. So, if we grant that we have moral duties to humans, then under the principle of equality we have the same duties to animals. Singer is not denying that humans and animals differ, only that they differ in ways that can justify speciesism. Following Jeremy Bentham's assertion – "The question is not, 'Can they reason?' nor, 'Can they talk?' but rather, 'Can they suffer?'" – Singer points out the capacity to have interests as the relevant moral trait. This trait is present in humans and other animals in much the same degree, and Singer argues that this has serious ramifications for our practices with animals. Experimentation on animals, meat-eating, and the use of animals in sport are all practices

⁶ I do not mean to say that opposition is *all* that hunting has met. For the most part, hunting has been an accepted, and to some, an essential, practice, though conflicts over hunting rights and privileges have been common throughout history. My point is simply to demonstrate that dissonance over hunting is not something entirely new.

we need to reconsider. Though Singer does not deal with hunting in any detail, it seems clear that it too must fall in the category of ethically dubious practices on his account.

And if Singer's utilitarian account does not suggest a clear-cut denunciation of hunting, then the approach offered by American philosopher Tom Regan definitely does. In *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983), he presents a deontological argument for the moral status of animals, where he singles out being a *subject of a life* as the ethically relevant criterion. With regards to the moral status of animals, Regan's theory is even more radical than Singer's, because the deontological approach does not allow the utilitarian calculus of accumulated satisfaction of interests. In Regan's view, the value of animals is more absolute and inviolable, and it attaches specifically to each individual animal. In fact, in his view, animals have *rights*, which stem from their categorical *inherent value*.

Singer and Regan intended explicitly for their arguments to have an appeal beyond the academic community of moral philosophy, and the emergence of a strong "animal rights movement" indicates that they have been successful. This is true most notably of the United States, where animal rights groups like *Fund for Animals*, *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)*, *Humane Society of the United States* and *The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals* gather the support of a substantial part of the population in a systematic and organized effort. It is true only to a lesser extent in Norway, where animal rights groups have rarely made the headlines except for the cases when non-native mink kept for fur have been released into the wild. In addition to this most radical segment of animal rights activists, however, it is likely that the mere presence of animal rights thought has had an impact on that part of the population (the majority), who do not support Singer and Regan's propositions without qualification. As an example, in a report about animal husbandry and welfare commissioned by the Norwegian parliament, Peter Singer and Tom Regan were the only contemporary philosophers whose views were mentioned, and the report cited as representative of current attitudes a Norwegian survey where 41% approved, and 35% disapproved, of the statement "animals should have the same moral rights as humans" (Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture 2002-2003: 18-20).

The work of Singer and Regan sparked not only an activist movement, but also a surge of interest from within the academic community. Utilitarian and deontological accounts were soon complemented by other approaches, from virtue theory, to contract theory, to eco-feminist theory and an ethic of care; all intent on revising our traditional conceptions of animals and their moral status. Although this challenge came in the form of

an academic ethical argument, the movement to acknowledge animals grew out of a particular context, with historical, scientific, and social components. In fact, if the animal rights movement is a symptom of new attitudes towards animals, these new attitudes are in turn symptoms of broader, underlying tendencies in society.

The 20th century saw the fulfillment of a development begun centuries earlier, namely urbanization. This process was highly relevant for people's conceptions of animals, because a large part of the population was now removed from daily contact with the animals that sustained their existence. At the early stages of urbanization, animals were still present in daily city life; slaughterhouses were often conspicuously located in the city centers (Vialles 1994, Philo 1995), "mongrel" dogs and other animals ran freely in the streets (Ritvo 1987), and beasts of burden were everywhere to be seen and experienced (Ritvo 1994). However, during the 19th century this urban animal presence was all but cleansed out, and with the arrival of the 20th, what remained was that (historically speaking) peculiar animal known as the modern pet. As city-life became the mode of living for a majority of the population, the power to define animals increasingly came to rest with urban people. Consequently, urbanites were, and are, met with the charge that their lack of everyday contact with animals other than the "honorary member[s] of the moral community" (i.e. pets, Scruton 2000: 83), engenders a too narrow, and too sentimental, view of animals.⁷ The effect of modeling human-animal relations in general on the pet-master relation is a denial that animals are the kind of beings meant for our consumption. The consequent unease at eating or otherwise consuming animals has to be dealt with through differentiation, concealment and mediation, as documented in Noëlie Vialles' study of the slaughtering process (Vialles 1994).

In science, new developments seemed to add some support to this "sentimental" view of animals. Animal researchers had indicated that (some) animals were more intelligent, more emotional, and more social than previously assumed. At the same time, some branches of science suggested that human beings were *less* of those things than what was commonly believed. While apes apparently could be taught to communicate quite well with human sign language, humans were being portrayed as "naked apes" (see Morris 1967). Authors in the new discipline of sociobiology were suggesting that, in essence,

⁷ Hunters are among the most notable proponents of this charge, as Norwegian hunter and writer Atle Mysterud exemplifies: "My worst nightmare is Dutch conditions, where practically all hunting is prohibited thanks to an increasingly urban population's lack of contact with nature and ridiculous view of reality" (Mysterud 2002: 202).

humans were nothing other than animals, and hence, human behavior can and should be studied as *animal* behavior. In this context, the great divide between man and beast seemed seriously overstated. These were not new thoughts, and Darwin himself had provided a scientific statement much to the same effect a century earlier. However, the impact of Darwin was far from immediate and not in any way complete, which is why philosophers still found it pressing in the 1980s and 1990s to talk about the “moral implications of Darwinism” (see Rachels 1990) and about “taking Darwin seriously” (see Ruse 1986).

Sociologist Adrian Franklin argues that the emergence of radical moral inclusion of animals can be understood in terms of three commonly identified phenomena of post-modernity: misanthropy, ontological insecurity and risk/reflexivity (1999: 3). He says that: “Whereas modernization was predicated on the essential potential goodness of humanity and built upon the twin goals of progress and democracy, in the latter part of the twentieth century these goals have been deemed unaffordable luxuries of a bygone period” (1999: 3). The “compromise” modernity made with animals, which rested on “animal exploitation, extinction and experimentation” (1999: 35), is in post-modernity revealed as empty pretense, a mere sham. Confronted with the industrialized animal, post-modernity reconsiders animals, and consequently, itself. However, Franklin warns against seeing the shift from modernity to post-modernity as a clear-cut switch. Parallel to increasing empathy run sustained practices of meat eating, animal experimentation, and not least, hunting. We should also add that in the post-modern condition, animals are far from unequivocal; despite questioning the grand narrative of humanity’s limitless potential, post-modernity offers no real resolution to the human-animal question.⁸ Still, says Franklin (overstating the case a bit), “almost every book published since the 1970s which reflects on modern relationships between humans and animals urges more restraint, more humanity, more paternalism and protection, more respect for animal life and rights” (1999: 105).

⁸ I am grateful to David Kaldewey who pointed this (and many other things) out to me.

The Hunter's Response

Against this background, Franklin refers to the steady popularity of hunting as an “enigma” (1999: 105). Likewise, Ortega y Gasset asks of hunting in modern society: “How is such an enormous anachronism possible?” (1995: 126). We can understand their bewilderment, because in our society hunting apparently fits these terms perfectly. Unlike in hunter/gatherer societies, our economy, as well as our culture, is based almost exclusively on agriculture.⁹

A short glance at contemporary hunting literature reveals that there is an ongoing attempt to explain and resolve the anachronisms contained in modern-day hunting. Hunters currently expend considerable efforts to define their sport, presumably in order to 1) meet the critique voiced against it (mainly U.S.) and 2) to make sure its support does not waver (mainly Norway). With a clever (?) pun, American hunter David Samuel has entitled his book *Know Hunting* (1999), suggesting that when the moral circumstances indicate there should be no hunting, it becomes imperative for the hunter to know his sport. Norwegian hunter Ole Kirkemo makes a similar point with the title of his book, *Jakten på jakta* (The Hunt for the Hunt) (2004). We have apparently reached a point where even some hunters admit that it is somewhat difficult to justify hunting, and Kirkemo is a case in point. He demonstrates both the enigma of contemporary hunting and the need to put it into a meaningful context:

To define hunting can be a difficult task. But if we do not know hunting, and if we cannot retain its nature, then we have a problem. The hunting tradition has existed as long as humanity, but many traditions have been modernized into extinction. It is simply a question of time. The original purpose of the hunt was to put food on the table, in the same way as the purpose of marriage was to have and raise children. Today people marry for a great number of reasons other than housing a big family. And it is not difficult to grant the critic that hunting, in our time, is not necessary for our survival. (2004: 164)

However, we should not be too baffled by this misfit of hunting to modern society, since anachronisms are the rule rather than the exception in human-animal relationships. The

⁹ Firstly, it is true that hunting has been a necessary supplement to the livelihood of many people up till quite recently, but the need for meat as a justification for hunting no longer works on its own. In industrialist-capitalist agricultural economies, hunting is a nonstarter; it is a waste of time that could have gone into productive labor. Secondly, it is true that our economy is not agricultural in every sense; in a narrow sense, agriculture covers only a minor part of our economies. However, agriculture is what allows the other parts of our economy, like the service sector. In contrast, in a hunting/gathering economy one cannot have a service sector, because nearly everyone is somehow involved in the acquisition of food. (see Sahlins 1972) Therefore, in this wide sense, we can still talk about our economy, our society, our civilization as *agricultural*.

more interesting approach, and the one chosen in this thesis, is to look at how hunters deal with this situation. How can it be that hunting manages to sustain itself in a social environment that seems increasingly hostile to any mean-mannered relation to animals? How do hunters respond to these surroundings, and how do they position hunting? What motivates their arguments? And finally, how plausible is the hunter's response? My goal in this thesis is not necessarily to answer Ortega's question, but to investigate the answers that hunters give to the question "How can hunting be justified in today's world?"

It should be noted that not everyone – whether hunter or not – considers hunting to be controversial. Most take it for granted, and do not see any need to defend their pastime. This attitude is the symptom of habit rather than reflection; in ethics, this person would have to give some reason why he does not relate to the claims of the animals he hunts. If he thinks that animals make no "claims", he would have to justify that statement. If he, on the other hand, thinks that animals make certain claims, but maintains that these can be overridden by other claims, he must give a plausible account of how different claims relate to one another. In a pluralist society, especially, we must demand that people give reasons for their beliefs, at least in the cases where these beliefs have consequences beyond the private sphere. We should not take "just because"-responses seriously, especially when it comes to a practice that kills millions of sentient creatures each year. Hunting, despite its ancient and intimate bond with humanity, is always in need of justification. That is not to say that hunting is never justified, simply to point out that we cannot disregard the claims of animals (or the question whether they make any claims) before we have made a serious assessment of the issue. Notions that animals make no claims, that they have no worth, or that they exist solely for our consumption, are quite rare in the literature I have reviewed. That does not mean that one cannot hold such a position, and indeed that it is the position of some hunters, only that, for the most part, it is not what I will be studying in this thesis. I am not looking to study hunters as a group, in the way an anthropologist or a sociologist would; instead, I aim to investigate the most prominent moral arguments given to justify their sport.

In what follows, I will investigate the arguments put forth in defense of hunting and look into the ideals that underlie these arguments. The thesis oscillates between moral philosophy and cultural analysis, taking hunting to be ethically as well as ideologically relevant. In the next chapter, I outline the methodological and theoretical assumptions of the thesis, and then suggest a position on the nature and status of animals. This is then

compared and contrasted to the hunter's definition of the hunt as a *fair chase*. In chapter 3, I look at what I have called the argument from *origins*. Roughly, it states that the origin of humankind as hunters has left an imprint on us: the hunting instinct. In chapter 4, I deal with the cluster of arguments about nature's *webs*, which says that humans cannot be thought of as separate from nature, but should be seen as participating actors in nature's food chains. In the last chapter, I will deal with some of the implications of the material reviewed.

This division of chapters, I must emphasize, is done simply for the sake of practicality. The arguments reviewed in each chapter are not actually the self-contained wholes I make them out to be. Rather, the accounts brought forth to justify hunting are typically mixed, muddled and stirred in sometimes uneasy combinations, which occasionally makes it difficult to single out particular arguments. However, an organizing of this very diverse field was required to get past opinions to the underlying moral arguments.

2 Creatures

Take any demand, however slight, which any creature, however weak, may make. Ought it not, for its own sake, to be satisfied? If not, prove why not. The only possible kind of proof you could adduce would be the exhibition of another creature who should make a demand that ran the other way. The only possible reason there can be why any phenomenon ought to exist is that such a phenomenon actually is desired.

– William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”
(quoted from Albrecht 2004)

This thesis aims to combine the approaches of several academic disciplines, most importantly cultural studies and moral philosophy. In one respect, any such attempt is problematic. Not only do different disciplines rest on different theories and methods, they also differ in their fundamental goals, aims, and rationales. To see how this is the case, we can consider the systems theory of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1989). He describes how society is functionally differentiated into autonomous, non-substitutable, and self-referential systems (e.g. economy, law, politics, science). Each system operates according to an internal binary code, which gives rise to the closure of the system. Openness and communication of one system towards other systems is possible only to the extent that data are brought into and interpreted according to the code of the former. Within each system, codes become “totalizing constructions” (1989: 38). This situation is largely analogous to what we see in the academic “society”, where each discipline functions according to its code, which is not (Luhmann would say *cannot be*) brought into relation with the codes of other disciplines.

Systems theory is descriptively forceful because it reveals the cause of conflict and disagreement with ways of seeing that are not our own. However, with its decision to focus exclusively on the systemic structures of society, it seems to leave an odd place (that is, no place) for human agency. To point to the difficulties described by Luhmann is no excuse, then, it is an attempt to direct attention to the problems of seeing a discipline as a self-contained whole. Against this notion, I would argue that any account which fails to relate to

what lies beyond the boundaries of its own discipline stands in danger of becoming implausible, unusable, irrelevant, and potentially, morally suspect. We need to turn the objection against multi-disciplinarity on its head and assert that if disciplines cannot be combined, then there is something wrong with the disciplines. Disciplines, as well as function systems, are not simply fixed structures that perform certain “neutral” functions. They are, rather, infused with reasons, motives, and values that are meaningful to us. Economy, for instance, is not just a subsystem that operates according to internal coding in a functionally differentiated society. It is also a means for a human end; it is (or rather, *should be*) a tool with which we attain what we see as valuable in life.

This thesis starts from the notion that cultural studies and moral philosophy can be combined, though only at certain costs to both. It is my hope that such a combination will produce a result that narrow disciplinary studies could not have brought about, and that the thesis is judged by its degree of success in that respect.

In this chapter, I start by outlining how the mentioned disciplines relate to the topic at hand. The problem of pluralism is identified as the key to making the approaches work in concert, and a path through this problem is suggested. My guide in this endeavor will be what has variably been referred to as a theory and a method, which I prefer to think of as a useful device for thinking on difficult issues, namely philosophical pragmatism. The basic content of this approach will be sketched, and its relevance for the topic at hand will be discussed. Further, it will be distinguished from other approaches, and an argument will be given why something resembling pragmatism remains preferable. This approach is then brought to bear on a central concern: *the nature and status of animals*. The position gained in this issue is then compared and contrasted to the hunter’s definition of the hunt, and specifically, its potential character of being *fair*.

The Problem of Pluralism

The main motivation for this thesis comes from an interest in human-animal relations and in the moral significance of animals. In the course of the previous century, and especially from the 1970s, the academic discipline of ethics became seriously occupied with the question of our duties to animals. As noted in the previous chapter, this debate was kick started with Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation*, which is still one of the most cited texts in the field. Though Singer’s argument was seen as relevant, there was no agreement on

central issues, and 30 years later the consensus is still lacking. The radical animal rights position, whose objective is to completely revise our conceptions of the moral status of animals and put them on equal footing with humans, remains controversial.

Parallel to what has happened in ethics, humanist and social science disciplines like cultural history, art and media studies, sociology, and law have begun to foster an interest in animals, or rather, in the roles that animals play in our lives and we in theirs. Fields of interest have included the slaughtering process (Vialles 1994), pet-keeping (Tuan 1984), breeding, animal control (Ritvo 1987), zoos (Rothfels 2002) and many other themes. The refrain of these studies is the diversity of our conceptions of animals, and the plasticity with which they are created and re-created in our lives. As historian Nigel Rothfels says, “each generation seems to remake its animals” (2002: 5). Consequently, the emerging discipline of animal studies has taken its study to be our creation, and re-creation, of animals.

A central tenet of most varieties of cultural studies is that people’s conceptions and values (and hence, their practices, institutions, rituals, etc.), vary according to a wide spectrum of variables, among which could be counted history, nationality, cultural background, religion, age, gender, ethnicity, class, occupation, species membership, individual interests, etc. Needless to say, not all values are in perfect harmony. And herein lies the problem, because ethics does not live comfortably with the notion of contradictory prescriptions for action. Normative ethics, as it is traditionally practiced by the professional philosopher, takes as its function to make specific, qualified judgments on moral issues, seeking to recommend a course of action absolutely and unambiguously. In short, its function is to establish the distinction between right and wrong. However, from the viewpoint of cultural studies, the judgments passed by the Western moral philosopher are colored by his background in the same way as the judgment of any other. The Western academic discipline of “ethics” is itself no more than a cultural product, nor could it be, according to this account. For instance, within cultural studies the notion of animal rights is not defined according to the binaries right/wrong or good/bad. Rather, it could be defined (similarly to how I defined it in the previous chapter) as a cultural product of our age, sparked by certain circumstances in society, among them an unprecedented urbanism.

Increasingly, though, there seems to be a willingness even within cultural studies to recommend that animals be included more “wholeheartedly”. For instance, geographers Jennifer Wolch and Jacque Emel urge social scientists to “journey across the species divide to construct a more inclusive social theory” (1995: 632). Likewise, Chris Philo is frustrated

by the human chauvinism of his discipline of geography, and urges inclusion into social science of animals “as beings with their own lives, needs, and (perhaps) self-awarenesses, rather than merely as entities to be trapped, counted, mapped, and analyzed” (1995: 658). Similarly, Erica Fudge proposes that we question the anthropocentrism inherent in writing the cultural history of animals, and says that: “Recognizing the centrality of the animal in our own understanding of ourselves as human forces us to reassess the place of the human (...) dominion [must be] reviewed as not true, but created” (2002: 11).

Although these are all commendable attempts to integrate moral sentiment into descriptive analyses, they do not always seem to realize that the diversity of values, and more specifically, the variety of functions and roles occupied by animals in our lives, so convincingly demonstrated by their own disciplines, causes some serious problems for ethical theory and practice. How can one acknowledge the plurality of values and practices pertaining to animals, while insisting that animals should be acted towards only in particular ways? This would not be a problem, perhaps, if our conceptions of animals and their value were uniform and unequivocal. However, this is clearly not the case. This dilemma is a constant source of conflict in our societies, and the tension it arouses will be apparent throughout this thesis as well. To argue, in response of this problem, that only one value (or one ethical code) is right, and all else wrong, smacks of ancient metaphysics; we don’t like to think of values in those terms. And rightly so, because if we acknowledge that values stem from a number of “situations” like those mentioned above (nationality, cultural background, etc.), it is not clear *from where* we could reject foreign value sets.

This describes the pluralist predicament, which is in urgent need of a response from ethical theory. Such accommodation, however, seems to go against the grain of a very influential strand of philosophical thought, which insists that the apparent plurality of values is due to some kind of confusion or failure to apply the appropriate rationale. Philosopher and historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin describes what a pluralist framework is up against in his article “On the Pursuit of the Ideal” (1988):

At some point I realized that what all these views had in common was a Platonic ideal: in the first place that, as in the sciences, all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only, all the rest being necessarily errors. In the second place, that there must be a dependable path toward the discovery of these truths. In the third place, that the true answers, when found, must necessarily be compatible with one another and form a single whole, for one truth cannot be incompatible with another—that we knew *a priori*. (1988: 12)

When faced with the apparent incompatibility of moral values and traditions, as we constantly are in the pluralist predicament, there are a few alternatives; firstly, one can choose sides and dismiss all opposing views; secondly, one can conclude that morality is nothing but individual opinion. Neither is a viable alternative. If the first, objectivist, notion that there is only one moral truth was correct, we would be at pains to explain why the plurality of values persists; are some of us just confused about the moral truth? And why is it that only some have arrived at this truth? On the other hand, if ethics were nothing but individual opinion or feeling, as the second, subjectivist, notion suggests, it would not be clear what the function of ethics could be. If our individual opinions were all that mattered, what good would this institution be? What basis would we have from which to form laws?

There might be a limited case for both objectivism and subjectivism in ethics, but they should not be seen as exhaustive models. What ensues from adapting these approaches exclusively is a variety of strictly *private* conceptions of the good, which, in the subjectivist scenario, are conceived of as so many individual values, and, in the objectivist case, as the confusion of others about the absolute moral truth. These approaches are highly insufficient if we sustain any ambition to avoid social conflict and disintegration. Before we introduce the descriptive fact of interdependence as well as the normative idea of public discussion and negotiation, in short, before we introduce a social element, we cannot be sure that the whole of our moral lives is being described.

What should be considered in the place of these positions, then, is a third alternative of pluralistic inter-subjectivity, where the following points are acknowledged: 1) disparate values and “moral truths” exist and they are legitimate starting points for ethical discussion; 2) some values/moral truths are shared, while others are not; 3) despite disagreement, we depend on each other, on a well-functioning social sphere, and on confrontation, discussion, and negotiation of moral values. In this framework, ethics does not consist in an application of any supreme moral principle, nor in clamant assertion of individual opinion; rather, it equals an effort in clarifying and harmonizing our various values and conceptions of the good. As argued by philosopher Mary Midgley:

Human rationality is not a monoculture, a simple system with a single aim. It is the project of bringing together in some sort of harmony the many motives, many interests, that naturally form part of human life. Moral “pluralism” is correct in the sense that we really do have many distinct ideals. (1997: 94)

The position that is being sketched here is relativist in one meaning of the word, but not in another. It *is* relativist in its recognition that what people hold to be morally true or valuable is highly variable and relative to historical, social, and cultural circumstances, as well as in relation to one's own individual interests. It is *not* relativist in the sense that it does not accept this relativity as the final word in ethics. According to Isaiah Berlin, relativism amounts to the following formula: "I prefer coffee, you prefer champagne. We have different tastes. There is no more to be said" (1988: 14). This kind of relativism assumes that communication is vain, a notion which cannot, in my mind, be a viable approach to conflict and disagreement. Further, it disregards shared values, and it does not realize that different values, even whole moral traditions, can favor the same course of action although their motives for doing so may differ. (That is not to say that values are *always* shared. Conflict, though not inevitable, is certainly real.) Most importantly, this relativism does not acknowledge that there are grounds for dialogue between distinct ethical codes:

Intercommunication between cultures in time and space is only possible because what makes men human is common to them, and acts as a bridge between them. But our values are ours, and theirs are theirs. We are free to criticize the values of other cultures, to condemn them, but we cannot pretend not to understand them at all, or to regard them simply as subjective, the products of creatures in different circumstances with different tastes from our own, which do not speak to us at all. (Berlin 1988: 14-15)

Because the sense of moral pluralism sketched here does not accept the dubious assumption that there is *one* non-contingent moral truth which can be arrived at through some specific means, it, in extension, does not accept the idea, often called "moral monism" (see Stone 1995), that there is one moral theory or principle that can account for all that is our moral lives. In contrast, it assumes that because our actual moral lives are diverse, the theoretical apparatus with which we reflect on our everyday attitudes must be equally diverse and flexible. As a result, it escapes the plague of much moral philosophy, which is the quarrel about where moral judgments may legitimately come from. While some hold that the capacity to have interests is the measure of morality (ex. Singer 1975); others argue that we are bearers of inviolable moral rights with corresponding duties (ex. Regan 1983); still others talk of moral sentiments and an "ethic of care" (ex. Noddings 1984); and some envision morality in terms of virtues and vices (ex. Scruton 2000). Against the assumption that the whole of morality can be subsumed in one general

principle, the moral pluralism described here holds that the different theories and principles of ethics all have a part to play in the process of making moral judgments. This does not entail an embrace of contradictory prescriptions for action, on the contrary, it equals a continuing effort to work through and smooth out contradiction through argument, deliberation, and conflict resolution. In other words, pluralism remains true to the end of morality, which is the distinction between right and wrong. Its distinguishing mark is that it will not disallow any approach, theory, model or principle as long as it can be useful in making sense of the moral dilemmas that confront us.

As far as I can see, something akin to the ethical pluralism I have sketched here is the only plausible response to the problem of pluralism we are constantly met with in our society. However, this kind of pluralism is perhaps not operational enough to be of much help in concrete endeavors. Some device is needed to negotiate and prioritize, to bring “together in some sort of harmony the many motives, many interests, that naturally form part of human life”, as Mary Midgley puts it. In this thesis, I will take philosophical pragmatism to be such a device, and it will be the guide for what follows.

The Importance of Being Practical

The term “philosophical pragmatism” denotes a school of thought that originated with the American scholar and scientist C. S. Peirce, and which was later developed by scholars like William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead. While being more or less dormant for large parts of the 20th century, a “neo-pragmatism” has lately been emerging, fronted by the American philosopher Richard Rorty and others. Rather than a clearly defined theory, pragmatism denotes a way to think about and relate to the world. William James delineates the pragmatic approach thus: “the tangible fact at the root of all our thought distinctions, however subtle, is that there is no one of them so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice” (1982a: 210-211). What James points to with this statement is that our thoughts, indeed our whole lives, are limited by the experience of being creatures immersed in an actual, contingent world. Whatever we think, then, must have some consequence in our actual, practical lives, or else...it is of no consequence! Enter the pragmatic question, or method: “What difference would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be

traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle” (James 1982a: 210).

Pragmatism entails a radical revision of the traditional correspondence theory of truth, which assumes that there must be some special relation between our minds (subject) and the world (object). In its place, pragmatism introduces a version of the coherence theory of truth, described by James thus: “(...) *ideas (which themselves are but parts of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience*” (1982a: 216). In this instrumental view of truth, a proposition counts as true only to the extent that it helps us cope and make sense of our other truths. Furthermore, according to pragmatism these other truths are also instrumental, and thereby pragmatism is opposed to epistemological foundationalism, which holds that there are some basic truths that are self-evident and can have (or need) no prior justification. In contrast, on the pragmatist account a truth assumes importance only in the social context of inquiry, the effort of understanding and finding ways to deal with the world. As stated by Kelly Parker: “We have no absolutely *indubitable* beliefs; only a stock of importantly *undoubted* ones. We have no absolutely clear, immutable concepts; we do have many concepts that are sufficiently clear and stable to let us make pretty good sense of experience” (1996: 22). It follows from this that pragmatists speak of truths in the plural rather than of capitalized Truth¹⁰, and furthermore, that they consider any truth a partial, fallible, and revisable construction. This does not mean that truth is something we make up at our personal whim; rather, the pragmatist notion of truth is sensitive to the social, and even environmental, aspects of epistemology:

It converts the absolutely empty notion of a static relation of “correspondence” (...) between our minds and reality, into that of a rich and active commerce (that any one may follow in detail and understand) between particular thoughts of ours, and the great universe of other experiences in which they play their parts and have their uses. (James 1982a: 220).

What the pragmatist view does entail is that our truths are ultimately imperfect and uncertain. We have no other choice but to rely on these imperfect truths, but at the same

¹⁰ There can be, and clearly are, several distinct sets of truth, that may be equally coherent on their own terms. Different systems of truth may be in varying degrees of harmony. For instance, in an often cited example, American Indian worldviews produce knowledge about plant and animal species almost completely analogous to that produced by Western ecologists (see Berkes 1999). Though these truths are framed in entirely different terms, and though they relate to different *sets* of truths, they seem to fill the same function. Needless to say, there are occasions where systems do not communicate well, and this is as much a challenge for the pragmatist as for any other. The only guide pragmatism can give is to look for common ground and to downplay differences if they are without practical consequence.

time we must be willing, and even intent, on revising them if our experiences indicate that we have it wrong.

To effect the transition from epistemology to ethics, James argues that what is “right” in the moral sense “*is only the expedient in the way of our behaving*” (James 1982b: 238). In this statement, James apparently comes close to the everyday, derogatory meaning of the term “pragmatism”. However, he adds that what is morally right is:

Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course; for what meets expediently all the experiences in sight won’t necessarily meet all farther experiences equally satisfactorily. Experience, as we know, has ways of *boiling over*, and making us correct our present formulas. (1982b: 238)

Our job as philosophers, and as citizens, is to question established truths, to bring in a variety of alternative experiences, to figure out what practical differences follow from alternatives, and to search for the alternative that has the most expediency “in the long run and on the whole of course”. This is no once-and-for-all accomplishment, but rather an ongoing endeavor of ethical deliberation, negotiation, discussion, formulation and re-formulation; it is ethics as “a process of continual mediation of conflict in an ever-changing world” (Parker 1996: 25). Pragmatism can fully acknowledge the pluralism of our societies, as it takes the complex sets of interrelation and interaction of the individual with its (social and natural) environment as the setting in which values grow. In this paradigm, morality has no external source. It is we who decide, through the emotional and intellectual process that is ethics, what should count as right and wrong. Pragmatic ethics is assuredly inter-subjective, and implies an emphasis on the actual values that people hold, and how these values come into being. According to Kelly Parker: “The first question about value (...) is not ‘What ought we to desire?’ but ‘What do people in fact desire, and why?’” (1996: 26). Not coincidentally, this approach is exactly parallel to the aim of this thesis.

The pragmatic approach has been attacked from all angles.¹¹ Still, I am confident that the most serious objections to pragmatism can be met. Firstly, some object that if truth is instrumental, if its only function is practical utility, and the only criterion that it “works”, then truth is simply “what we want it to be”. For instance, if it is practically useful for people in the first world to believe that third world poverty does not exist, it is true that third world poverty does not exist. This is clearly not a view of truth that conforms to our

¹¹ The objections reviewed here are adapted rather freely from an article by Doug Groothuis on: <http://ivpress.gospelcom.net/groothuis/doug/archives/000127.php> (Accessed: September 26, 2005).

common sense understanding. However, this objection glosses over some central parts of the pragmatist view of truth. Firstly, what is “practically useful”, what “works”, cannot be determined solely by individual desires, but must be defined by citizens through public debate and discussion. (Of course, some “truths” are more private in character, but at the point where these become relevant for a wider public, what counts as true should no longer be determined by one individual). It is doubtful whether the notion that third world poverty does not exist could survive for very long when entered into such discussion, where the experiences of third world citizens would surely reveal the falsity of the claim. Also, this objection overlooks the coherentist requirement of the pragmatist view of truth, which says that unless a proposition can help us make sense of the other parts of our experience (the other propositions we count as true), then it cannot itself count as true. As far as the no-third-world-poverty-hypothesis is concerned, I cannot see how it puts us in a more expedient relation with our other truths, to the contrary. The underlying problem with this objection is that it assumes that the pragmatist takes truth seeking in itself to be of no value. What matters to the pragmatist, this objection says, is only our desire to hold comfortable, optimistic beliefs. However, self-deception is not expedient on a pragmatist account. For a proposition to count as true it must put us in a better relation to the other things we count as true; it is irrelevant whether it satisfies our short term desire to hold comfortable, self-deceiving beliefs (if such a desire can even exist).

Another objection says that the focus of pragmatism on the practical consequences of beliefs is problematic because it presupposes the truth of the estimation of these consequences. This objection is flawed. Pragmatism does not promise flawless estimations of consequences; in the same way as it sees truths as fallible, pragmatism must see the process of assessing consequences as fallible. In this predicament, we can only do our best with the experiences we already have or ones that we can acquire. Estimations of consequences must, in the pragmatic view, be seen as a continuing public endeavor, and hence, any estimation of consequences is dependent on the epistemological apparatus available to the individual, group, society, or historical age, in question.

A third objection says that pragmatism, in ethics especially, discards the standards by which propositions are judged to be right or wrong. This is not entirely true; James, for instance, says that ethical judgments are those that are expedient in the long run and on the whole of course. However, some would not count this basic, minimal formula as a “standard” of the kind we are looking for in ethics. In response to this objection we should

point out that this pragmatic formula can accommodate any and all other standards of ethics, as we noted in the discussion about pluralism. For instance, if it is expedient (in the long run and on the whole of course) to hold human rights as an ethical standard, as it might well be, then we should do so.

A fourth objection says that not all beliefs that “work” are true. For instance, the belief in Santa Claus works for many children, but it is not true. Against this we could counter that this belief clearly does not work “in the long run and on the whole of course”. Children only believe in Santa Claus because they do not have access to other parts of our (adult) experience, which in this case are deliberately being kept from them. If children continued to believe in Santa Claus into adulthood, that would not “work” in the same way. A more serious example of the same objection is the belief in a God, which James notoriously defended on pragmatic grounds. This is a troublesome question, but we may point out that religious creeds are constructed so as to not be susceptible to proof; their existence and popularity does not depend on truth for their existence, but rather, on faith. That is not to say that religious creeds are untrue; rather, the point is that they are designed to be so slippery that we cannot decide the issue definitively. Consequently, even the atheist, though he lacks faith, cannot prove the non-existence of a God. As far as I can see, the only requirement to religion from the pragmatic view of truth is that it must adapt to changing conceptions of non-religious truths. If it does not, it can no longer conceal its truth content, and puts itself in a position where it is more likely to be considered untrue.

A fifth objection says that not all truths are useful. For instance, the proposition “I took 40,342 breaths on May 3, 1987” may well be true, but it is not useful. Firstly, we should note that this objection targets relevance as much as it does truth. Pragmatism agrees that it is not generally very useful to know such a thing as how many breaths one took on a particular date, but if it for some reason were relevant, then pragmatism would be at no disadvantage in relation to other models in deciding the truth of this proposition. However, an additional intention of this objection may be to point out that things exist in the world, and things are true, although we don’t know about them, and can never know about them. However, what the pragmatist denies is not the notion that there is an outside world where some things are true and others not. Rather, it challenges the idea that discovery and representation of these truths is a straightforward function of our senses and rationality. In the place of this notion, pragmatism insists that “truth” depends on previous individual experience as well as on our social and environmental context. Pragmatism shifts the focus

from the object that is supposed to be known towards the mode of knowing. So it is not that a specific proposition must be useful (in a wide sense) for it to count as true, but rather that what we count as true is useful in the sense that it puts us in a better relation with the other things we count as true.

Finally, an objection says that pragmatism may be able to explain all ideas except why people sometimes choose to die for one. Again, this objection could be met with James' emphasis on the long run and the whole of course. While dying is not always useful in the short term, pragmatism does not exclude actions or beliefs that take entities beyond the individual as valuable. The objection seems to presuppose that the pragmatic concepts of usefulness, expediency, and about "working" come from the everyday, derogatory, meaning of pragmatism. But as I have argued, philosophical pragmatism is clearly oriented towards discussion and negotiation of ideals. For instance, pragmatism can have no *a priori* objections if we, through public discussion, arrive at the notion that people should sometimes be willing to sacrifice for the greater good, as long as such a sacrifice is useful on some level or other (although I would question how useful such sacrifice really is, in most cases). However, if I suddenly were to ask you to kill me in the name of liberty, without any context or view to benefit of any kind, that would be something pragmatism could not explain. But neither could any other approach, I presume.

Pragmatism is imperfect. Unlike certain other ethical theories, it does not promise to arrive at the Supreme Principle of Morality to be applied to very particular situation. It does not promise to discover the Moral Truth. In itself, pragmatism solves nothing (although it *is* intrinsically inclined towards conflict resolution). What it does do, however, is to suggest a way ahead in a world where certain things remain ultimately insolvable. The choice of pragmatism as an approach, then, should itself rest on a pragmatic rationale. Pragmatism is true only to the extent that it enables us to make sense of our other truths. I cannot currently see any other approach that allows us to make sense of our world, and especially our experience of ethical conflicts in pluralist societies, to the extent that pragmatism does.

Ceci n'est pas un animal vs. The Moral Status of Animals

Having established the pluralist-pragmatic framework, it becomes imperative to give some indication of what such a position entails in terms of an animal ethic, and specifically, how

it can relate to the case of hunting. In this section, I will suggest what may be a pragmatist outlook on the nature and status of animals.

The first challenge in sketching an animal ethic is to determine how the plurality of views about the nature of animals can be combined with prescriptions for our dealings with them. As numerous theoreticians have argued (see Howe 1981, Baker 2001, Marvin 2001, Rothfels 2002), animals are not easily represented in human experience. Or to be more precise, representations of animals abound, but they are highly divergent, variable, and negotiable. Animals fill a great variety of functions, and they play many distinct roles, in relation to humans. The result is an uncertainty about what an animal is, or more likely, opposed certainties that engender conflict and disagreement. Such disagreement over the nature, and the status, of the animal, is to blame, at least partially, for the conflicts over hunting in today's world. For instance, some see the deer as the kind of being it would be alright to kill, while others do not. And among those who think killing is acceptable, there are many qualifications; some could kill for fun, others for the spiritual experience, and some would kill only for food or survival. (Also, there are those who have no objections to animals being killed and eaten, although they would not be willing to do the killing themselves.) Some hunters realize the complexity of animals in our lives, and try to integrate that fact into their accounts. American hunter Robert Kimber is at the more sophisticated end: "We live lives of unending confusion and contradiction. One minute we are expending considerable effort to kill an animal; the next, we are going to sometimes ridiculous lengths not to kill one" (2002: 146).

Kimber's statement aptly targets an aspect of our relation to animals that cannot be avoided by those concerned with animal ethics, namely the social construction of animals. The notion that animals are socially constructed is itself an epistemological assumption, and it needs some elaboration, since there is currently a debate between *realists* and *social constructivists* about the nature of human knowledge of the outside world. In this debate, the realist position holds that the outside world is objectively present for us to discover and know (alternatively adding the requirement of a special, reliable procedure). This idea is rejected by social constructivists, who claim that our conceptions of the world stem from the process of "social construction"; when we talk about the outside world, we are actually talking about the humanly created *idea* of the outside world.

Neil Evernden has taken on the elusive concept of "nature" from the standpoint of social constructivism. He says that:

Nature, though explicitly nonhuman, is *ours*: we do not so much read the “book of nature,” as Galileo desired, as write it. It is a human artifact, and like the traffic light, its only purpose is provided with the use we give it (...) For nature is, before all else, a category, a conceptual container that permits the user to conceive of a single, discernible ‘thing’ (...) One might even say that there is no “nature,” and there never has been. (1992: 60, 89, 99)

Similarly, sociologist Keith Tester applies a social constructivist epistemology on animals:

(...) animals *are* a blank paper; they are only important because they can tell us something about ourselves; they are only subjected to certain types of behavior to the extent that such treatment is classified as the demonstration of the uniqueness of humanity. They are nothing other than what we make them. (1991: 42)

These writers point to something relevant, not only to this study, but indeed to any inquiry into the outside world. They want us to “admit our own role in the constitution of reality, which in turn means admitting something quite fundamental about the nature of our knowing” (Evernden 1992: 94). The pragmatist concurs with social constructivism that there is no one-to-one relation between subject and object; knowledge, in contrast to realist beliefs, is decidedly social and interactive. Though this claim is likely to cause some dismay, the immense social, cultural, and historical variety in the connotations of concepts clearly indicates that experiencing the world is not a one-directional process where objects in the world are directly available for us to “grasp” or “observe”, as if we were isolated and disinterested machines performing a pre-programmed task. Information does not simply flow undisturbed in this way. Rather, humans see and think in lines of particular structures, categories and models; they interpret, discuss, and negotiate the meaning of things; and finally, they decide, at some point, that they “know”. Thus, it seems, the world is what we think it is, but only because we think it thus.

At this point we should note that the hunter’s view of animals is also a social construction of the animal. This is demonstrated by anthropologist James Howe in his article “Fox Hunting as Ritual” (1981), where he describes both how hunters “create” the animal and how volatile such a creation is. His starting point is that the purported tradition of fox hunting in Britain is more recent than assumed. In Medieval times, British (upper class) hunters preferred to hunt the boar or the deer. The boar was envisioned as a warrior, and hence as a “noble adversary”, although its kinship with the domesticated pig was seen as unfortunate (1981: 293). The deer was an even more estimable adversary, seen as the monarch of the woods (1981:294). At this point in time, the fox was seen as vermin, as a

pest. Even the way to hunt a fox, “digging them out of their earths or sending terriers down after them”, was seen as lowly (1981: 294). But with the advance of agriculture, the noble beasts mostly disappeared, and hunters were forced to turn to the fox: “Because the fox was the only animal left that could offer a chase on horseback, fox hunting ultimately came to occupy the position formerly held by deer hunting as the most prestigious of field sports” (1981: 295). As a result, hunters’ views of the fox changed, though his construction of the fox was never to become entirely benign. Hunters emphasized the fox’s wildness and cunning cleverness, but they could not completely be rid of the idea that the fox was a “thief” and a “villain” (1981: 295). The fox remained a borderline figure, but it had nonetheless been transformed into worthy game for hunters.

Howe’s account is of British hunters, but his theoretical points have full application to hunting elsewhere, and possibly to other practices that involve animals. I cite his analysis as an example, since the constructions of animals made by hunters are too numerous and complex to be dealt with adequately in this thesis. In this thesis alone, we will encounter a variety of ways in which hunters construct animals; they can function as food, as counter-players in a sacred game, as a harvestable crop, as “others” in the definition of human identity, as symbols of wildness, as a problem that must be managed, etc. Because these constructions are not the main objective of this thesis, we can only note some general points and tendencies. Firstly, animals are constructed by hunters according to the latter’s interests and desires, as well as by external pressures and circumstances. Secondly, as a broad categorization, the hunter tends to divide animals into (noble)¹² game on the one hand, and vermin on the other; the former to be hunted primarily for the sake of the hunt (and the meat it brings), and the latter not just for the hunt’s sake, but also because the animal has become a “problem” or “nuisance” in some way or other. Consequently, the hunting of noble game enjoys a privileged status among hunters, while the hunting of vermin has an aspect of duty attached to it. This distinction, it should be noted, is not absolute; even the noblest of game can sometimes be portrayed as a problem, and hunting it a duty, while the hunting of vermin species can sometimes be portrayed as an enjoyable and worthy hunt. Still, that there is a bias towards the hunting of big game and certain other species, seems clear. Thirdly, the hunter tends to distinguish between predator species and

¹² For instance, the moose, an analogous case to the fox in Britain, since it was not hunted on a large scale until the previous decade, is commonly referred to as “the king of the forest” (*skogens konge*) by Norwegian hunters.

vegetarian species, while the former has historically been seen as an enemy or a competitor for human hunters, the latter are envisioned as the classic hunted animals, as counter-players in a fair game. Finally, the hunter excludes some animals from view, either domestic species, whom the least appreciative hunters term “freaks” (Shepard 1973: 14), or non-game species, because they are considered too small or otherwise unfit to be hunted.

The hunter’s construction of the animal is something we need to have in mind when constructing an animal ethic. However, such an ethic cannot be a simple functionalistic formula, where the animal’s function in relation to the human community is all that matters. More precisely, the function of the animal in the hunt (or in any other practice, for that matter) needs to be harmonized with the construction of the animal made by ethics. One variety of the social constructivist argument seems to deny this, though. Some social constructivists claim that we not only create the world, but that it, as a result, does not have any existence independently of us. This is an overstatement that lets the *epistemological* argument of social construction extend into *ontology*. Hence, they can conclude that the outside world does not really exist, cf. Evernden’s statement that: “One might even say that there is no ‘nature,’ and there never has been”. In the extension of this we can imagine an argument that says: “One might say that there are no ‘animals’ and there never has been”.

A response to this claim is to point out that it rests on a fallacy. When extended into ontology, the social constructivist argument sees the human as a transcendent observer in the role of creator and organizer of the material world. However, there are no grounds in our experience from which to suggest that our mental creation of ideas to represent entities and phenomena in the world is what brings those things into existence. We should remind ourselves that the concept of social “creation” is a metaphor. What we create are mental images, ideas, and representations of the things around us; we do not create those things in any actual, physical, material sense. As far as animals are concerned, they are surely created by us in this metaphorical sense, but that fact does not (and cannot) alter their material existence. As Mary Midgley argues, though we make representations of animals in our minds, “a flightless bird does not cease to be a bird, nor a flying fish a fish” (Midgley, in Tester 1991: 31). The fallacy of the radical variety of the social constructivist argument is that it assumes that the transcendence of humans has bearing on the materiality of animals. But this is clearly false. One cannot deny the materiality of animals by citing the transcendence of humans. The one claim has nothing to do with the other. Animals, we can conclude, are remarkably, but not infinitely, plastic. The implication of this for animal

ethics is that we must consider the material existence of animals to see whether it is something that can matter in moral deliberation.

Which features of the animal's existence are relevant to ethics? How much should these features count for? How do they relate to the claims of humans? In short, what could be an ethical construction of the animal? By asking these questions, we are making a transition from the reflective mode of cultural studies to the prescriptive mode of ethics. This is always troublesome, but the pragmatist framework developed earlier suggests that we start (but not end) with people's actual beliefs and values, and moreover, that we focus on those aspects that can be shared by individuals, groups, and ethical traditions. So the question then is: "How do people commonly envisage the moral status of animals?" To answer this question, we must turn to what I believe are the two most widely held intuitions or common sense beliefs about the status of animals (also suggested by DeGrazia 2002 and Carruthers 1992).

The first intuition is that there is an ethical difference between causing unnecessary harm to a sentient animal, say a dog, and causing harm to an inanimate object, say a rock.¹³ The expression "to cause harm" does not even apply in the case of the rock, which supports the intuition that inanimate things have no moral status (at least not as "individuals"). In contrast, the notion that it is wrong to cause unnecessary harm to a sentient animal does make sense, and it suggests that these animals have moral status of some kind, i.e., that they are worthy of moral consideration. It does not matter, in actual cases, whether a harm caused to one sentient animal is weighed against the "harm" caused to a thousand rocks, because only the former has any moral significance. Why do we make this distinction? The German philosopher Immanuel Kant suggested that it is wrong to cause harm to an animal

¹³ Firstly, we should note that this distinction rests on the empirical fact of the animal's capacity for sentience, which is not absolutely indubitable. Historically, the French philosopher René Descartes held that animals were insentient automata. Despite the apparent oxymoron, Descartes thought that animals were inanimate. The Cartesian stance, though not widely held today, has been resurrected by some philosophers and scientists who argue that animal pain, if it can even be said to exist, is markedly different from the kind we know as humans. These arguments are ingenious; though pain experienced by humans may have an additional dimension that does not mean that we do not share the basic features of the experience of pain with animals. Given the similarity of human and animal reactions to pain, as well as the similarity of our nervous systems, evidence suggests that human and animal experiences of pain are at least *comparable*. For the time being, at least, we can maintain that the burden of proof rests with those who suggest that (higher) animals are not sentient (see Taylor 1999 for a review). Secondly, we must note that there is some disagreement about which particular animals have the capacity for sentience. For some time, fish have been a case in point, since they lack a nervous system similar to that of mammals, but the evidence now seems to be in favour of fish having some form of sentience. Other animals, though, are clearly *not* sentient, and they would not be affected by the distinction between sentient beings and inanimate things (although there might be some other reason to distinguish them from rocks).

because, in so doing, one harms oneself, in a way. “[S]o far as animals are concerned”, says Kant, “we have no direct duties” (1963: 239). And he adds: “Animals are not self-conscious and are there merely as a means to an end. That end is man” (1963: 239). This means that the duties we have towards animals are merely “indirect duties towards mankind” (1963: 241). This is so, argues Kant, “for he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men” (1963: 240). However, though this account may have explained the intuition of Kant and his contemporaries, it does not adequately explain ours. Or to the extent that it does, it only addresses part of the issue, because the intuition seems to be that animals are worthy of moral consideration *for their own sake*. I may be harmed by causing harm to an animal, but that is surely not the only reason why I consider it wrong. Rather, I think *it is wrong to cause harm to a sentient animal because in so doing I bring upon the animal an experience in which it suffers*.

This suggests that the sentient animal be distinguished from things that cannot feel, or more specifically, from things that cannot care about how they are treated (see DeGrazia 2002: 19). In other words, it means establishing animals as beings with interests. Humans too are beings with interests, and as a part of the human experience we learn to know the absence of pain and suffering as a presupposition for healthy, well-functioning, and desirable lives.¹⁴ The intuition that animals are worthy of moral consideration can then be explained in terms of identification, sympathy, moral sentiment, and an impulse towards care-giving. When we see an animal in pain, we recognize its reaction, because we have been in its place at one time or other. We identify that experience as undesirable, and we feel compelled to prevent it. In contrast, if we kick a rock, we cannot recognize in it any reaction at all. We cannot be empathetic with a rock; we cannot put ourselves in its place. We cannot perfectly put ourselves in the place of other animals, either, but we can recognize and understand important signals.¹⁵ (In fact, we cannot even put ourselves

¹⁴ The proposition that a life without some pain and suffering is not worth living, that these experiences are necessary contrasts to more enjoyable states, or even that pain and suffering are in some senses good (see Callicott 1980: 332-333), have some plausibility in the case of humans, but they scarcely hold in the case of animals. Presumably, in the cases where pain is good, it is as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself. It is doubtful, however, whether animals have ends that require pain and suffering as means. (For instance, if we see giving birth as an end, then pain is a means to that end. However, in the case of animals, having offspring is not an end in the relevant sense. Producing offspring is not something intended by the animal, not something it pursues with full knowledge of the result, so there cannot be talk of means to an end.) I cannot see instances where a sentient animal would desire suffering, or where it would experience pain as something good. In fact, it seems likely that animals are not capable of this kind of (rather advanced) reasoning, which probably does not even occur to all humans.

¹⁵ See Taylor (1999) for a discussion of the challenges to this view.

perfectly in the place of other humans, but that does not prevent us from being empathetic with them.)

Mary Midgley puts the interests of animals into context. She argues that moral obligations are not to be seen as impersonal routine tasks, but that they are partially a function of the relation between the moral agent and the interest-holder (1983: 112-114). Firstly, in contrast to the rock, animals are beings with which we form a wide variety of bonds; we engage with animals in work, play, sports, eating, etc. Secondly we have a much stronger sense of kinship with the dog than with the rock. Compared to the rock, the dog is “one of us”. It is a moving, breathing, eating, feeling, thinking being, as we are. We share something with the animal which we do not share with the rock. The content of the first intuition can further be described by extending what the philosopher David Hume termed “fellow-feeling” (1966: 97) to include animals. Animals are not our fellows in everything, of course, but they are alike us with regards to the experience of pain and suffering, which is shared by all sentient creatures. The concept of fellow feeling, then, denotes a basic, almost impulsive, sympathy with others, and it suggests that we are not exclusively self-interested (or with a pragmatic spin, that it may be in our interest to accommodate the interests of others, even at the expense of our purported self-interest).

Such fellow feeling may even be phrased in terms of a moral virtue, where it goes under the name of *compassion*. Compassion may be seen as a virtue, not only, as Kant suggested, because it safeguards against cruelty to humans¹⁶, but because it is valued as a character trait in general, regardless of the beneficiary. We can relate this attitude to the prescriptions made by William James in his article “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings”, where he argues that the virtues we may call “open-mindedness” or “curiosity”:

(...) absolutely forbids us to be forward in pronouncing on the meaninglessness of forms of existence other than our own; and it commands us to tolerate, respect, and indulge those whom we see harmlessly interested and happy in their own ways, however unintelligible these may be to us.¹⁷

¹⁶ In fact, the assumption that cruelty to animals gives rise to cruelty to humans is dubitable. David DeGrazia suggests that: “Perhaps kicking his sheep around will allow the shepherd to blow off some steam, making him *less* likely to rough up his wife and kids” (2002: 18). Now, I don’t know how accurate this proposition is, and as DeGrazia points out, this question is an empirical one, not yet sufficiently answered. In any case, it seems clear that there is no *necessary* connection between cruelty to animals and cruelty to humans. Also, as DeGrazia adds, “cruelty to animals would presumably be wrong even in hypothetical situations in which harmful consequences for humans were *impossible* (say, if one were the last living person on Earth)” (2002:18).

¹⁷ Available on: <http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/jcertain.html> (Accessed September 26, 2005).

To sum up, there is a variety of models under which our intuition about the moral status of animals makes sense. These are models which have only been suggested here, but which ideally should be thoroughly combined to yield an extensive view of the moral importance of animals (see Scruton 2000 for a good, though short, pluralist account of the moral status of animals).

We have not yet said anything about whether animals have the same moral status as humans. We have only concluded that animals are not in the same ethical category as non-sentient things, and further, that any unnecessary harm caused to the animal is undesirable because it harms the animal, not (just) because it harms humans. We have arrived at something not entirely original, but then that was never the point. As an ethical principle, the first intuition may be stated thus: “It is wrong to cause unnecessary harm to sentient beings”. We can call this the principle of unnecessary harm. This principle conforms to William James’ statement quoted at the start of this chapter. Firstly, the starting point for granting moral status to animals is that they care about (desire) certain things, i.e., they have interests. Secondly, any demand that springs from such interests ought *prima facie*, to be satisfied. However, since the principle refers to *unnecessary* harm, it adds a moderating aspect which is also included in James’ statement; demands cannot always be satisfied, because they are often in conflict with other, sometimes more important, demands.

The second intuition that must be dealt with is the distinction between harm to animals and harm to human beings. Though we agree that causing harm to an animal is wrong, we are in most cases not willing to equate that harm to a similar harm caused to a human being. One way to envision this distinction is to ask: “Who would you rather rescue from a burning building; your child or the family pet?” For most people it would not matter if there were a million dogs in the burning building, we would still rescue the human (first). This indicates that the moral significance of humans must somehow be different than that of animals. Even animal rights theorists go to great lengths to accommodate this intuition. Tom Regan, for instance, constructs a hypothetical case where four humans and one dog are stuck in an overcrowded lifeboat. To prevent the lifeboat from shrinking, one of them needs to be thrown overboard. Throwing the dog overboard is justified, according to Regan, because it entails a lesser harm for the dog than for the humans (the worst harm principle). And it still entails a lesser harm if a million dogs had to be thrown overboard, because harm cannot be accumulated across individuals (see Singer 1985 and Regan and Singer 1985 for an exchange about this case).

While we explained the first intuition with reference to interests, fellow-feeling, and compassion with beings whose interests are being denied (who suffer), we cannot explain this second intuition in the same way. Animals have interests in much the same way as humans (though they do not have the *same* interests, obviously), so from this perspective, we should expect the animal to merit the same treatment as the human. We need some other explanations, then, to account for our common sense belief. Regan's worst harm principle is one, but it does not cover the intuition in its entirety. As Peter Singer notes in a critique of Regan's account (Singer 1985), the principle does not explain what to do if the choice is between, say, a chimpanzee and a dog; should we still sacrifice a million dogs to save one chimpanzee?

As with Kant's view of our indirect duties to animals, Regan's view of the worst harm only explains our intuition in part. Within our common sense belief that humans are morally more important than animals is definitely contained a historical prejudice, as documented by Peter Singer (1975), Mary Midgley (1983), James Rachels (1990), and many others. However, that realization does not exhaust the intuition either. Even when we learn about and reflect upon the historical prejudice, a more innate resistance against attributing the same value to humans and animals seems to linger. Mary Midgley suggests that there may even be a biological prejudice towards preferring one's own species, like that prejudice observed in other animal species (1983: 98-111).

In addition, however, we need to consider whether one aspect of morality can be seen as an analogy to a contract. The contractarian view of ethics is by no means new, and has been suggested, in different guises, by Hobbes, Kant, John Rawls, and (with special reference to animals) by Peter Carruthers (1992). If we are willing to accept the analogy of a social contract as part of morality, then we must point out that animals are not the kind of beings that can enter into a contract (see Palmer 1997). From the pragmatist viewpoint, the contractarian idea is appealing, since it provides a meta-ethical motivation for morals (see Mackie 1977 for one version of this idea). Envisioning moral obligations as a contract, though it can hardly be an exhaustive model of morality, helps us understand where the strong incentive to count humans as worthy of special protection comes from. In extremely simplified form, the rationale of the contract is: "if you don't hurt me, I won't hurt you". This formula implies a reciprocity that cannot be attained between humans and animals. (I am not denying that some kind of reciprocity can exist between a human being and an animal, say between a master and his pet, but I do not believe this to be comparable to the

reciprocity implied in the word “contract”). It is not so easy to imagine, as James Rachels put it, a “morality without the idea that humans are special” (1990: 173). Humans are the creators of morality. That does not mean that animals lack moral status, but it does mean that we may have a stronger incentive to act morally towards other humans than towards animals, at least when we must choose between the two. That stronger incentive is added by the pragmatic reason why we uphold the institution of morality, namely that it functions as a device that orders and regulates the social dealings between people, and allows us to “hold together” (Mackie 1977: 239, see also Hume 1966).

That being said, I am not convinced that this distinction is of much consequence to the practice of hunting. In the kind of hunting I am concerned with, there is seldom a matter of comparative harms to humans and animals. The harm inflicted on the animal in the hunt is rather obvious; it is stalked, shot, sometimes wounded, and sometimes killed. This harm must be weighed against the harm that would befall the hunter if he were not allowed to hunt. This harm is less obvious, but as we will discover, it is no less real. Whether the harm caused to the disallowed hunter is equal to or surpasses the harm caused to the animal during the hunt cannot be decided before we are more knowledgeable about how the hunter sees the hunt, which we will hopefully be at the end of this thesis.

These intuitions provide a starting point for further discussion, but they should be seen as no more than tentative suggestions. In any case, there is one more point which should be discussed, which is the issue of death. Although we asserted the principle of unnecessary harm above, that principle does not deal directly with the infliction of death, which is obviously a central part of hunting. The question that needs an answer is this: “Granted that death can be inflicted painlessly, can killing be morally justified?” To answer this question, we apparently have to answer a more basic one, which is whether death constitutes a misfortune for animals. This issue is disputed. While some hold that *taking* an interest in life is the criterion to go by, others argue that *having* and interest in life is enough (see Cigman 1980, and Sapontzis 1992, respectively). If only those beings who *take* an interest in life, i.e. who value life itself in distinction to non-life, are harmed by death, then death cannot harm an animal. On the other hand, if all who *have* an interest in life, i.e. who are beings with interests that can be satisfied in a life, are harmed by death, then death does harm an animal. This comes across as a dispute of words; both sides seem to agree that animals cannot take an interest in life, but that they have interests that may be satisfied in life, and even that a prolonged life potentially entails more satisfaction of interests. The

conclusion, as far as I can see, is that death can be a misfortune for animals and that it does constitute a loss for them, but that animals suffer a lesser harm from death than do humans. With regards to (painlessly) killing animals, it seems that it cannot *prima facie* be justified, but this is clearly a prescription that can and must be overridden by other, more important concerns.

It should be noted that the candidates to become “more important concerns” form a long queue. Most importantly, until recently animals were an intrinsic part of the agricultural cycle; they lived largely off crop wastes, and in turn, they produced their own wastes (manure) which, in turn, facilitated the production of new crops.¹⁸ In our day, animals have been removed from this cycle and replaced by chemical fertilizers, but as many studies have documented, this has happened only at the expense of serious environmental degradation (Carson 1962, Durning and Brough 1991). The central concern, however, is that killing animals is an integral part, either by intention or as a double effect, to any workable way of obtaining food on this planet (see Kerasote’s argument in chapter 4 for a hunter’s statement of this point). I should point out that this thesis, plainly out of lack of time and resources, does not extensively consider hunting in comparison to livestock production.

Some points of difference and similarity should be noted, though; hunting and livestock are both means of producing animal protein (that is, meat). There is some dispute about the extent to which animal protein is essential for human nutrition, but most people who abstain from meat are at no risk, and can have a sufficient and healthy diet. A vegan diet, which excludes all animal products, is at a higher risk of certain deficiencies, but even such a diet is potentially healthy and sufficient, given that vitamin B¹² is added.¹⁹ With regards to the environmental consequences of producing meat, hunting seems to have a clear advantage over livestock systems in that it requires little or no alteration of the environment. Also, the amount of grain consumed by the world’s livestock animals is tremendous, and the rising consumption of meat in the world is one of the main reasons for domestication of land. The huge mass of manure that, because of chemical fertilizers, is not being put to use, is another environmental hazard created by the current system of livestock

¹⁸ I am grateful to Karen Syse, who made me see why this point needed to be included.

¹⁹ See, for instance, the American Dietetic Association’s position paper on vegetarianism: http://www.eatright.org/Member/PolicyInitiatives/index_21026.cfm (Accessed: October 2, 2005). From the abstract: “It is the position of the American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada that appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases”.

production (see Durning and Brough 1991 for these points). As far as animal welfare is concerned, my judgment is that hunting is preferable over much livestock, at least what comes from the “factory system” of livestock production, where the interests of animals seem to be systematically disregarded to serve this system’s exclusive objective of profit. In the case of livestock produced according to a small-scale, organic rationale, especially where there is no transport of live animals (which, admittedly accounts for a small part of total meat production today), the case is more even. We can also note that, although hunting and the production of livestock both bring about meat, today, only the latter has this as its primary rationale.

We need not get too sophisticated about the morality of killing animals painlessly here, because in hunting, as in the current system of livestock production, death without pain is very uncommon and these institutions undoubtedly inflict pain on a large scale (in hunting, not least by wounding). In other words, the important question is not whether hunting kills, because numerous things kill animals, but whether the killing that takes place in hunting is 1) necessary, and 2) preferable to other ways of killing animals. This is not necessarily the approach chosen by the hunter, but some of the arguments reviewed here do touch upon the comparison between hunting and the other ways that animals die (most notably the arguments reviewed in chapter 4). First, however, we turn to the hunter’s view on the moral importance of the creatures he hunts.

The Hunter’s Animal

An obvious part of the hunter’s notion of animals is that they are the kind of beings that can be legitimately killed, for one purpose or another. However, this is not all there is to the hunter’s view of the animal. In fact, expressing some kind of admiration for one’s prey has become something of a requirement for hunters, though some seem to be afraid to use the “I-word”: “Let there be no mistake on this. Most hunters care a lot about the animals they hunt” (Samuel 1999: 16). That caring a lot about animals has become a sign that you are an ethical hunter is demonstrated by the hunter Sven Gjems. He comments on a Spanish bullfight he once witnessed:

Like so many others who have experienced a bullfight, I sat reluctantly fascinated by the historic tradition being played out on the arena. But those ritual animal killings, which were highly professionally executed, made me sick to the core of

my Nordic soul. Despite having killed many animals hunting, I felt sick and upset as I stumbled out from that cruel spectacle. The unnecessary tormenting of animals makes most people upset and angry. Likewise with reportages on how animals are treated on transportation trucks or in modern slaughterhouses. (1999: 63-4)

Like Gjems, many hunters demonstrate that they acknowledge the emotional lives of animals. Punsvik and Storaas assert that “animals and birds too express grief at the loss of close friends, offspring, and parents”, and they refer to the fact that “distinguished animal behavior scientists now realize that animals have emotional and intellectual lives (*følelses- og tankeliv*)” (1998: 24). They conclude that: “With this new knowledge, much of what humans do to other animals is more difficult to justify” (1998: 21-2). Apparently, hunting is one of the practices that on their account is harder to justify, but that does not mean they abandon it. Instead, they assert that: “When we hunt, we intervene in the lives of our fellow beings. As hunters we should sort out our attitude to our prey, we should try to understand their situation, and we should avoid unnecessary suffering” (1998: 21). Finally, they conclude that “the good hunt is based on appreciation and respect for the wild animal” (1998: 90). American hunter Mike Gaddis takes a similar position, in what he sees as the middle ground between animal rights supporters and the “hunting establishment”:

The antihunting fraction has frequently attributed human traits and emotions to game birds and animals in its appeal for support. It is an effective political strategy, but forty years afield tell me it falls short of fact. The behavior of wild creatures is driven largely by instinct, and there is neither the time, need, or inclination for the deep reasoning and contemplation through which human emotion is defined and classified. But neither can I accept the premise of much of the hunting establishment seems to expound – that life other than human is devoid of feeling and is, individually, of small consequence. (1996: 121)

Incidentally, Gaddis inaccurately represents both the anti-hunting position and the hunting establishment; animal rights do not necessarily entail that animals possess the “deep reasoning and contemplation through which human emotion is defined and classified”, only that they be subjects of a life. Even more minimally, Singer’s utilitarian account demands only that we accept the notion that animals are sentient, something Gaddis admits without much ado. On the hunting end, Gaddis is wrong to suppose that most contemporary hunters would endorse the notion that animals are things “devoid of feeling”, as this chapter will hopefully demonstrate.

Be that as it may, Gaddis lands, as do many hunters, on a position we can call *animal welfare*. In line with our first intuition, it acknowledges that animals are not mere

things; they have emotions and some capacity for intelligence, and hence, we should take this part of their lives into account in our dealings with them. At the same time, this position adds, thereby accommodating our second intuition, animals are not exactly like humans. Adherents of the animal welfare position sometimes point to a distinguishing factor that sets humans apart from animals, but most often that factor remains assumed and unspecified. In Gaddis' case, he seems to point to the fact that animals are driven by instinct to an extent that humans are not, and that animals are not capable of the kind of reasoning that humans are. Still, he fully acknowledges the emotional lives of animals, and has no objections against anthropomorphic language. In fact, he endorses it:

What I do believe is that the life of wild creatures has both dimension and sensual fulfillment. I believe the bond between a pair of Canada geese, though not love by human standards, has similar elements and that each finds pleasure, confidence, and security in the presence of the other. Are those words too emotionally suggestive? Then perhaps the problem is the limits of our own language in defining behavior that seems so similar to behavior we describe with emotional words. Suddenly, we border on a challenge to our self-appointed superiority. (1996: 121)

Gaddis suggests that there is, in the hunting community, an increasing realization that: "The life we will take is not all that different from our own" (1996: 122). Current accounts of hunting go to great lengths to demonstrate that animals are more than mere things, that they are not just "prey" for the human hunter. American hunter Thomas McIntyre asserts that:

When a man begins to see game strictly in terms of inches on a steel tape or a ranking on the page of a record book; when the animal is no longer eyes and ears and nose and brain and agile hooves and a wild grace, but is reduced to an arithmetic problem; when a man hunts with a calculator in place of his heart, the game, the *true* game is over, and the way is lost. (1988: 176)

McIntyre is referring to the trophy hunting mind-set, which he thinks have got some things wrong. Against this mode of viewing animals, and in line with my argument above, McIntyre argues that animals cannot be reduced to their function in relation to human desires. Not only does McIntyre refer to the "wild grace" of game, but he points to the parts of the animal that are not shared with inanimate things ("eyes and ears and nose and brain and agile hooves"), which seems to imply that he sees animals as more than mere things. McIntyre does not rule out that the animal may also, legitimately, be inches on a steel tape or ranking in a record book. He only says that game cannot be represented *exclusively* in those terms. The gist of his argument is to urge acknowledgement of all aspects of the animal, even those that do not fit easily in with killing it

American writer and hunter David Petersen is among the clearest hunting proponents with regards to animal welfare, and his involvement is clearly spurred by a concern for animals *qua* animals, and not for any vicarious reason:

As one who's morally and spiritually offended by many aspects of culturally sanctioned cruelty to animals – industrial chicken, pig, veal, and egg factories; trivial and overtly commercial cosmetic and redundant medical experimentation on animals; mistreatment and neglect of pets; and genetic god-playing – I am, de facto, an animal welfarist. (2000: 63)

Ted Kerasote is another pronounced animal welfarist hunter:

Bullfighting, cockfighting, dogfighting...shooting live pigeons and prairie dogs for "sport" and money...dropping cosmetics into rabbits' eyes so humans can have nonirritating and frivolous products...keeping calves in stalls for tender veal, and chickens in crowded, filthy boxes to increase production...wounding elk through carelessness – all of these examples, and thousands of others whose common denominator is disrespect, seemed to me to be gratuitous forms of pain that are best removed from the world. Different from them is the instrumental pain caused by the honest biological clamor of our guts' wanting to be fed and which seems irreducible. (1993: 232)

Of course, the instrumental pain induced by hunting is not as irreducible as Kerasote wants us to believe. At some point, when the killing of animals was essential for survival, it might have been. Nowadays, however, that is no longer the case for most people in the Western world. Rather than being "an honest biological clamor of our guts' wanting to be fed", hunting is more appropriately seen as symbolic behavior and a ritual. As such it expresses cultural meaning, as well as a set of social, cultural, and political ideals. In distinguishing hunting from other animal uses, Kerasote and other hunters indicate that hunting symbolizes a life that is closer to animals, closer to origins, and closer to nature than the modern lives most of us lead.

Robert Kimber approaches the issue of justifying hunting in a particularly honest account. He thinks that animals are worthy of a respect that must somehow be acknowledged, even in hunting. In his *Living Wild and Domestic* (2002), he comments on the practice of catch-and-release fishing, which he finds troubling: "The core issue that bothers (...) us who have struggled with the question of catch-and-release is the issue of respect. In a true hunting culture, hunters are permitted to kill and eat animals but not toy with their lives, not treat them as playthings" (2002: 159). Kimber's position entails, as do many of the sources reviewed here, that individual animals have a certain value by virtue of the kind of beings they are. This means that animals are constructed as individual, sentient

beings, and that the hunter thinks this is of some consequence to his sport. An animal is more than a unit in a population statistic, says this argument; it is also an individual. Kimber elaborates:

We are saying that the specific bear eating doughnuts in front of our tree stand is not just a representative of its species but an individual creature deserving of our respect (...) And so it is with the bear or with our family cat, who is programmed to groom his fur and to sharpen his claws on any handy tree or doorjamb *but is also his unique self* (2002: 165, emphasis added).

The hunter must struggle to harmonize this conception of the individual animal's worth with his passion for the sport. As Ole Kirkemo notes in response to the hunter's constant awareness that he might wound an animal: "The only available alternative if we want to remove any risk of wounding, is to let down our weapons. For me, and the entire class of hunters in this country, that is a completely unrealistic option" (2004: 109). Though the hunter is aware that he can never extinguish all pain from hunting, it has become part of the contemporary hunting ethos to strive towards this ideal.

Practically, this has been sought achieved by making hunter education and target practice more obligatory, as well as extending the scope of those programs (see Sjøilen 1995). Also, legislation has been enacted that dictates the hunter's treatment of game more strictly. For instance, the Norwegian Game Law (*Viltloven*) states that: "Hunting and catching (*fangst*) shall be performed in such a way that game is not exposed to unnecessary suffering, so that it involves no danger for people or domestic animals, or damage to property" (in Pedersen 1999: 67). Besides these practical efforts, we can also see that the prescription to "minimize suffering" has become thoroughly integrated in the hunting ethic. Hunters assert repetitiously the prescriptions to aim for a quick kill and to retrieve wounded animals (see Luke 1997), and these points are often painted with a brush sympathetic to the plight of the animal. Norwegian hunter Ole Kirkemo admits: "100 000 deer (*hjortevilt*) are felled annually. The fact that the bullet not always lands where it is supposed to, is perhaps a harder blow to the hunter than the pain the animal experiences" (2004: 97). Hunters commonly note that one must never fire unless one is reasonably certain to be successful, never fire at animals in great motion, never fire if one only has a view from behind, and never fire into a group of animals. Their repetitions of these points are most likely inspired by a genuine desire to avoid causing unnecessary suffering. An additional motive, though, is to retain (or rather, create) the image of the hunter as a sympathetic character, who

understands the situation of the game. Pedersen reveals as much: “In the future it will be of great importance that all hunters strive towards a humane form of hunting that does not conflict with society’s notions of what is acceptable” (1999: 49).

In the case of wounded animals, there seems to be few vicarious motives, though. American hunter Jim Posewitz tells the story of a bow hunter who wounded an elk, and who stayed in the field searching for it for 30 days, until he found it dead. Posewitz puts the deliberate effort of this hunter into context: “The important point is that the hunter stayed with the hunt until he satisfied himself that it was over. He had mortally wounded an animal and did not rest until he sat with that animal. This is a profound expression of respect” (1994: 83). If we accept hunting as a fact, then it is hard to disagree with Posewitz’ statement. The respect shown by the hunter in Posewitz’ story, although another kind of respect than what critics of the hunt might envision, still indicates that the animal is not merely a thing to the hunter. His action signals that the hunter, although he eventually kills the animal, owes it certain duties.

But can really the duties we owe to animals be fulfilled within the hunt? If so, how? If we now have some idea of the hunter’s view of the animal, we must ask how hunting can legitimately fall in the category where some people, as Kimber puts it, “expend considerable effort to kill it”.

The Hunting Game

In his book on hunting, anthropologist Matt Cartmill (1993) defines hunting thus:

(...) hunting in the modern world is not to be understood as a practical means of latching onto some cheap protein. It is intelligible only as symbolic behaviour, like a game or a religious ceremony (...) We define hunting, then, as the deliberative, direct, violent killing of unrestrained wild animals; and we define wild animals in this context as those that shun or attack human beings. (1993: 29-30)

I believe Cartmill’s definition of hunting is accurate. However, it leaves the hunter with a problem, because how can a deliberate, direct, violent killing of animals, which is not primarily a way of procuring food, be justified under the principle of unnecessary harm? Before we add some context to Cartmill’s definition, hunting looks decidedly immoral. Such context will be provided by hunters in the two following chapters, but in the remainder of this chapter we will look at how hunters view the nature and status of hunting

itself, and specifically, at a definition that sees hunting as a game, which, if played according to a set of specified rules, can be deemed *fair*.

Historically, the modern hunting rationale developed towards the end of the 19th century, and it was, in some aspects, markedly different from its predecessors. In her book *The Animal Estate* (1987), Harriet Ritvo documents one of those predecessors in the dominionistic mode of hunting exemplified by British colonial big game hunters. She argues that big game hunting was both an image and a tool of the imperial enterprise: “The connection between triumphing over a dangerous animal and subduing unwilling natives was direct and obvious, and the association of the big game hunter with the march of empire was literal as well as metonymic” (1987: 254). Following this rationale, colonial big game hunters managed to hunt several species almost to extinction, and consequently, strong doubts were raised about this ruling ethos of hunting.

What this domination rationale and the modern sport, or recreation, rationale have in common is that they are both forms of hunting that do not turn on necessity, like the subsistence variant, nor on commercial profit, like the market variant.²⁰ However, as far as their attitude to the hunt and to game is concerned, they are worlds apart. Ritvo documents that, for colonial, dominionistic hunters: “Each slain animal represented a personal assertion of dominance” (1987: 270), and hence, it was imperative to fell as many exemplars as one could (cf. photographs of the immense bags of imperial hunters). These hunters, significantly, took little interest in the meat, and were primarily interested in the head, horns, and hide, in other words, the trophies. Ritvo quotes from a large number of historic accounts of big game hunting, written by hunters whose books were immensely popular at the time. Their accounts reveal how far from today’s ethic this kind of hunting was; one hunter talks about the “insatiable desire for *slaying* something”, another admits being delighted by “whole hecatombs of slaughter”, and a third took his goal in hunting to be the “humiliation of every wild beast”. The famous big game hunter Gordon Cumming found the thought “that you can ride up [to a group of elephants] and vanquish whichever one you fancy” to be “so overpoweringly exciting that it almost takes a man’s breath away” (all quoted in Ritvo 1987: 270).

²⁰ Distinctions like these are hard to make, because the motives and rationales for hunting are not always easily kept apart. However, it seems safe to say that the *primary* rationale for hunting in today’s Western world is sport/recreation (see Espen Sjølen’s 1995 history of the Norwegian Hunting and Fishing Association, entitled *Sportsmen in Foraging Land: 125 Years Working for Hunting and Fishing as Recreation* (Sportmenn i veideland: 125 års arbeid for jakt og fiske som rekreasjon).

Eventually, a new, and more modest, ethos emerged. This came about partially in response to dwindling populations of game, and partially as a parallel to the new model of colonial administration at large, which had begun to evolve around stewardship rather than domination (Ritvo 1987: 287). The new way of envisioning the hunt would not only ensure plentiful populations of game, it implied quite another image of the animal. Hunting was no longer equal to domination. It was no longer “slaughter” (Ritvo 1987: 287). While the hunt had previously been an arena for *assertion*, of the empire as well as of individual manhood, its rationale now turned towards *interaction*. The hunt was now imagined as a game played by the hunter and his prey; and as with all games, it needed its set of rules, the most important function of which was to ensure the fairness of the game.

Consequently, hunting can today no longer be performed freely and without restraint. The ethos that emerged from the experience of diminishing populations of game (which, incidentally, was not peculiar to Africa, but a fact even in Norway and the U.S., see Sjøilen 1995 and Mighetto 1991), has been firmly established in a sportsman’s code. This code, an unwritten set of rules and norms designed to guide the hunter and direct him towards an ethical hunt, includes prescriptions in relation to the game, to fellow hunters, and to non-hunters (see Luke 1997). Most importantly, it includes rules that sort under the heading of “fair chase”. The concept of a fair chase consists in the idea that hunting can be a fair game played by hunters and their quarry *and* a set of rules that describe how to make it thus. In essence, these rules are about limiting the scope of the hunter’s killing force, so as to allow the animal a chance of escape.

According to Thomas McIntyre, fair chase “requires us to use our senses and stealth to draw within killing range of our prey, not to wield our technology to detach ourselves from it and make it merely a target of opportunity (1988: 60)”. In practice, this means:

(...) proscriptions against shooting animals from airplanes or any motorized land or water vehicle...against the use of airplanes, boats, or land vehicles to herd animals toward shooters...against the use of artificial lights or night-vision optics...and against killing fenced-in animals or those otherwise rendered helpless. (Petersen 2000: 48)

In a study of hunters’ motivations, Dag Jønsberg elaborates: “An important feature of the hunt is that it is difficult, and that it should be difficult. The hunt is simplified if it assumes the character of mere slaughter or target practice on live animals” (2000: 28). Considering the previous synonymy of the terms hunting and slaughter, it is interesting to note that

many hunters nowadays use the term slaughter to contrast the (potential) fairness of hunting. Kirkemo talks about the hunting fever that sometimes comes upon a hunter as he spots an animal within shooting range. An “uncontrolled trembling” commences, which cannot be helped (2004: 35). But, says Kirkemo: “This excitement is part of the nature of the hunt, and it distinguishes our activity essentially from the routine that is characteristic of the execution of animals in a modern slaughterhouse” (2004: 35). Hunting fever, he says, “is the proof that what you are doing is hunting, not slaughter” (2004: 33, reads better in Norwegian, because it rhymes: “det du driver med er jakt, ikke slakt”). Thomas McIntyre, similarly contends that “killing should never be allowed to become simple or dispassionate” (1988: 85), and we could add: “as in a slaughterhouse”. Former American president, and hunter, Jimmy Carter asserts that: “Success, when it comes, must be difficult and uncertain. The effortless taking of game is not hunting – it is slaughter” (1996: 43). In these accounts, the act of slaughtering is implicitly regarded as unfair, dispassionate, and cold. By contrast, the fair chase is seen as a passionate game played by hunter and game, which allows the animal a chance. While domestic animals are slaughtered for one purpose only, the quarry of a hunt has an additional function in that it becomes a contrast, a challenge, and a counter-player to man in the confrontation between humanity and nature.

Though the fair chase demands that the hunter “allows the animal a chance”, the function of this requirement is not simply (or not at all?) to safeguard the interests of the animal. As we have seen, notions of fair chase originated in response to a situation where the hunter, for several reasons, was able to fell immense numbers of prey with little effort. However, today, the number of animals killed is not supposed to matter, according to the code. What matters, instead, is that the hunt presents the hunter with a challenge. Indeed, the contemporary hunter may find the primary value of the hunt to lie in this challenge, a fact that elucidates the ruling rationale of hunting. In an economy where the hunter’s primary objective is to obtain food, it is likely that fairness would be a far less central concept (we can note the American Indian practice of driving whole herds of animals off cliffs as an example). The fair chase emphasizes the effort that goes into hunting, while the hunter/gatherer is more likely to appreciate little effort whenever it is possible. Also, the approach of the hunter/gatherer is much like that of the slaughterer; the animal is killed primarily because its meat provides the executioner with food. Not so for the contemporary hunter, where food can be no more than a secondary motive. He hunts for the challenge of it, more than anything. The hunt is a game, carrying a challenge to the hunter: “Are you

man enough? Are you up to the challenge?” When success comes, the hunter has answered the challenge in the positive. But, for most hunters that is not enough. Rather, by upholding the fair chase the challenge is sustained, so that the hunter can assert himself time and time again. The fair chase, we could say, satisfies the hunter’s need of confirmation. On a more general level still, the same notion satisfies humanity’s constant need of confirmation in relation to the animal kingdom.

Though most hunters accept the greater part of the fair chase recommendations, some feel that certain parts of the code are insufficient or even wrong-headed. Sven Gjems questions the requirement of wing-shooting birds, which he refers to as “a fairly dubious lottery of life and death” (1999: 76). Kirkemo challenges the typical Norwegian rejection of Danish herding hunts of pheasants, on the grounds that “no form of hunting is more worth than any other as long as it is performed humanly and with a respect for game” (2004: 125). David Petersen is critical of fair chase conceptions, because he considers them primarily a cover-up of trophy hunting clubs like Boone and Crockett, Pope and Young and Safari Club International. He shows no mercy in his condemnation of the worst exemplars of these hunters:

The worst – the absolute worst – is a clueless killer-cult that pays thousands to execute captive, increasingly biogenetically engineered “trophy” animals and dares to call it hunting. These are the bottom-feeders of the testosterone-drenched subset (...) call[ed] dominionistic/sport hunters. These drooling, incompetent few – a tiny minority even among the headhunting crowd – literally buy their “trophies of a lifetime”, paying big bucks to indulge in the shooting-gallery killing of big bucks in fenced enclosures. (2000: 86-87)

What upsets Petersen about this way of hunting, is that it does not conform to his conception of an ethical hunt, fair chase or not. In fact, however, his grounds for protest start from one particular version of the sportsman’s code.

Firstly, Petersen is frustrated by the hunting of *enclosed* animals. A prerequisite for an ethical hunt, according to the great majority of written sources, is that the game must be wild. If not, then the animal is deemed to have less of a chance *and* the hunter is seen to be up against less of a challenge. Such a hunt is never described as fair chase. Further, animals must be wild and natural, and not made by man, as in bioengineering. If animals are not wild, then hunting loses its character of being a special kind of confrontation between man and nature. Also, in Petersen’s mind, as well as in that of many other hunters, a basic presupposition for ethical hunting is to *eat what you kill*. While most hunters sanction the

taking of a trophy, many cannot accept it as the only motivation. (As Petersen says: “It is only when the competitive drive expands to the level of killing to feed a sickly ego – as promoted, codified, and glorified by trophy hunting “clubs” – that it becomes morally reprehensible” (2000: 46).) The motive of meat might strike some as peculiar, considering what has been said so far about subsistence no longer being the rationale for hunting. However, things are not that simple. Many hunters still appeal to the food motive, for various reasons. For some, hunting may turn out to be cheaper than buying domestic meat, though considering the cost of hunting this is not likely to be the operational motive for the average hunter. Some might mention the meat motive because they prefer the taste of wild game to that of domestic animals. This is probably true, as far as individual tastes go, but I doubt that it could make much of a difference in the justification of hunting, since it does not relate to the critical issues at hand, like the suffering of the animal. Rather, the more likely reason why hunters appeal to the meat motive is a moral reluctance to waste an animal. For the most part, contemporary hunters acknowledge that animals are sentient, emotional creatures, and to waste such a creature would signal a lack of respect. To hunt and kill animals requires a moral context. To “use what you kill”, partially supplies that context for many hunters.

For some hunters, the notion of fair chase is wholly inadequate to justify hunting in today’s world. Instead, they attempt to make subsistence the only legitimate justification of hunting. Edward Abbey, though he was not a dedicated hunter all his life and can probably not count as one here, explains his view on how hunting can be justified:

In earnest. There lies the key to the ethical issue. Earnestness. Purpose. That sly sophist Ortega y Gasset wrote, somewhere, that ‘one kills in order to have hunted.’ Not good enough. Thoreau would say, one kills in order to eat. The killing is justified by the need and must be done in a spirit of respect, reverence, gratitude. Otherwise hunting sinks to the level of mere fun, “harvesting animals”, *divertissement*, sadism, or sport. *Sport!* (1996: 15)

Even some dedicated hunters, like Robert Kimber, turn against the sportive aspect of the sportsman’s code. In the place of sport, he appeals to the ethos of hunter/gatherer cultures, here in the American Indian variant.

If we can say to the bear, as the Abenaki hunter says to the deer, ‘I have killed you because I need your skin for my coat and your flesh for my food. I have nothing else to live on,’ then we can also ask the bear’s forgiveness and hope to receive it. But if we have to say to the prairie dog, ‘I have killed you because I enjoy blasting

you into thin air,' how can we expect forgiveness? How can we dare even ask for it? (2002: 165)

Gary Snyder gives another example of how the contemporary hunter applies the hunter/gatherer framework:

The world is not only watching, it is listening too (...) Other beings (...) do not mind being killed and eaten as food, but they expect us to say please, and thank you, and they hate to see themselves wasted. (Snyder, quoted in Petersen 1996a: xviv)

These statements play with the notion that there is some sort of communication between the hunter and his prey. In the moral universe of the American natives, the animal could require that the hunter display a specific attitude of respect and gratitude. If the hunter did not demonstrate these virtues, then the animal would remain elusive. If he, on the other hand, appeared modest and grateful, the animal could choose to disclose itself, “giving” itself to the hunter, and thus accepting its own death. James Swan endorses this notion explicitly: “The wisdom of native peoples (...) asserts that under the right conditions, the success of the hunter is not just a reflection of skill but the choice of the animal” (1995: 37). He comments on his astonishment over shooting a Canada goose where “there was no good reason for that goose to be”, and asks:

Did the bird want to come to us? I have seen ducks fly kamikaze-style into range for hunters standing out in the open, but never geese. They are very wary birds. If the willing-victim sacrifice of animals does exist, then this goose seemed to be living proof (...) One wonders if the Canada geese approved of what we were doing. It was the kind of experience with the spirit of the wild that makes a person understand why animals are sacred and feel great awe in their presence. (1995: 49)

Assertions like these demonstrate the mystique of the hunter's animal. The animal is native to the land, while the human hunter remains, always, a borderline figure. The animal knows the land intuitively, and carries nature's law within. This leaves the hunter in great awe and respect for his quarry, but also with a query whether the animal may, under the right conditions, choose to give itself to him. For many hunters, the hunter/gatherer ethos secures a much-needed context of respect for the animal which they cannot find in the Western notion of fair chase. However, it seems obvious that the two frameworks have much in common. They both see the hunt as a kind of game, and they both demand a certain attitude of the hunter in relation to his quarry. An apparent difference is that in the hunter/gatherer framework animals are anthropomorphized to a greater extent. However, we should not

overstate this difference, because the construction of animals implicit in the notion of fair chase is that they are the kind of beings that can care about *fairness*, which, we should add, is a rather human concept.

Is There a Case for the Fair Chase?

In this chapter, an approach for discussing the nature and moral status of animals was delineated, and it was suggested how a minimal animal ethic may look like given this framework. We then turned to the hunter and found that the hunter's conception of the nature and status of animals largely conformed to the intuition on which this ethic was developed. Hunters almost invariably acknowledge animals as sentient, emotional beings with distinct interests. Despite this realization, hunters maintain that animals may be hunted, and they vie for a scheme to minimize suffering rather than the abandonment of hunting. Hunters add context to this position through their construction of hunting as a game. This notion was formed by the environmental, political, and moral circumstances of the age in which it came about. Specifically, diminishing populations of wild animals engendered an ethos where the hunt, envisioned as a *fair chase*, was made into a challenge, a game, a confrontation of worlds, and at the same time, the concept itself necessarily implied that this challenge, this game, could be fair. These motives, to be sure, are not new in the history of hunting. The novel aspect of the modern fair chase is its practical application in rules that prohibit certain attitudes and practices, and prescribes others.

The hunter's construction of the animal as a sentient being with distinct interests is acceptable given the position sketched earlier in this chapter, and it also corresponds to common sense beliefs about animals. We should not take issue with this part of the hunter's account. However, given the principle of unnecessary harm, we would expect hunting to be deemed impossible as an ethical practice; modern hunting apparently involves the infliction of unnecessary harm upon the animal, not only inevitably, but deliberately. What we must consider is whether the hunter's contextualization of hunting as a fair chase, is ample grounds to disregard the suffering experienced by the animal. This seems quite clearly *not* to be the case. We asserted earlier that the interests of animals could be overridden by more important concerns, and, in particular, we established that the interests of humans were to be preferred in cases where humans faced a harm comparable to that facing the animal. In the case presented so far, we have no indication that there are any crucial human interests at

stake. In fact, the only apparent stake is the hunter's desire to play a game, the objective of which is to take the other player's life. But, the hunter objects, this is not just any game; it is a fair chase!

However, we have good reason not to accept the notion of hunting as a fair chase. We should note that, in the "game" of hunting, the odds are far from even. Though the animal certainly has some advantages, these are ultimately of little consequence; while Norwegian and American hunters collectively kill millions of animals each year, game animals, in comparison, *very* seldom kill hunters. How can a game where one player always wins be fair? How can a game where one player comes to the game with a high-precision lethal weapon and the other without any weapon at all, be fair? (In a football match, would it be fair if one team had to play in their socks?) These questions are ridiculous, but so is the notion that hunting is a fair chase. Fairness is not a concept the animal can understand, and many of the prescriptions contained in this concept is not something the animal can care about. For instance, the proscription against shooting a bird on the ground can in some instances be at the expense of the animal's interest in avoiding suffering. The fair chase notion that excessive technology and equipment turns hunting into dispassionate slaughter cannot be accepted either. From the principle of unnecessary harm, we would prefer any device that had the effect of bringing the animal's suffering to a minimum. Also, the fair chase distinction between the dispassionate killing of the slaughterhouse and the passionate one in hunting is far from clear, and indeed, it sounds suspect. What does it mean, exactly, to kill "passionately"? Are we allowed to kill humans, if only we do it "passionately"? If not, why? "Passion" and "killing" are entities we normally do not like to see juxtaposed (they bring to mind psychotic serial killers or something of that sort), and so the hunter needs bigger guns if he is to argue that this juxtaposition is legitimate in the case of hunting.

What is more troublesome, however, is the hunter's interpretation of the principle of unnecessary harm. The hunter, and even the game law (as quoted above), clearly acknowledges this principle. However, the hunter does not seem to acknowledge the full consequences of this principle, and instead he diverts attention towards "minimizing" suffering. In so doing, he does not resolve the paradox that hunting, on the one hand, necessarily (and on one level, even deliberately) inflicts suffering, while on the other hand, strives to minimize that same suffering.

If we turn to the efforts of some hunters to revitalize the hunter/gatherer ethos, we can see that they are not necessarily much more successful. The major problem of these attempts is that they do not always relate to the animal's actual experience. As with the concept of "fair chase", animals cannot understand, nor care about, the hunter's "thank you". Animals do not "hate to see themselves wasted". If hunters say to the deer, as Robert Kimber suggests they do, "I have killed you because I need your skin for my coat and your flesh for my food. I have nothing else to live on", then the deer would not understand a single word the hunter said. Also, it does not, as far as our current knowledge of animals' capacity for language and intelligent thought goes, make sense to "ask the bear's forgiveness". The bear does not have the mental apparatus to grasp such abstract concepts. Of course, the goal of these hunters is not necessarily to suggest that animals have this capacity, but rather to give a more exotic account of how hunting can be justified. My quarrel is not with the desire of some hunters to put hunting into a subsistence context, but with the language they use to achieve this objective.

However, some hunters seem to take this kind of language more literally, when they suggest that animals may on occasion give themselves to the hunter. This is a far slipperier slope, since it entails that the animal does not mind being hunted, indeed, that it wants to be killed and that dying is in its interest. This notion does not relate to any knowledge we have about animals, and in fact, it actively disregards the knowledge we do have. As far as we can reasonably tell, an animal does not want to die, nor does it actually give itself to the hunter. The willing-victim-hypothesis reads more like an excuse than a justification for hunting.

Against these notions, we can establish that what can matter to the animal are the conditions under which it lives and dies. Primarily, this concerns the absence of pain and suffering, but we could also add, perhaps, a sufficient environment where the animal can flourish and function normally.

This discussion does not entail that the fair chase ethos should be abandoned, or that one cannot phrase hunting in exotic terms. What it means is, firstly, that these definitions do not provide sufficient justification for hunting given the principle of unnecessary harm, and secondly, that if these definitions of hunting are to be retained under some other regime of justification, then they must be brought into a satisfactory relation with the actual interests of animals, to the extent we can determine what these are. We now turn to those other forms of justification.

3 Origins

For we are all men of nature, and the natural man is a killer.

– Gunnar Schrøder Kristiansen, *Mellom natur og kultur*

If you believe that you can do whatever you like – even, for example, the supreme good, then you are, irretrievably, a villain. The preoccupation with what should be is estimable only when the respect for what is has been exhausted.

– José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting*

The image of the hunter as our noble ancestor is widespread and its popularity is not confined to hunters (see Edgerton 1992). However, hunters are particularly fond of this tale, for apparent reasons. For many hunters, the story of who we are and where we come from – the story of origins – carries great weight even in our contemporary lives. And as we shall see, this attitude is often coupled with the contention that there is something fundamentally wrong with these modern lives, that we from noble origins have gone astray, and that we are now out of touch with our inner, original, selves. It is a variation on the Fall from Grace, although, as we will see, it is a variation with a twist.

The Hunting Hypothesis and the Killer Ape

In his exemplary book on hunting, *A View to a Death in the Morning*, Matt Cartmill (1993) investigates what has commonly been called the hunting hypothesis of human origins. He tells the story of the young Australian anatomist Raymond Dart who, in 1923, was sent to occupy a position at the School of Medicine in Johannesburg. Dart had not originally wanted to leave his more attractive job at the University College London, but for some reason he did, and it turned out to be a defining moment in his career. Shortly after he arrived, an ape-like fossil skull, which could not be identified as belonging to any known species, was discovered and brought to him. After examining it, he concluded that it was

the skull of a big-brained and upright human ancestor. He named it *Australopithecus africanus*. Two circumstances made Dart's discovery relevant to the hunting hypothesis of human origins: Firstly, the location of the discovery was puzzling because South Africa is and has been savannah-like landscape for millions of years, while apes invariably live in forests. Secondly, together with the Australopithecine skull there was found a fossil of a baboon skull with a round hole in it. Putting these two facts together, Dart concluded that the baboon had literally fallen prey to our ancestor, the Australopithecine. That would explain how the latter could survive on the plains, where there was a scarce supply of vegetable foods common to apes. Man, Dart now concluded, had a tremendously long history as a hunter. Or to be more specific, hunting was what made us human.

The hunting hypothesis, then, implies not only that man hunted at an early stage of his evolution, but that hunting was what sparked the movement from ape to human. Robert Ardrey, a more recent promulgator of Dart's ideas, states the hypothesis clearly: "*Man is man, and not a chimpanzee, because for millions upon millions of evolving years we killed for a living*" (1976: 10). Ardrey's expression adds momentum to the image of man as an original hunter, with its insistence on the "millions upon millions" of years involved in our hunting past. He establishes firmly a theme that resonates strongly even among modern sportsmen, namely that hunting, in a very fundamental way, defines us as a species. To distinguish the hunting hypothesis from the theory that hunting was a result of a rational decision, Ardrey asks:

(...) what if the hunting way, with all the human consequences...implied, had started millions of years *before* the advent of the human brain? Then our brain – like our triceps, our buttocks, our flattened running feet – is an evolutionary consequence of survival necessities that had come before. (1976: 23-4)

Stated like this, the characteristics that go along with being a predator are established as core aspects of our being. Killing animals to eat is a human trait just as basic and unavoidable as being made up of limbs. It is attached to us, and it cannot be severed without somehow leaving us incomplete.

Cartmill shows how Dart, with his discovery, met the post-WWII need to explain the atrocities of the war, by portraying the Australopithecine not simply as our meat-eating ancestors, but as:

(...) confirmed killers: carnivorous creatures, that seized living quarries by violence, battered them to death, tore apart their broken bodies, dismembered them

limb from limb, slaking their ravenous thirst with the hot blood of victims and greedily devouring livid writhing flesh. (Dart, in Cartmill 1993: 10)

This is the image of the *Killer Ape*, a rapacious and blood-thirsty beast who, according to the hunting hypothesis, lives in all of us. It explains with amazing simplicity the cause of all our contemporary calamities: man is a predator, and removed from the original predator/prey-relationship, he continues to act out his aggressive instinct in the new setting of human mass society. Cartmill argues that the motif of the Killer Ape was not merely a quirk of a confused scientist, but that it was attuned to a widespread cultural pessimism regarding human nature, dominant in the two decades after the war. Among the distinguished promulgators of the idea of man's wretched nature were Robinson Jeffers and William Golding. The pithy Robert Ardrey was also part of this choir:

Not in innocence, and not in Asia, was mankind born. The home of our fathers was that African highland reaching north from the Cape to the Lakes of the Nile. Here we came about – slowly, ever so slowly – on a sky-swept savannah glowing with menace. (Ardrey, in Cartmill 1993: 13).

For the post-war generation, the thought of a predatory element in us evoked images of inevitable blood-shed, and the hunting hypothesis served to explain how humans were capable of being turned against each other to the extent demonstrated by the Nazis. Then, during the 1970s, this “flimsy story” lost its hold due to obvious flaws in scientific method and logic (Cartmill 1993: xi).²¹

Cartmill's account is both entertaining and accurate, as far as it goes. However, in his treatment the hunting hypothesis is left to die when confronted with the (leftist) anthropological critiques of the 1970s; it is not recognized that the task of working through the experiences of the war in time gave way to another imperative issue: *our relation to the natural world*. In this scenario, the hunting hypothesis was called on again, only now people were able to see our predatory past in a more benign light.

²¹ Among the accusations were: insufficient evidence, tendentious use of the evidence there was, as well as failure to consider alternative scenarios (Cartmill 1993, Leakey 1994).

A Fresh Look at Our Predatory Past

Robert Ardrey, though closely aligned to the work of Raymond Dart and the tale of the Killer Ape, notes in his book *The Hunting Hypothesis*:

While [the hunting hypothesis] may explain why we are human beings and not chimpanzees, the story will not explain how we are to remain human beings. Our humanity evolved as a portion of our hunting way, and the hunting way, regrettably, is gone. (1976: 24)

Here, suddenly, is a willingness to take a new and fresh look at our predatory past and, perhaps, even at the current practice of hunting. A more recent expert on our evolutionary origins, anthropologist Craig B. Stanford, largely remains within the bounds of the hunting hypothesis paradigm. However, in his writings, the image of the Killer Ape has slipped out the back door. He argues that “the origins of human intelligence are linked to the acquisition of meat”, but he adds that the key element in this process is “the cognitive capacities necessary for the strategic sharing of meat with fellow group members” (1999: 5). In other words, “the intellect required to be a clever, strategic, and mindful sharer of meat is the essential recipe that led to the expansion of the human brain” (1999: 5). From Dart’s “confirmed killers” who slaked their “ravenous thirst with the hot blood of victims”, we have gone to Stanford’s emphasis on the “clever, strategic, and mindful sharer”!

As the war grew steadily more distant, the pessimistic interpretation of our evolutionary origins lost much of its appeal. The cultural pessimism expounded by the Killer Ape tale had partly been replaced by an impressive optimism and a belief in the possibilities of endless economic growth and affluence. And real life, for once, seemed to live up to expectations. People in the Western world were better off than ever, and there was apparently no limit to the progress attainable by the Western model of society. However, beneath this complacent optimism stirred a stubborn discontent, and it wasn’t long before someone started seeing the “limits to growth”. This protest came to be known as environmentalism, and following the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962, it was to have many prophets. One among these was distinct in his insistence that our contemporary predicament – including biodiversity loss, destruction of habitat, over-consumption, warfare and social conflict – was due to the departure from our predatory past. This person was the world’s first human ecologist, Paul Shepard (1926-1995), who became one of the key figures in the re-evaluation of hunting through a series of particularly vivid accounts.

In this chapter, I will look at Shepard's academic account of our Fall from Hunting Grace, and compare it to the non-academic accounts made by other hunters. It is the purpose of this chapter to argue that the hunting hypothesis, from the 1970s on, was invoked and reshaped by hunters who needed to depict our hunting ancestor – and, in the face of a growing criticism by animal rightists and others, hunting itself – in a more benign light. In this process, the hunting hypothesis assumed a new content. Unlike in the Killer Ape story, where human predation explained alienation from fellow humans, our origins as hunters could now be seen to safeguard our connection to natural processes. Hunting was reinvented as the quintessential natural activity. However, giving the intentional killing and consumption of our relatives in the animal kingdom an air of nobility – at exactly the time when the move to acknowledge the moral status of animals gained serious momentum in the Western world – required the use of an outstanding exemplar of the human predator. This figure, of course, was the *Ecologically Noble Savage*: the magnificent primitive who lead a life beyond our reach; a life simpler and purer, more harmonious and more beautiful than ours; but ultimately, a life that mirrored the lost innocence of our origins.

With this new content, the hunting hypothesis of human origins comes to the fore as a prominent justification of hunting in the modern world. But the argument from origins encompasses much more than a simple statement of how and when we came into existence; it becomes the story of how our origins define and determine us.

10,000 Year Long Fall

Judging from a web page²² intended to “introduce and celebrate the adventure of Paul Shepard's life and work,” he seems to have the kind of recognition that only befalls great geniuses – the posthumous kind. David Petersen testifies: “In this century and a whole lot of others, no other thinker has been anywhere near so visionary, prophetic, revolutionary and important as Paul Shepard.” But then he goes on to add: “Yet, if you know about Paul Shepard – about the man, his vision, and his books – you're a member of an anomalous minority.” My foremost concern here is not whether Shepard's work is representative of the common hunter. Rather, Shepard is interesting because he so clearly formulates an eloquent tale of who we are and where we come from; a story that many hunters return to in their

²² <http://home.earthlink.net/~frshepard> (Accessed: September 1, 2005)

arguments. What sets Shepard apart from many contemporary hunters is that he aspires for more than just a defense of hunting as a pleasurable pursuit in the modern world; his much broader agenda is to vindicate the traditional hunter/gatherer way of life. However, in Shepard's account there is an inextricable bond between the traditional hunter/gatherer and the modern sportsman. Despite the various technological aids put to use by the latter, their way of relating to their environment remains the same, and more importantly, the hunting mode remains essential for our physical and mental health – individually and as a species:

Something enormously powerful binds living hunter/gatherers to all those of the past and to modern sportsmen, who are no exception to the best traditions of the ancient hunt. That something is the way the hunt satisfies the demands of the genome. (1998: 76)

In his books and articles, Paul Shepard attempts to re-evaluate our modern lives in a remarkably stark contrast with the traditional hunter/gatherer. In his book *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (1973), he lashes out at contemporary society, declaring humans “refugees from nature” since the start of civilization (1973: xiii). In Shepard's view, history since the invention of agriculture equals “ten thousand years of crisis”, and he adds that “the epidemic of acquisitive proprietorship and territorial aggrandizement that resulted from this development is all too apparent” (1973: 4). His main thesis is that agricultural society brings alienation from nature – where this term stands for both “human nature” as well as “natural environment”. According to Shepard, “all major human characteristics – size, metabolism, sexual and reproductive behavior, intuition, intelligence – had come into existence and were oriented to the hunting life”, and modern society suppresses all these fundamental characteristics by being centered on agriculture instead of hunting (1973: 7). The result of this is all too clear:

Cut off from hunting (...) men lost both the models and the means by which personal integrity was achieved and measured within the group by peaceful means. They found a substitute in the biggest and most dangerous potential prey remaining – men themselves. (1973: 7)

Apart from outright violence and war between men, argues Shepard, agricultural society brought with it more time-consuming and tedious work, arranged marriages and routinized procreation, diseases and epidemics, famine and scarcity, authoritarian families and generational disharmonies, class struggle and ideological exploitation, as well as derangement of animals through domestication; in short, most of the things we regard as

bad in our society originated with the abandonment of hunting. An illustration of Shepard's sweeping approach is offered by his equalization of farming with an "ecological disease" and animal husbandry with a "failure of biological style" (1973: 33, 9). In this perspective, the shift to agriculture equals a Fall from Grace: "For every man whose life was improved by that momentous Neolithic revolution, hundreds lost health, freedom, and social dignity" (1973: 90). In agrarian society, life is harsh and redemption scarce. Self-deception, however, is widespread:

[Agriculturalists] are simple, industrious, tenacious, and predictable. But simplicity can mean dull wits, and industry can be a kind of word for toil, the price and token of security, respect, and piety. The other virtues are euphemisms for the simplified, repetitive life of people whose bulldog grip on their humanity is misinterpreted as contentment and wise serenity. (1973: 18)

In *Nature and Madness* (1982), Shepard argues that the shift to agriculture not only brings with it a damaged relationship to other humans and to the natural world, but that it imposes a dysfunctional psyche on us as well. The departure from the perfectly integrated lifestyle of the foragers, Shepard describes as "irrational (...) and unconscious, a kind of failure in some fundamental dimension of human existence, an irrationality beyond mistakenness, a kind of madness" (1982: 3-4). When he elaborates, however, it becomes clear that our problem is not really that we are mad, but that we are not mature, indeed, that we are children:

The culmination of individual ontogenesis, characterized by graciousness, tolerance, and forbearance, tradition-bound to accommodate a mostly nonhuman world, and given to long, indulgent training of the young, may be inconsistent in some ways with the needs of society. In such societies – and I include ours – certain infantile qualities might work better: fear of separation, fantasies of omnipotence, oral preoccupation, tremors of helplessness, and bodily incompetence and dependence. (1982: 14-5)

And he adds, forcefully, that "the only society more frightful than one run by children, as in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, might be one run by childish adults" (1982: 17). This lack of maturity in agricultural societies, argues Shepard, stems in no small part from the unnatural and dysfunctional role played by animals in these societies. In *The Others* (1996), he argues that "the human species emerged enacting, dreaming, and thinking animals and cannot be fully itself without them" (1996: 4). Shepard is concerned that, in our societies, where we hardly ever experience animals in their natural habitat, the role of animals as others in the formation of our human identities is obstructed. Ours is a world where all things are

humanized, “a world where otherness of all kinds is in danger” (1996: 5). He worries about human ontogeny, which he describes as “a kind of necessary pattern of growth toward maturity in which we acquire respect for that which is unbridgeable between ourselves and the animals” (1996: 5). While in foraging societies, animals were seen as other nations, they are now regarded either as things or machines, or as “pets” and morally considerable beings. The result is that indispensable otherness is confused or altogether lost. This has dramatic consequences, argues Shepard, not only for the animals and for nature, but for our own mental functioning and well-being:

Now consider the process in a world in which that Other has mostly disappeared. Food, tools, animals, structures, whole landscapes are man-made; even to me personally they seem more made than given and serve as extensions of that part of the self which I determine. My infantile ego glories in this great consuming I-am. Everything in sight belongs to me in the same sense as my members: legs, arms, hands, and so on. The buildings, streets, and cultivated fields are all continuous with my voluntary nervous system, my tamed, controlled self. In the ideology of farming, wild things are enemies of the tame; the wild Other is not the context but the opponent of “my” domain. (1982: 34-35)

In contrast to the flaws of modern agricultural civilization, Shepard posits the prehistoric Pleistocene, the era of hunter/gatherers, or what he calls cynegetic²³ society. Pleistocene foragers are role models because their lifestyle is near perfectly adapted to the human genome, which in turn is perfectly adapted to its natural surroundings, making the Pleistocene hunter/gatherer a prime example of the *ecologically noble savage*. Shepard takes his lead from Marshall Sahlins and other anthropologists who argued that the existence of the primitive hunter/gatherer was not “nasty, brutish and short” as often assumed. Sahlins argues that “there are two possible courses to affluence. Wants may be ‘easily satisfied’ either by producing much or desiring little” (1972: 1-2). Hunter/gatherers, obviously, are in the latter category. In fact, the traditional hunter/gatherer spends less time on subsistence than people in any other mode of living. That does not mean that they are poor, argues Sahlins: “Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between people. Poverty is a social status. As such it is the invention of civilization” (1972: 37). While Sahlins can refer to the human condition in civilization as an “ordained tragedy, with man the prisoner at hard labor of a perpetual disparity between his unlimited wants and his insufficient means”

²³ The term *cynegetics* comes from Greek and means “hunting with hounds”. Shepard uses the term to denote a hunting/gathering culture and lifestyle.

(1972: 1), he can conclude that the primitive hunter/gatherer, for his lack of a real job, material possessions, and even a permanent settlement, is the original affluent: “We are inclined to think of hunters and gatherers as *poor* because they don’t have anything; perhaps better to think of them for that reason as *free*” (1972: 1).

What Shepard does is to expand the images provided by Sahlins into a full-fledged appraisal of the foraging mode of existence, always pitting it against the negative counter-image supplied by modern Western civilization. For Shepard, the hunter/gatherer is not simply better off economically, he is more perfectly adapted to every aspect of life on this planet:

Because he is a hunter, he is the most deeply loving and profoundly compassionate animal (...) In his relationship to other individuals, and in his ecological relationship to the whole of his environment, man the hunter and gatherer has a great advantage in that the social and environmental perceptions necessary for his way of life are similar to those in which man evolved, so that his life style is the normal expression of his psychology and physiology. His humanity is therefore more fully achieved, and his community more durable and beautiful. (1973: 145-146)

At the core of Shepard’s argument is a thorough essentialism about human nature. The hunting mode of existence is considered “normal”, while other modes are seen as deviations. Hunting is not just something we do; hunters are the kind of beings we *are*. Consequently, he strongly rejects the notion of a limitless human adaptability, the idea of man as the unspecialized animal: “We are not the generalized species we claim. Indeed, human ontogeny – the intricately structured, human life cycle – is, like our central nervous system, a delicately equilibrated biological complex (1998: 135). He realizes, however, that suggestions of such “constraints” are not welcome in our society, “where, in the rush of individuals creating themselves, the self is left as an open sore (1998: 135). Citing anthropologist Derek Freeman, Shepard notes that “the doctrine of cultural relativism, which has dominated modern thought, may have blinded us to the deviate behavior of whole societies by denying normative standards for mental health” (1982: 4). Implicitly, it is understood that our society is just that – a “deviate society”. And the story we tell about ourselves, what we call “history”, Shepard succinctly describes as nothing but “a Western invention whose central theme is the rejection of habitat” (1982: 47). In Shepard’s view, history, and indeed, the whole mindset of the agriculturalist, does not conform to requirements set by the biological-environmental complex.

Despite his frustration with the purported cultural relativism of our age, Shepard acknowledges that cultures vary greatly. However, he cannot accept that the ability we have to freely create cultures is put to just any use: “We are free to create culture as we wish, but the prototype to which the genome is accustomed is Pleistocene society” (1998: 38). Straying from this norm will, as we have seen, have dire consequences. Shepard does not simply want to pit “culture” against “biology” and hail the latter. Rather, he sees the two as inextricably linked components that have to be harmonized in order for us to have healthy lives. The Pleistocene hunter/gatherers are awarded the status of ideals simply because they were the ones who most perfectly effected the symbiosis between biology and culture: “Human societies vary greatly in their structure, but the differences, however crucial they seem to us, are variations on the species theme – whose *human* traits are Paleolithic” (1998: 34).

In modern agricultural society, civilization has diverged from this “species theme”, and made us into beings not properly human: “Man is in part carnivore: the male of the species is genetically programmed to pursue, attack, and kill for food. To the extent that men do not do so they are not fully human” (1973: 123). Shepard believes in evolution, of course, but he thinks that all the essential parts of humans have been in place for thousands of years, and that any further, substantial evolution of human nature is unlikely. The objection that “nature is change” is not absolutely wrong, admits Shepard, but it “distorts the fundamental aspect of evolutionary change, which is its tempo” (1973: 122). What man essentially is, and must remember to be – if he is to avoid the diverse pains he now suffers from – was established ages ago. Whatever change the “elaborate constructions of civilization” may induce thereafter, is mere “frill” (1973: 202, 39). However, as Shepard himself points out, the frills can assume power over the core; suppressing, concealing and redirecting it. This is what has happened in our society, where the progress of civilization has moved forth at a rate which human nature could not adapt to, and where we have begun to mistake the frills of man’s nature for the real thing: “Culture, in racing ahead of our biological evolution, does not replace it but is injured by its own folly” (1982: ix).

If modern man is to be at all harmonious, he must realize that nature determines him: “The significance of being shaped during this almost inconceivable length of biological time is that it implies a degree of inherent biological control over our lives which we are accustomed by our culture to reject” (1973: 112). The notion of humans as “tragically disengaged” from all that is nature, is not a fundamental trait of our existence,

says Shepard, but rather a result of our culture defining us thus (1973: 40). The extent of his argument is such that nature determines us even morally. Unlike today, morals did not constitute a problem in hunter/gatherer society. It was an integrated part of a rich emotional experience which included pleasure and pain, life and death, love and hate (1973: 172-3). The contemporary view in ethics which says that all suffering should be eliminated as far as possible is a far cry from the moral outlook of the hunter. According to Shepard, this modern conception, “whether it sees the natural pattern as a consequence of evil or simply as absurd, is a denial rather than an affirmation of the world, and affects an ethical bravado that gives the illusion of elevating man above the rest of nature” (1973: 152). In effect, Shepard puts little value on acting morally for the sake of morals alone; morality cannot guarantee harmony, only nature can. Only through *affirmation* rather than *denial* of the world, can man become harmonious. And such an affirmation does not necessarily conform to the commands of the moralists – living according to nature is not the same thing as living according to (modern) morality. What affirmation of the world primarily implies is that man accepts and asserts his animality:

Men are born human. What they must learn is to be an animal. If they learn otherwise it may kill them and life on the planet. It is very difficult to learn to be an animal. First man must unlearn his misconception of the animal as a brute. To be an ape is to unlearn the ideologizing of nature. (1973, 84)

Shepard’s theory does not entail going back in time, giving up all the things that are actually good in civilization. In fact, it cannot be a question of going back, because as he says, “we cannot go back to what we never left” (1973: 260). It’s not a question of becoming-once-again hunter/gatherers, because we *are* hunter/gatherers. It is the essence of our nature. Civilization has suppressed and concealed this nature, but it has not managed to fundamentally change it. Deep within, the hunter still stirs. The only viable option is to let him roam. If we do not, then the Killer Ape that is modern man will continue on his rampage.

The Fall as Conceived by Those Who Are Not Professional Human Ecologists

Shepard's account is simultaneously more radical and more elaborate than that of the common hunter. However, hunters not only express an interest in our ancestry as hunters, but they do so in terms often remarkably reminiscent of Paul Shepard²⁴. Admittedly, there is considerable variety among hunters who utilize the argument from origins; some delve enthusiastically into the intricacies of evolutionary theory and prehistoric social organization, while others are content with succinct statements like: "Hunting and gathering has been the very foundation for the whole of humankind" (Pedersen 1999: 14). What is common to most, however, is the notion that history (especially where it is muddled with biology) comes with normative meaning. This idea is often blurry and unpronounced, but some version of it rears its head in most of the hunting literature. According to this view, the past, either through implanting biological traits or tendencies in us, or through creating stable and harmonious cultural traditions, is a better guide than human ingenuity to how we should live our lives. And it is no surprise, perhaps, that many hunters perceive the normative meaning of history to lie in man's connection to nature. Coupling the primitivism of Shepard's argument with a concoction of political conservatism and appraisal of rural values, these hunters construct one of the main defenses of hunting in contemporary U.S. and Norway. In this process, the city, which is identified with the runaway modernity of a rootless populace, is construed as contrast.

²⁴ Shepard's work has many branches, some of which I would hesitate to identify with the general hunting community. For instance, in America there is a strand known as the *anarchoprimitivist movement*, the main objective of which is to work "towards a post-civilized world" From: www.coalitionagainstdcivilization.org (Accessed: June 15, 2005). See also www.primalwar.org, www.greenanarchy.org, www.blackandgreen.org. Like Shepard, this movement singles out the agricultural (hence industrial-capitalist) economy as the source of most our troubles, and consequently seek to revive the "wild" lifestyle of hunter/gatherers. Key books in this tradition all seem to be aptly named; besides Shepard's *Nature and Madness*, other sources of inspiration apparently include Chellis Glendinning's *My Name is Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization* (1994), Fredy Perlman's *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan* (1983), as well as the works of John Zerzan, with titles like *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization* (2002), *Future Primitive* (1994), and *Against Civilization* (2005). The hunting community is varied, and so is the literature it produces, but in general, writers who present themselves as hunters do not support this radical anarchoprimitivist agenda. Nevertheless, the argument from origins contains an obvious primitivist element.

The Wild Ember Within

The basic thrust of the argument from origins comes from stating the significance of our hunting past. This exercise, often performed with great pathos, has become commonplace in defenses of hunting, even outside the relatively small community of human ecologists. The first thing to note is that hunters apply an unusually wide time scale. Commenting on pressures to give up hunting, David Petersen asks rhetorically: “How can we expect to nurture our continued evolution as a species by ripping out ninety-nine percent of the roots of that evolution? Hunting and gathering, millions of years deep, are these roots” (2000: 36). In a similar vein, Edward Abbey observes that:

For a mere five thousand years we have grubbed in the soil and laid brick upon brick to build the cities; but for a million years before that we lived the leisurely, free, and adventurous life of hunters and gatherers (...) How can we pluck that deep root of feeling from the racial consciousness? Impossible. (Abbey, in Petersen 2000: 1)

Citing the 100 000 generations of humans who lived as hunter/gatherers, John Mitchell asserts that it “is a far piece of time over which to hone the racial appetite for flesh” (1980: 24). For these hunters, the length of time spent by our species as hunter/gatherers is simply too extensive to permit the trivial discussion of whether or not to abandon hunting for moral reasons. Even more importantly, in the accounts of these hunters, the impressive durability of the hunting mode assumes a moral connotation of its own. A livelihood of such ancient origins, and of such apparent stability of expression, deserves our respect. It is more than sport, and more than a way to procure food; for our species, hunting is what defines reality. Hence, hunters can complain that critics of the hunt are “alienated” or “unreal”. American hunter Thomas McIntyre speaks with no small amount of frustration against what he sees as alienated “antis”:

A certain class of intractable moralists, who tend to perceive existence in terms far more streamlined than the woefully complex and ambiguous actuality of it would really seem to dictate, admonish us that the chase is at best ignorant carnival, at worst a heinous crime, and in any case a dark urge long ago to have been put behind us (1988: 2).

In the eyes of McIntyre, the “actuality” of the world cannot be made to obey the whim of a human morality; existence *as it is* cannot be fit into the human idea of what it should be. This is not a new thought in ethics, and it is contained in David Hume’s dictum that one cannot without a further premise deduce *ought* from *is*. What is interesting in this context,

though, is that hunters include the human *desire* to hunt among things as they are, and further, that they produce historical and evolutionary evidence to support that contention.

American hunter Jim Posewitz, who has become an authority not only by way of his books on the subject, but also due to his efforts in hunter education, exemplifies the hunter's use of (evolutionary) history to establish what is *real*. According to him, "we are the children of [countless] generations of hunters" (1994: 9), and our hunting heritage forms a legacy for us to uphold. In his view, the hunt as performed by the primitive tribesman is only marginally different from that of the modern sportsman. The contemporary hunter sustains an ancient lineage he should value and take pride in. In his aptly named book *Inherit the Hunt*, Posewitz traces the "hunter's trail" (1999:115) through history in an attempt to discover the inherent connection between the contemporary practice of hunting and that of our distant ancestor:

The human transition from societies of hunters to civilized cultures with a few hunters is a recent change in terms of human evolution. This change was rapid, and we hunters, for reasons we may not understand, are not ready to extinguish the wild ember of the hunt that burns within us (...) I believe we have a responsibility to preserve this particular element of human nature and nurture it, so it will remain functional in the process of evolution that still attends our kind. (1999: 5-6)

Posewitz' identification of hunting with "the wild ember that burns within us", and more explicitly, with human nature, is neither accidental nor unique. Elsewhere he talks expressly of "the hunter's DNA" and about carrying the "desire to hunt in some mysterious configuration of [our] genetic make-up" (1999: in dedication). James A. Swan, in his book *In Defense of Hunting*, similarly describes hunting as entering "into a continuum of experience that has gone on for millions of years", and about "an ancient fire burning inside" (1995: 2, 5). What these writers convey is that, despite our modern civilization, there is something of ancient origins still within us, something primitive, uncivilized, animal. Consequently, opposition against hunting is interpreted as modernity's futile attempt to eradicate a part of our nature.

With their insistence that the hunting legacy cannot be abandoned, these writers exemplify how hunters utilize the argument from origins. Not only were we once hunters, they say, but the evolutionary history of the human hunter is still in effect. The implication is that our origins affect us in ways we cannot consciously influence. The fact that our identity evolves around our past experience as hunters, means that identity is not an issue

which is open to deliberate creation á la postmodernism. The rootless, creative expression of self imagined by the latter is off the mark, according to these hunters. We are in fact *not* rootless; our history as hunters roots us, to ourselves and to the natural world. And if you're a hunter— as we (men) all are— then you will remain a hunter. To give up hunting, as some animal rights activists would surely have hunters do, is not an option, according to Thomas McIntyre. He describes the human hunter as “incorrigible” (1988: 185) and adds that hunting is something “just so *utterly* human” (1988: 5):

We arose over ten thousand centuries ago from hunters who loped, with weapons in hand and animal flesh on their minds, across yellow plains, and it may be every bit as long before the need to hunt is in any way quenched within us. When, and if, it ever is, it will probably mean that for better or worse, we are no longer human, but have become something quite different. For now, though, human we tenaciously remain. (1988: 5-6)

In the face of ethical and political pressures to abandon hunting, McIntyre and other hunters assert the “need to hunt” as an inherent element in the human animal. The implications for ethics are clear enough: morality is neither fulfilled by respecting the rights of every individual, nor by maximizing utility for the greatest number. Rather, we have an obligation to be true to our human selves. This principle, of course, could mean practically anything depending on the definition of “human”. But considering the hunter's tendency to see the predatory urge as central to the human species, what it means is that we should be true to and sustain the hunter within.

The suggestion to abandon hunting is not only vain, it is blatantly wrongheaded, since hunting, as Petersen says, is “the surest and most natural way into the sacred primal grove of reality, being the same well-worn way we took to becoming human” (2000: 97). To deny our history as hunters is to deny ourselves. According to the hunter, hunting is not simply another issue amenable to choice. When it comes to the philosophical question of whether or not to hunt, or rather, when it comes to the question of *being* hunters or not, we are bound by our past, and hence by our biology.

The American hunter has developed the origin myth with much greater sophistication than his Norwegian counterpart, and statements in the Norwegian literature tend to be rather prosaic and straightforward in comparison. Nonetheless, the primitivist urge seems to dwell within the Norwegian hunter in no lesser degree than in the American. At times this feeling is allowed to surface, like here, in Sven Gjems' book *Toner fra et jegerhorn*:

There is a (...) gap [of 12 000 years] between the Stone Age man and ourselves in our ways of life, our thoughts, and our worldviews. Still, we do not consider the Stone Age hunter/gatherer a stranger (...) Most of us still feel a quiver of delight running through our bodies, an original feeling of joy and expectation, when we see fair game or birds in nature, or a silver-sparkly salmon surface in a river. The reason is more deeply embedded in us than most realize, or are willing to admit. (1999: 17)

In this account, humans are “triggered” by the sight of game animals, a reaction that is more animal, more natural, than we like to admit. Gjems further speaks of the hunt as infused by a “longing for something [the hunter] cannot define, for something that used to be. A longing that can feel like a blurry memory of the time when man was one with nature, when they were few and their hunting grounds never-ending” (1999: 17). Like the Americans, Gjems sees our hunting past as important, because it was a mode of life attuned to social and environmental demands, but more importantly, because it is still within us. “History”, he says, “does not lie behind us, it lies within us” (1999: 24). In this view, having evolved as hunters means having been *made* as hunters. What we were in our youth, we are still. This motive is elaborated by Norwegian hunter Ståle Botn, who has equally discovered the force of the argument from origins:

We cannot escape the fact that the hunt itself; the necessity, and the striving for it, is deeply inherited in humans. We are all hunters and gatherers, it is genetically attached to us. It is our origin and our existence. (2001: 145)

Botn paints hunting as the anchor of our existence. Despite what else may surround us, he implies, there is always the hunt, which can be relied upon as the foundation of our being, a basic necessity. Knut Brevik appeals explicitly to the notion of hunting as an anchor. He writes:

Times change. And we change too, only not at the same pace as electronics or society around us. We have been hunters for 100 000 generations, and in comparison, we have lived in industrial society for 10 generations. Maybe that is why days and nights spent hunting gives to many of us an inner peace? Perhaps hunting and nature recreation [*friluftsliv* (literally, “life in free air”)] function as an anchor to our origins – a point of contact with history that yields the sort of cohesion and understanding that many seek? I think so. (2001: 6)

These statements mirror Paul Shepard’s assertion that culture is racing ahead of biology. While human-made things change and progress at an incredible pace, humans are not human-made things. Of course, most of us have a choice when it comes to issues of diet, exercise, intellectual activity, etc., and surely those things can partially determine how we

turn out. However, the hunter insists that our innermost selves, our core aspects, cannot be made and re-made. The only change it is susceptible to is the infinitesimally slow process of evolution. And it is because evolution has placed “a hunter’s heart” (Petersen 1996a) at our core that hunting and nature recreation can be thought of as “an anchor to our origins”. Going hunting reminds us of who we really are. Only in the hunting context do we see things clearly, only there do we achieve the kind of “cohesion and understanding” that Brevik talks of.

The fascination of hunters with the ancestry of our species equals a longing back to a primal state that seems purer and simpler, where all the different aspects of life seem to have been more perfectly integrated. However, the argument from origins does not stop at such nostalgia for an archaic past. According to the hunter, our tremendously long history as hunters makes hunting more than a compelling cultural motif; in fact, it amounts to an explicit *instinct*. Jim Posewitz introduces us to this drive as he reflects on his personal trail to hunting:

In the 1940s there was little opportunity, and even less encouragement, to be a hunter or angler. Still, the desire was smoldering somewhere within my very being (...) The comfort and warmth created in those post-Depression years was like an infant’s first blanket. The security of it all, however, was no match for the whisper within myself that said...*go*. (1999: 13, 22)

The Predatory Instinct

The tendency to talk about an urge, or a drive, to hunt is widespread among hunters (see Jønsberg 2000). While some hunters turn vague or romantic when talking about the hunting urge, others are not embarrassed to say outright what kind of force is at work. David Petersen explains that for him hunting was “not a family thing, not a peer thing, not a cultural thing, but a self-powered passion – like a bird’s urge to fly, a fish’s fervor to swim...like *instinct*” (2000: 9). In the course of his book, however, it becomes clear that he sees hunting not just as something *like* instinct, but as an *actual* instinct. In response to critics, he explains: “And so it is (...) that contemporary humanity’s seemingly instinctive – we could say spiritual – need to hunt, although we no longer “need” to hunt in order to survive (...) is in *fact* instinctive, arising from the ancient depths of the human genome” (2000: 14, italics in original). To leave us in no doubt, he rams it in properly:

Yet why – I’ve often been asked – why can’t thoughtful, nature-loving hunters attain this same level of neo-animistic bliss just by watching or perhaps photographing wildlife without looking to kill it? It’s a good question. And my instinctive answer is...instinct. (2000: 92)

Similarly, John Mitchell states as the purpose of his book, *The Hunt* (1980), to see “whether there might be now (...) a cooling of the venatic instinct, a shuffling of the spark that has beckoned man afield since the morning Adam took a taste of the apple and thereupon decided that things go better with meat” (1980: 226). Norwegian hunters Lier-Hansen and Wegge talk about “awakening the ancient hunting instinct” and describe hunting as “a resurrection of inherited hunting instincts” (2003: 41, 11). James B. Whisker explains that “the hunt reinforces and keeps alive man’s most basic instincts” (1981: 7). Kåre Vidar Pedersen, recalling one of his hunts, lays it out in more poetic detail:

The moisture of the forest floor allowed almost silent movement. I snuck forward with all my senses strung, sensing and sniffing all the amplified smells of the woods. This is when I live most intensely; my senses are utterly in tune thanks to my hunting instincts. (1999: 11)

This feeling of being attuned to one’s surroundings during hunting is explained by Brevik, who adds that: “Our instinct is perfectly adapted to a life as hunter, trapper, or gatherer, and without this adaptation man would probably have starved to death a long time ago” (2001: 16).

The fact that hunters use the word instinct is not necessarily important. In many of these accounts, hunters seem to use it as a short-hand to denote something they cannot call by another name. However, some writers are more explicit about what the hunting instinct is, and how it works. James A. Swan certainly belongs to those who are not embarrassed by the term, and his book is replete with references to our hunting instinct:

Since the beginning of time, men and women have hunted. Their tools and methods have varied considerably, but when the first breath of fall air comes rushing down from the north, and ghostly strings of geese pass across the face of the hunter’s moon, a special kind of adrenaline begins to pump up from the deepest recesses of the instinctual psyche, calling up sentiments that link even modern people back to the Paleolithic and beyond. (1995: 12)

In Swan’s treatment, the hunt resembles nothing more than an animal process. While human intelligence and ingenuity are subject to change and variation, something animal remains in us which is not susceptible to reason. The human animal (actually: the human

predator) is triggered simply by the sight of certain natural events, like a flock of geese on the horizon. The consequent adrenaline cannot be stopped. It is instinct.

The notion that the desire to hunt is instinctual, leads many writers to a simile with another of our basic instincts, namely the sex drive. Again, James A. Swan provides a good example:

Life without hunting is possible. Hunting is a privilege, not a constitutional right. In the near future we will be able to give up the physical act of sex for reproduction and replace it with sperm banks, test tube fertilization, and surrogate motherhood. A world without hunting or sex is possible, and seemingly safer, but is it desirable? (1995: 16-7)

The underlying charge in Swan's statement is that modernity is obsessed with cleansing the world; in the same way that we have made reproduction possible without the physical, "beastly" processes formerly involved, we now consider giving up hunting. Swan's rhetorical last sentence implies the answer "no", but as we will see, he goes much farther in arguing that hunting is not only desirable, but absolutely essential. The sentiment expressed by Swan is, incidentally, backed by a Norwegian study of hunters' experiences, where several informants compare the desire to hunt with the sexual drive (Jønsberg 2000: 66). American hunter Mike Gaddis expresses something of the same sentiment:

As the relationship between a man and a woman rarely finds complete expression short of a physical sharing, the hunt is incomplete less possession of the prey. When you boil away the social pretext in either case, the respective behaviors are basic to man's bent for survival and conquest. (1996: 122)

Gaddis' expression is revealing, since he refers to the relationship between man and woman in the same breath as the hunter's "possession of the prey". He specifies that the rationale between a man and a woman is "physical sharing", but feminists would certainly reject this gesture. The relationship man/woman, they argue, has throughout history been characterized by the same "possession" that identifies the hunt. In addition, the discourse of hunting is often couched in terms that bring to mind the objectification and oppression of women (Kheel 1995, Kalof *et.al.* 2004).

Phrasing the issue of hunting in terms of instinct adds weight to the notion that contemporary sportsmen are but the last exemplars of a long, and honorable, trail of hunters as long as humanity itself. It is no longer simply a compelling cultural motif, but something that resides (and burns, and smolders...) *within* us, something ultimately unexplainable that still forces us onward, into the woods or up the mountains with its simple command...go.

You can't argue with that. In fact, you cannot argue with instinct. Instinct is devoid of moral qualities, and must exist *as is*, or if subject to change, then only the incredibly slow evolutionary variety. And if modern civilization has not managed to eradicate our hunting instinct, then the hunter feels confident that nothing will.

Pondering the fact that the will to hunt seems to be innate, some hunters are lead to the conclusion that hunting, in essence, is changeless. Ole Kirkemo says that "there is something invariable about hunting. When you sneak up on a roe buck at dusk, you sense the same tingling the stone age man felt when he took aim on his prey" (2004: in preface). Other hunters quote approvingly the words of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset in his classic *Meditations on Hunting*, where he states that hunting allows one to "catch a starry glimpse of eternity" (1995: 37). Commenting on the tendency of hunters to describe the hunt as changeless, Norwegian sociologist Olaf Aagedal has described hunting as an activity that makes time stand still. He argues that, for hunters, to "practice this form of life is to return to origins" (1999: 28). He explains how:

(...) the modern moose hunt, which is a recent tradition, can be seen as something that has always existed. In this way, hunting becomes a way to recreate the ancient human in modern man. In confrontation with the wild animal, the distance between the ancient past and the present is made irrelevant. The hunt creates another sense of time, or the sense of something timeless. (1999: 28)

Hunters willingly accept that contemporary hunting is different from the Stone Age variant; the Pleistocene hunter did not ravage around the woods in an ATV, he did not employ body-heat detecting goggles, he did not communicate via radio, and he was not dressed in gore-tex. However, they maintain that this change does not, and could not possibly, detract from the *essence of hunting*.²⁵ The changelessness of hunting connects the sportsman of today to his ancient hunting ancestor, and demonstrates how the nobility of both stems from

²⁵ Still, in the material reviewed for this thesis, the trend towards increasing techno-addiction is often looked upon as undesirable, and excessive modern equipment is considered by many to clutter up the hunting experience. Even though the core of contemporary hunting is considered to mirror its ancient counterpart, many feel that fancy technology puts the emphasis where it does not belong (See especially Petersen 2000). In America, the increasing popularity of "primitive" forms of hunting, like bowhunting and muzzleloader hunting, signal the same desire to get away from an addiction to modern technology and back to the raw basics of man, beast, and weapon. Granted, if popular hunting magazines were included more thoroughly among my sources, these objections would likely drown in all the endorsements, advertisements, recommendations and practical tips that color these publications. We can conclude that there is no agreement among hunters on the role of technology in hunting. More relevant to the topic at hand is that both *pro* and *con* attitudes with regard to technology is sometimes given a moral twist. Primitivists argue that an ethical relationship between the hunter and his prey demands a minimum of intersecting instruments, while the techno-addict argues that the use of such instruments ensures a clean kill.

the same source, namely the instinctive drive to be a participant in the natural chain of eaters and eaten. The hunter thus becomes an image of the human species as a whole, in that he symbolically enters into the ecological niche that our species has occupied for “millions of years” (see also next chapter). This image imbues hunting with an air of stability and constancy, and in extension, necessity. Of course, what is lost in this account is the variability of the social context which any form of hunting must spring from and be a part of.

The Return of the Killer Ape

Although the reinvention of hunting from the 1970s relied on portraying the human hunter as an ideal figure, many hunters still retain a notion that some malignant element attaches to the hunting instinct. However, hunters now blame the incorrect application of the instinct rather than the instinct itself. Naturally, the arguments about “correct application of instinct” and “the right channeling of inner drives” are not put forth in mid-air, but are posed against a number of “wrong” (i.e. urban) ways of coping with those instincts. James A. Swan is particularly clear on what happens when the hunting instinct is not applied for hunting. He argues that, as fewer people hunt, more people feel the need to go to bed with a firearm close at hand: “Nowadays it seems that people hunt one another more as hunting for animals wanes” (1995: 5). Like many hunters, Swan resurrects a version of the Killer Ape story:

We cannot simply put the lid on human nature and declare that we do not have aggressive instincts. Some of the people who declare that they are peaceful and are working for peace sometimes seem to be among the most aggressive. This seems especially true of some of this decade’s politically correct types. Deny the shadow and in time we become the shadow. We need to find ways to express our aggressive energies in a creative fashion (...) Hunting happens to be one of those natural ways in which humans express aggression in a manner that benefits themselves and the species. (1995: 220)

Swan not only establishes hunting as a part of human nature, he also draws a rather bleak picture of what the demise of hunting will inevitably lead to. He argues, citing a “vast majority of behavioral scientists worldwide”, that “trying to deviate from our instinctual nature is a primary cause of mental disease” (1995: 175). He elaborates:

Whenever we deny instincts, we create problems for ourselves, those around us, and the world. In our inner nature we are all animals. The symbols of our dreams

constantly affirm this. As long as our psyches do not change, we will never be able to give up our hunting heritage. The hunting instinct is bred into the bones and blood of at least most of us and is one of the most fundamental elements of human nature. Our challenge as humans is to find the best ways to express our instinctual nature.” (1995: 176)

Though Swan thinks that we cannot be cut off from our hunting instincts, he is acutely aware that not everyone is equally attuned to this nature. He pities children living in urban areas who, removed from nature, are left “without the natural way of learning about death, guilt, and eating living things, which is the foundation for developing a healthy reverence for life” (1995: 134). Swan talks about “the draining feeling I get when I am in most cities” (1995: 258), and his use of the city as a symbol of all things bad is deliberate and thoroughgoing. In general, his scheme of good and bad is drawn along city borders, and even on a generous reading, Swan’s sense of geography is not more refined than city = bad, nature = good. According to Swan, urbanization “tends to numb us to our connection with nature”, and the result is drug use, violence, divided families, and a general “lack of value for human life” (1995: 135). Faced with these horrors, one has no other choice but to turn to nature:

In an age where information overload, stress, boredom, and crime run rampant through urban minds, refuges near urban areas are sanctuaries, not just for the animals – they are sanctuaries for people. They are places of the heart for man and beast, islands of sanity in a world that often seems crazy. (1995: 267)

As we have seen, this image of modern society as mad was suggested by Paul Shepard, and it is not uncommon among hunting apologists. In the case of most hunters, however, it is not the agricultural society as such, but rather its urban outgrowth that serves as scapegoat, which enables the hunter to retain the image of country life as attuned to nature. In this “Return of the Killer Ape”, the evil inherent in humanity is seen expressed in urban, modern living. McIntyre talks of the “modern world and all its attendant abominations and widespread chuckleheadedness” (1988: 36). Mitchell mentions how the biggest cities in the US have grown and regrets that “people no longer hunt in any one of them, though they do sometimes hunt each other” (1980: 207). Guy de la Vald ne describes “[the] desperation I feel every time I venture into cities...” (1996: 273), and Petersen complains about constantly having to defend hunting, especially to “an increasingly urbanized, denatured, domesticated, and virtualized populace” (2000: 8). In this story, the argument from *evolutionary* origins blends into the argument from *rural* origins, and in the shared ideal of

being close to nature, living *off* the land is mixed with living *in* it. What the hunter regrets, in these accounts, is the loss of the original mode of human life, which was to make one's own livelihood from the land; in modern cities, people no longer live off the land, but off one another. Hence, urban people are categorized as alienated, denatured, and virtualized.

In an essay entitled "What the Hunter Knows" (1996), Thomas McIntyre elaborates on the hunter's frustration with alienated urbanites who do not understand what hunting is:

At no other point in history has the idea of the hunt and the hunter been under such intense assault, and for such disheartening reasons (...) Something more than cynicism must be at work (...) Something to do with the rise of mass culture and our society's increasing estrangement from the wild and its native processes. Something that questions our very presence on the planet. Something that is more pathogenic than accidental, the symptoms all too widespread. (1996: 174)

He adds that "this pandemic isolation of people from the wild and wildlife (...) would produce enormous unspoken and probably unconscious resentments and frustrations that find some bitter relief" (1996: 176). In the eyes of McIntyre, urban people are pathogenic, bitter, and estranged victims of a disease that makes them unnatural and dangerous. In contrast, the hunter still carries with him an ancient sanity. What the title of his essay refers to, what the hunter *knows*, is the laws and rhythms of nature. McIntyre expresses a radical discontent with what he sees as modernity's alienation from nature. In his view, we have made our homes in the cities, those compounds of glass and concrete far removed from natural things, at a great cost. In substituting our homes in nature for our home inside giant human-made constructs, we have moved away from nature not just spatially, but even spiritually. We no longer know nature like the hunter does, and we live a virtual, artificial, unreal, existence. In this context, the demand to abandon hunting is seen as predictable; an "all-too-urban" outcry.

Citing a novel he once read, McIntyre expresses how important hunting is to human lives: "The main character, half Inuit, half European, thinks to herself, 'I am not a hunter. And I'm asleep inside.' And I thought, I am a hunter. And I'm wide awake. And I mean to stay that way" (1996: 181). The urban populace, represented by animal rights supporters and non-hunting environmentalists, is asleep. They do not see, and cannot know, the realities of the natural world; a world we despite our civilization cannot help but depend on. And the basic reality of that world is that we, despite layers of civilization, are still hunters at our core.

To Argue with Instinct

What I have looked at in this chapter is an argument commonly made by hunters to justify their activity. The argument from origins goes beyond the plainly stated (although controversial) time and place of our origins. It is, more importantly, a theory of human nature. And as such, it is very much a product of our contemporary age, despite its nostalgic content. It emphasizes more than anything the duality of human nature; the potential for both good and evil inherent in us. Without embarking on any sociological analysis, we can easily identify Adrian Franklin's sociological factors of misanthropy, ontological insecurity, and risk/reflexivity as central parts of this argument. The basic instinct of the argument is to question man's ability to cope with his predicament using man-made parameters only. Instead, this argument wants us to search for something more stable, more invariable, and more original. According to the hunter, we do not have to search further than our inner selves to discover what we are looking for; our hunting past supplies us with an anchor to a world that has begun to feel increasingly alien; the hunting lifestyle offers a blueprint for the successful integration of humans in the world; the hunting instinct *roots* us, to our past and present selves and to our environment.

In this argument, the hunter sees entities like modernity, urbanity, and relativity as parts of an ongoing effort to uproot humankind; an effort that consists in separating the humanity (physically and spiritually) from biology, place, tradition, environment, and fauna, and which throws humanity into an abstract and unearthly sphere. Against this, the argument from origins maintains that humans are not some *other kind* of animal, they are simply *another* animal, and a predator at that. The thrust of the argument consists in the proposition that what made us human was an animal process, namely predation. This means that animals are important to us as counter-players in the "sacred game" of predation, and as pure exemplars of the animality that still lingers in us. They are valuable to us because they are our only Others, and we owe them the duty of preserving the prime constituent of that otherness, which is their wildness. Primarily, though, we owe something to the human animal within, which has been suppressed so thoroughly in modern civilization. The one thing we could never owe to other animals is to refrain from hunting, because that would be the end of the sacred game that brings out the most valued parts of both of us. Though we are related to animals, it is a different sort of kinship than the one we have with our parents, children, siblings, or cousins; we are related to animals as natural beings that feed on each

other, each giving his life up so that another may live. This argument tries to establish that hunting should not only be accepted, but that it should be celebrated; indeed, in our sinful times hunting should be regarded as redemption and as a return to the natural state. Rather than merely an evil we must endure, hunting is a positive good and a celebration of where we came from.

This ethos, however eloquent, is not without certain problems. The most obvious objection to be raised against it is that it commits the so called naturalistic fallacy. Suggested by the philosopher G. E. Moore, this alleged fallacy targets definitions of ethics that confuse what is morally good with a natural property. In the case of the argument from origins, we would note that it defines what is morally “good” as that which conforms to human biology. This fallacy is related to the is-ought fallacy, identified by David Hume, which says that, in ethics, one cannot simply deduce an *ought*-statement from an *is*-statement without introducing further premises. The argument from origins commits even this fallacy, because it claims that since hunting has been a human activity for so long, even to the point of becoming an inherent part of our nature, it must therefore be morally good. Following these objections, we should apparently be able to reject the argument from origins on the grounds that it does not identify a distinctly *moral* value, property, or principle; it simply takes “nature” as its moral guide. However, we have good reason not to accept the content of these fallacies without some reflection.

In one version, at least, the naturalistic fallacy rests on the assumption that there is such a thing as a distinctly moral quality, which cannot be derived from or even connected to other parts of our experience. Given our pragmatic framework, we would want to ask “where does *ought* come from, if not from *is*?” We would not by asking this imply that there is any necessary or automatic relation between the two levels. For instance, though it would not be theoretically impossible to propose that we should take complete abstinence from eating as a moral virtue, it would certainly be impractical. Against the possibility of such absurd “virtues” the pragmatist would point out that morality is built on values which originate in actual experiences in this world; values that are then entered into a debate about what should count as right or good in society. In this context, the transition from is to ought is nothing like the flick of a switch, but rather more like the swing of a pendulum. Value is something that is created and adjusted in the meeting with our experiences, and not something that merely exists (see Mackie 1977 for a plausible account of the subjectivism of values). We have no grounds from which to suggest what we ought to do, if we have

never had an actual experience of something we found “good”. (Or as William James says: “The only possible reason there can be why any phenomenon ought to exist is that such a phenomenon actually is desired” (in Albrecht 2004: 24).) And since our experiences change, so do our values. This view sees morality as thoroughly integrated in all aspects of life, even the trivial ones, and so it will not assume that “moral” or “good” stands for something we cannot somehow explain and relate to our practical lives.

Another problem with applying the naturalistic fallacy in this case, specifically, is that the argument from origins commits this fallacy deliberately. It is not just that hunters want to assert that naturalness can be a valid criterion for action, but to question the priority of morality in the cases where nature and morality conflict, as they seemingly do in the case of hunting. In Shepard’s account, the question “what is good?” cannot be answered by the discipline of moral philosophy at all. Rather, morality is intrinsically subordinate to biology, and the moral good simply follows or not, depending on the degree to which our lifestyles are adapted to the demands of the human genome. In this view, hunting is not good because God says so, it is not good because animals lack moral relevance, and it is not good because most people accept it as a social practice; rather, it is good because it is a prime expression of the human genome. It is good precisely *because* it is natural. So it is not that these hunters mistake a natural phenomenon (what *is*) with morality (what *ought to be*), but that they knowingly challenge the concealed priority of the latter which seems to be inherent in the alleged fallacies. The argument from origins says that we would be better off to let human nature be the measure of how we ought to live, rather than trust the modern institution of morality, which defines itself fundamentally *apart* from biology. The effect of this is to deny that the naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy, and even to suggest that the kind of arguments targeted by the fallacy is the sound choice for healthy lives.

Commenting on the rhetoric of animal rights supporters, James Swan reveals that: “I am suspicious of people who keep calling for ethics” (1995: 112). In his view: “Ethics that last and serve a higher purpose obey natural laws and support human health” (1995: 112). The hunter’s argument takes the form not so much of an argument in ethics as a challenge to the same institution. However, we should note that the argument is infused with moral sentiment, and it seems to be frustrated rather more with the modern rhetoric of ethics than with the institution of morality as such. Hunters are opposed to what they see as modernity’s constant effort to transcend, improve, expand and invent; and would like to see

conceptions of right and wrong grow from natural laws, traditions, and integrated communities.

From a pragmatic standpoint, the hunter's challenge cannot be rejected *a priori*. In principle, if it could be shown that living according to nature would prevent the maladies that the hunter thinks we suffer from in modern, urban society, then we would have good reason to "follow nature". However, this prescription is problematic, for several reasons. Firstly, to follow nature we must know what nature is. But "to know nature" is not as straightforward as it may sound, and so, neither is following it. In an essay entitled "Can and Ought We to Follow Nature?" (1979), environmental philosopher Holmes Rolston, III admits as much. He nonetheless proceeds in delineating four senses in which we can be said to follow nature: the homeostatic, the imitative ethical, the axiological, and the tutorial. The problem for the argument from origins is its inconsistency with regards to the sense in which we are supposed to follow nature. Perhaps we are to follow nature in the homeostatic sense, where it is our relation to and influence on the ecosystem that is in question. Paul Shepard, for one, definitely appeals to this motive; agriculture is seen as a diversion from nature, and hunting as the way for humans to become reintegrated into the ecosystem. But then, when hunters urge us to see hunting as a predatory instinct, it seems we are also to follow nature in the imitative ethical sense, which is to find moral inspiration in nature; in relation to this mode of following nature, hunting is seen as nothing other than an imitation of one of nature's processes (predation), and hence, as unimpeachable. The hunter makes appeals even to the axiological sense of following nature, which denotes entry into nature as a respectful and curious appreciator of what *is*. Shepard's assertion that we must affirm rather than deny the world sorts under this sense of following nature.

The point of all this is the following. Firstly, in some senses of the word, "nature" is not something we can or ought to follow. In the imitative ethical sense, for instance, the prescription to follow nature is not very appealing; nature is not moral in any relevant sense, so to imitate nature in ethical matters is not only vain, it is patently dangerous. Secondly, we should note that the hunter is bound to run into some problems of accuracy in his appeal to "nature", because it is such a complex, ambiguous, and elusive concept (Evernden 1992, Coates 1998). At any time, it is not clear what the hunter means when he says "nature". For instance, in one sense of the word, anything humans do is unnatural. In this meaning of word, nature refers to what is not created or influenced by humanity. How can the hunter's prescription deal with this and other meaning of nature? The hunter's

assumption that to follow nature is a simple and straightforward choice must be challenged. In fact, the concept of “nature” (or “human nature”), seems so slippery that we may well question its ability to sustain a clear and efficient prescription for action.

Even more troublesome than these conceptual difficulties, however, are the empirical assumptions that go into the hunter’s prescription. In the face of the hunter’s assuredness, we would be well served to question some of these assumptions. Is there such a thing as human nature? If so, what exactly is it? What are valid criteria in determining human nature, and how do we identify the demands and limitations of that nature? What should count as evidence? How are prehistoric peoples and the process of evolution related to this human nature? These are difficult questions, and no good criteria have been construed to answer them with any accuracy. As Reay Tannahill argues, “there are as many theories about prehistory and the pattern of human evolution as there are theoreticians” (1988: 3, see also Leakey 1994 on this point). No doubt, the same could be said of human nature.

Despite these difficulties, the argument from origins takes human nature to be perfectly discoverable, measurable, and even obvious; moreover, it takes hunting to be an indubitable part of that nature. It asserts that millions of years of evolution has implanted in us an instinct to hunt, which, if not applied properly (that is: for hunting), can be dangerous and destructive. This reads like a *sociobiologist* defense; the main tenet of which is that “all aspects of human culture and behavior, like the behavior of all animals, are coded in the genes and have been molded by natural selection” (Rose *et.al.* 1984: 235-236). This definition of sociobiology excludes many of the accounts reviewed in this chapter, since hunters do not think that every part of human culture and behavior is “coded in the genes”. As Shepard says, and indeed, as the shift to agriculture implies, we create cultures freely. It is only that we are still biological beings, and as such, we carry genes, and genes are adapted to a certain environment, and so they “expect” something like this environment. Many find this thought offensive when it is used to argue that humans are innately aggressive, territorial, or the like. However, most people implicitly accept this line of thinking in other areas, so why should we not accept the same argument when it is used to argue that we are innate hunters? For instance, no-one would object to the assertion that humans need to nourish themselves, and not many would reject the requirement of this nourishment to be of a certain sort and quality. So why should we reject the notion that we need to hunt animals to avoid social havoc?

Firstly, we need to point out that the hunter commits a logical fallacy when he assumes that his experiences and sensations while hunting equals an instinct. To see why this is not necessarily true, consider the accounts given by sky divers, mountaineers, extreme snowboarders, rafters, motorcyclists, and anyone else involved in “intense” activities. These people testify that such activities give them a heightened sense of being alive, and of being in touch with their senses. But we cannot, and people do in fact not, reason from that experience to the notion of a “mountaineering instinct” or a “snowboarding instinct”.²⁶ In the argument from origins, the hunter generally assumes too much, and proves too little.

Further, this argument rests on a set of rather dubious methodological and empirical assumptions. For one, the argument presupposes that a basic behavior such as eating is no different from a complex, social behavior like hunting. However, as Rose *et. al.* demonstrate, science has not yet been able to prove that human social behaviors can be attributed to genetics:

(...) up to the present time no one has ever been able to relate any aspect of human social behavior to any particular gene or set of genes, and no one has ever suggested an experimental plan for doing so. Thus, all statements about the genetic basis of human social traits are necessarily purely speculative, no matter how positive they seem to be. (1984: 251)

The hunter’s problem in asserting a human need to hunt, is that 1) we have not been able to prove (except in highly speculative and hypothetical ways) that complex, social human behaviors can be attributed to a set of genes, and 2) insights from historical, religious, sociological, social anthropological, political, and cultural studies strongly indicate that such behaviors can largely be attributed to non-biological phenomena.

As far as the empirical evidence is concerned, hunters have a number of approaches available to them, all of which are lacking according to scientific standards. Firstly, they can choose to study other animal species, mostly the higher primates (especially the chimpanzee or the bonobo, our closest relatives), and think of them as analogous to human beings. This is the strategy chosen by Craig Stanford, who bases his version of the hunting hypothesis on a study of apes. The assumption underlying this strategy is that since we share forefathers, we are alike apes in many respects. The inevitable problem with this approach is that although we certainly are alike apes in many respects, we are clearly not

²⁶ I am grateful to my supervisor Andrew Brennan, who pointed this out to me.

identical, and this approach cannot tell us which features we share with apes and which we do not; it remains an assumption. The result is that this approach begs the question; in assuming that we are alike apes in a particular respect (for instance, in being natural born hunters), it is assuming exactly what it sets out to prove, namely whether that particular trait of apes is shared by humans.

Another strategy, preferred by Shepard, Petersen, Swan and others, is to deduce a theory of prehistoric peoples from a study of contemporary hunter/gatherer groups. The first problem of this approach is that it assumes that prehistoric people were prototypical humans, and thus, mere images of human nature. This assumption is highly dubious. Human modes of living have been highly variable, and no group at any time can be said to *be* the essence of human nature (Tanner 1988, Buege 1996, Leakey 1994). In addition, this approach makes a mistake similar to the first one, which is to assume that contemporary hunter/gatherer groups are like prehistoric ones. To some extent they probably are, but since we do not have access to prehistoric peoples to make a comparison, we cannot discover how the two are similar simply by studying contemporary groups. This strategy also begs the question.

A third approach is to rely on archeological (and other circumstantial) evidence. The problem here is that, although archeology can certainly be a source of unique knowledge, we only get to see a tiny fraction of the whole image. And we would not be well advised to infer a totality from a small number of tiny parts. Dart's discovery is a good example of how wrong we can go if we rely solely on archeological evidence in the reconstructions of our past. Incidentally, since the hunting hypothesis fell, a variety of other explanations of our leap into humanity (whether it was a leap is also contested) have been offered; the scavenging hypothesis, the pirating hypothesis, the sharing hypothesis, the gathering hypothesis (Tanner 1988). There is still no agreement on which models were decisive, and not even on which models describe an actual practice of prehistoric (pre-)humans (Leakey 1994).

The problems mentioned here apply not only to the question of our purported need to hunt, but even to the far more minimal question of deciding the extent of hunting in our evolutionary past, which is still disputed within the scientific community (see Leakey 1994). Hence, assertions of our genetic need to hunt seem unreasonably optimistic, and they should not be accepted. However, there is a more straightforward test of the hunter's claim that there is an innate need to hunt. For practical purposes, at least, we can see that

while the need to eat is obvious, as are certain other basic needs, the need to kill is not.²⁷ To discover whether a proposed biological need really is just that, we can see what happens when we abstain from satisfying the need. If abstinence leads to no significant change, there was never a significant need. Although I have no systematic empirical evidence, it seems clear that those who abstain from hunting (the great majority of the population) do not fare any worse than hunters. In any case, if the argument about our genetic need to hunt was acceptable, we could expect the hunter to supply an explanation of why more than 92 % of males and 99 % of females seem to get along fine without hunting.²⁸ The hunting “instinct” seems to be an extremely volatile phenomenon, which is what an instinct cannot be if it is to be called by that name.

While making this point, we need not deny that “humans are animals”; humans have basic biological needs that need to be fulfilled if we are to function, and the human genome clearly *does* demand certain things of our lifestyles and our behavior. However, the flaw of the sociobiologist approach is not to suggest that we are animals, but to claim that we are nothing but animals. It does not simply want to explain some very basic features of human behavior using animal/biological parameters; it wants to explain our whole experience with them. The problem, I would argue, is not the basic structure of the argument (social behavior stems from biological phenomena), but the tendency to overstate it (*all* social behavior stems from biological phenomena), and to rule out other factors (social behavior stems *exclusively* from biological phenomena). In other words, it is the reductionism of sociobiology that we should find offensive. For an example of this reductionism, consider Shepard’s notion that to satisfy the genome, hunting must be *genuine*, i.e., it must (occasionally) culminate in a kill. It seems odd, and in any case it is very controversial, that a gene could specify the need for humans to occasionally kill other living beings, and not just the need to exercise (stalking the prey), the need for a low fat, high-protein diet (game), etc. Shepard and some other hunters reject the possibility that the demands of the genome may be satisfied by substituting its original expression (though, as mentioned, we do not know to what extent hunting was that expression); for instance, someone who practices wildlife photography and regular exercise cannot be in touch with

²⁷ Some people need to hunt and kill in order to eat, of course, but that is not the case in the countries in focus here. Also, though these people have a *practical* need to hunt, that does not mean they have a *genetic* need to hunt, which is what we are discussing here.

²⁸ Statistics from the Norwegian Statistics Agency (SSB): http://www.ssb.no/emner/10/04/10/jakt_fiske/ (Accessed: September 29, 2005).

his instinct, on their account. From Shepard's standpoint, our species is not only specialized, we are specialized to a degree that leaves no room for adaptation to changing circumstances. In effect, the human genome is made into what it surely is not; an omnipotent force which determines every little aspect of our individual lives.

However, the charge is not only that abstinence from hunting makes individuals less harmonious, but even that our *collective* troubles in society are all due to this abstinence. Because we do not know what it is like to stalk and kill an animal, we stalk and kill each other, hence the pathology and madness of our civilization. Despite the apparent efficiency of this explanation, it remains ultimately implausible; or to be more specific, it is not plausible without a long list of additions and qualifications. To blame our current predicament simply on our society's departure from the hunting lifestyle is facile and naive. For one, it glosses over extremely significant differences when it comes to how successful non-hunting civilizations are, and have been. In Shepard's account, the only distinction of any importance is the gigantic one between hunting/gathering and agricultural modes. Although he undoubtedly is aware of the variability of agricultural civilizations, he cannot integrate that fact into his analysis, because it would detract from the momentous negative importance he ascribes to the Neolithic revolution. Shepard views agriculture, once begun, as one great slippery slope leading to psychological, social, and environmental destruction:

Scalping with the bulldozer succeeds gleanings with the goat; disinfecting the forest with pesticides is an extension of cleaning kitchen pots and pans with soap; polluting the air with fumes is not much different from the Sumerians polluting the water with silt. (1973: 26)

From this view, history reads like something of a giant conspiracy against nature and human nature alike. However, we would not be well advised to rely on an analysis that does not see a difference between small-scale, Neolithic horticulture and modern, industrial-capitalist agri-business. Shepard's paradigm is not only unacceptable as an empirical analysis; its ability to give helpful recommendations for the future is also rather dubious. In his long (and 30 years later, rather humorous) list of recommendations to save ourselves and the planet, Shepard says with seemingly small regard to practicality that we should end all agriculture and liberate animals, commence a fossil food industry, reorganize socially to conform to the standard of primitive tribal units, and rebuild our cities as strips of settlement at the perimeters of continents to accommodate wildlife (1973: 260-278). Though Shepard is hardly representative of the general hunting community in these

matters, the argument from origins often relies on a nostalgia that is unwilling, or in any case unable, to deal with the facts of today's world. For instance, as a policy recommendation, the notion to end all agriculture is not bold, visionary, or even utopian; it is an impossibility. And in today's world, so is a hunting/gathering economy. Our numbers are now at a level where a hunting/gathering economy would entail the definitive death of wild nature, which is not something Shepard or any other hunter would endorse. Some form of agriculture, and hence, some form of "unnatural" life for humans, seems unavoidable.

Apart from the failure to acknowledge differences in agricultural civilizations, scholars have recently begun to suggest that the image of the ecologically noble savage, which is so essential to the argument of origins, is inaccurate. Although we should note that such counter-arguments face the same evidential difficulties as the original theories, the myth that a hunting economy guarantees individual, social, and environmental harmony has now been debunked in a number of accounts. Environmental historian Ted Steinberg acknowledges the scant evidence, but nonetheless asserts about the American Indians that they "unquestionably left their mark on the landscape":

In Southern New England, for instance, the Indian population may have surged so much in the period immediately before European arrival that it even undermined the subsistence base, degrading the available supply of arable land and bringing on a food shortage. (2002: 20)

Similarly, Peter Coates argues that "Indians were often the pioneers who had hacked down the forest and turned the earth. Moreover, they had done so on a considerable scale" (1998: 94). American Indians are perhaps not counted as noble savages by the like of Paul Shepard and others who propound this myth, so their argument is not necessarily refuted by the malpractices of American natives. Still, we can detect a strong bias inherent in the myth of the noble savage that disables its proponents in seeing maladaptive traits in primitive societies; traits that are demonstrably present (Edgerton 1992). For instance, in recent revisions of the ecologically noble savage paradigm, it has become clear that some of the groups deemed "noble" have been beset by hunger, malnutrition, and brevity of life (Coates 1998: 92). Also, according to the "Pleistocene Overkill thesis", the animal extinctions that took place during the Pleistocene were all a result of hunting (Coates 1998: 90); a thesis which, if true, effectively puts to rest the notion of the sustainable hunting ways of the prehistoric primitive. As pointed out by Douglas J. Buege (1996), the image of the

ecologically noble savage is not always as benign as it seems; intrinsic to the concept is an element of ethnocentrism, where the savage is considered ecologically noble only because he is seen as, in some ways, sub-human (in relation to the construction of “Man” as a white Euro-American male), and therefore intellectually unable to destroy his environment.

Apart from the difficulties with this myth, most of the accounts reviewed here seem to carry another unreasonable bias. It is only natural, perhaps, for a hunter to emphasize the hunting aspect of hunter/gatherer cultures, but it turns out that it can be quite misleading. Some significant problems arise when conflating “hunting/gathering” to “hunting”. Firstly, it is not empirically accurate; research has shown that the gathering aspect of these societies is at least as important as the hunting part for the livelihood of the members of society, often more so. It has been acknowledged since long that plant foods, gathered mainly by women, make up the greatest bulk of the diet in nearly all hunter/gatherer societies (Tanner 1988, Leakey 1994, Stanford 1999). But according to Nancy Makepeace Tanner (1988), the importance of gathering is more far-reaching than that. She launches the “gathering hypothesis”, which states that it was the social circumstances around the gathering performed by women that spurred the development of the first tools. Hence, she concludes, in contradistinction to the accounts reviewed in this chapter, that the first step towards becoming hominid was taken by a plant gathering female. Tanner’s hypothesis, whether accurate or not, reveals some of the gendered bias inherent in the accounts reviewed in this chapter. If we confront these accounts with the question “whose origins?”, as feminists surely would, it seems that they describe not so much our origins as human, but as males. The hunter’s conflation of primitive societies into “hunting” is ideologically shaky; it undermines the importance of women in securing the community’s livelihood, which has the potential of a vicious circle; the less one is interested in the gathering aspect, and thereby in the effort of women, the less important this aspect looks, and the less one is likely to study it.

The points made here will hopefully convince the reader that the notion of our need to hunt is flawed, and that there is no simple, mechanic relation between the abandonment of hunting and the troubles we endure in our modern societies. I will make a few points to avoid any misunderstanding with regards to this conclusion: Firstly, I am not denying that humans have hunted for a very long time, or the *possibility* that human characteristics have evolved in response to a hunting lifestyle; I am simply questioning whether the characteristics produced by this evolution cannot flourish in a variety of environments.

Secondly, to dismiss the notion of the genetic need to hunt is not to dismiss that there may be something like a symbolic need to hunt. Some hunters undoubtedly feel strongly compelled to uphold the hunting institution as a social, cultural, or political statement, or even as an excuse to go on a trip with good friends and have a good time.

Though all these motives certainly exist, it is doubtful whether they can stand on their own feet as moral justifications when confronted with the principle of unnecessary harm. Why should we accept the killing of animals to meet the desire of a small number of people to reenact the evolutionary history of humankind? Well, if that is the only motive involved, we should not. To sanction this kind of motive would be to signal that animals were the kind of beings that may be played with and killed for rather trivial reasons, which they are not. Instead, we should recommend other, more animal-friendly, forms of recreation.

However, there still seems to be a case to be made on the ruins of the argument reviewed in this chapter. Although we dismissed the genetic, instinctual need to hunt, the argument from origins can still retain the notion that hunting, considering our long history of attachment to this way of life, is a natural activity for man. For contemporary hunters, the motif of the ancestral hunter is of no small importance. “Man the hunter” is no longer an image of a psychopathic renegade; he is an active expression of ideals like tradition, conservatism, and social and environmental integration and harmony. Even those opposed to hunting can benefit from seeing beyond the hunter’s actions to the ideals expressed by those actions. However, though the ideals of the hunter may be more widely accepted than his action, even these ideals have a problematic component.

Unlike the argument from origins, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that today’s humans are *not* hunters in any relevant meaning of the word. McIntyre’s assertion that humans are incorrigible hunters does not accurately describe our current experience, and if any general categorization is to be made, it must be that we are incorrigible agriculturalists. Without agriculture, very little of our current lives remain. For instance, the words on this page could never have been written, because there would be no computers and no “higher education”. Furthermore, there would be no schools, no kindergartens, no electricity, no means of transport other than the human body, no property, no homes, and no domestic animals of any kind. Practically everything we fill our lives with owes its existence to the advent of agriculture. Neither these things independently, nor the agricultural economy as a whole, is without flaws. But we cannot for that reason choose not to relate to them.

If we do chose not to relate to our predicament, it can only be as a temporary “vacation from the human condition”, as José Ortega y Gasset (1995) describes the hunt. On what grounds can such a vacation from the human condition be acceptable? What characterizes the human condition is the existential dilemma; humans are the only beings who can reflect on their own existence, and consequently, the only beings faced with the predicament of having to make moral judgments; but they are also the only beings to realize that they are alone in this endeavor. In short, the human condition is the moral condition, and *a vacation should not be granted generously*. But perhaps hunting is a special case? To elaborate on Ortega’s metaphor, a vacation is motivated by one’s own needs and desires, and leaves the social demands of everyday behind. In this perspective, a vacation is selfishly motivated. However, we should not underestimate the power of going away temporarily to gain a fresh perspective on things. The simile of hunting with a vacation significantly captures how both function as contrasts to our sometimes drab and troublesome lives. Hunting is, physically and symbolically, a way to gain strength and rejuvenate one’s engagement in the meeting with the constant problems of everyday, agricultural, life. In this context, hunting equals resignation, but only a temporary one. The only problem is that all those things, a fresh perspective, new strength, a temporary resignation, can be obtained through other means, which significantly, do not cause harm to animals.

In any case, we should not pretend that hunting in today’s society carries on “a continuum of experience that has gone on for millions of years”, like James Swan imagines. Firstly, this overlooks the variety of hunting practices through history and across continents. Secondly, it downplays the fact that the socio-economical context in which hunting currently takes place separates the modern hunter clearly from his prehistoric ancestor. The line to the hunter/gatherer was definitively broken as all material need was obliterated. Hence, the hunting that lingers on today is more plausibly viewed as a kind of *pastiche* than as a heritage. In today’s world, hunting is like a role play. In conclusion, we *are* not hunters, but some of us occasionally take on that role.

4 Webs

Hunters, then, are not simply fighters on the side of humanity against the wilderness. Their loyalties are divided. Because hunting takes place at the boundary between the human domain and the wilderness, the hunter stands with one foot on each side of the boundary, and swears no perpetual allegiance to either side. He is a liminal and ambiguous figure, who can be seen either as a fighter against wildness or as a half-animal participant in it.

– Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning*

The word “ecology” derives from the Greek words *oikos* (household) and *logos* (study). As a term denoting relations, phenomena, and processes in the natural world, it was not coined until 1866 by Ernst Haeckel, in the German word *oekologie* (Worster 1994: 192). Although linguistically of recent origins, the idea that all the entities of nature were part of a grand whole is ancient, as Arthur Lovejoy’s classic study reveals. In ecological thought, descriptions of this whole called nature have never reached any consensus; from the beginning, there were differing conceptions of its basic characteristics (was it good or bad, chaotic or ordered, constant or in flux?), and also disagreement about man’s place in relation to this whole (was man part of nature or something separate?). Historian Donald Worster argues that from its origins, the study of ecology allowed for two different, although interchanging, interpretations of nature. The first he calls *arcadian*, after the naturalist Gilbert White, who in his writings made his home of Selborne into something of a natural paradise. According to Worster, the arcadian view “advocated a simple, humble life for man with the aim of restoring him to a peaceful coexistence with other organisms” (Worster 1994: 2). The other interpretation of nature he calls *imperial*; exemplified by the systematic, rationalistic approach of Carolus Linnaeus, the ambition of this view “was to establish, through the exercise of reason and by hard work, man’s dominion over nature” (Worster 1994: 2). Another representative of this ambition, though predating the discipline of ecology, was Francis Bacon, who advocated “the enlargement of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible” (Bacon, in Worster 1994: 51).

To speak in ideal types, the arcadian ideal represented nature as a good and peaceful whole in which humans could blend in unnoticeably, while the imperial ideal saw nature as a violent and chaotic mass to be brought under man's control for his benefit. The division identified by Worster is undoubtedly more than a historical artifact. It has managed to remain in effect even to this day, and we see remnants of it in the distinction between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric attitudes in environmental ethics. In the particular case of hunting, I argue in this chapter that different conceptions of nature, and of man's place therein, give rise to distinct justifications for hunting.

In this chapter I will look at an argument for hunting that relies heavily on the science, as well as the ethos, of ecology. The *argument of webs* is really a web of arguments, and contains both strands of ecological thought mentioned above. On the one hand, hunters have recently been determined to formulate a non-anthropocentric ethos for hunting, to distinguish it from the sporting ethic of the first half of the 20th century. Their motivation springs from the emergence of new sensibilities towards animals and nature in our society; attitudes which do not harmonize well with the notion of killing for "sport". In the argument of webs, this new statement of hunting's rationale, which attempts to harmonize the deliberate and violent killing of animals with the notion of their intrinsic value, turns to the natural law of predation for redemption. This readjustment of hunting's focus is nowhere near being absolute, so, on the other hand, remnants of the older ethos still linger on. In this perspective, wild animals need to be managed, for the enjoyment and benefit of man. This leaves the contemporary hunter oscillating, as Matt Cartmill argues, between the roles of fighter against wildness and of half-animal participant in it. (In our day, though, the designation "fighter against wildness" would hardly appeal to anyone, and the preferred term is "manager" or "steward".)

In any case, all versions of the argument from webs relate to the claim that we moderns have an unhealthy tendency to think ourselves separately from nature; a tendency that purportedly produces our peculiar alienation from natural processes. In the face of modern alienation from nature, this argument attempts to place humanity where it belongs, either 1) as a manager of nature, or 2) as an integral part of it. A central point made by both versions of this argument is that we must enter into nature's food chains, or "webs", if we aspire to an ethical relationship with the land. We cannot afford to, in fact we *cannot*, live our lives detached from natural processes. Historical arguments about the unity, and the relations, of all natural things certainly form a backdrop for the argument of webs.

However, it is an unmistakably modern version of these ideas, and its history is intimately tied to the growth of Western environmentalism.

The sport hunting ethos of the late 19th and early 20th century was highly successful in augmenting populations of wild animals who shortly prior had been threatened by extinction, and thus, this ethos seems to have had a keen ecological edge. The sporting ethos, however, must not be confused with the current ecological argument for hunting. Significantly, contemporary hunters have begun to view hunting less as a sport and more as 1) a duty, or 2) a communion with nature. Current pressures on hunting force the hunter to downplay the element of pleasure, or “sport”, and emphasize duty and necessity in its place. As we will see, arguments about hunting being a duty and a necessity are vicarious, but potentially powerful. More importantly, there is an ongoing shift away from these managerial, anthropocentric, imperial, conservationist attitudes towards communionist, non-anthropocentric, arcadian, preservationist ones. This is a less than complete change, however, and in current justifications of hunting, human chauvinism is mixed with varying degrees of ecocentrism, leaving the hunter once again as the ambiguous figure.

Preserving Nature, or, Making Sure There Are Enough Animals to Hunt

Regardless of their dissimilar attitudes to nature and to animals, contemporary hunters unanimously applaud the conservation efforts of the early sport hunters. This is especially true of American hunters, on whose account these efforts are considered a legacy comparable to that of the primitive hunter/gatherer. According to Richard Nelson, “it was predominantly hunters who shaped and promoted the idea of conservation, the scientific principles guiding sustainable use of natural resources, and the concept of public wild life preserves and national parks” (Nelson 1996: 5). David Samuel argues that “hunters were really our first large group of environmentalists”, and he adds that “the roots of our wildlife management system come from the work of recreational hunters who, over 100 years ago, began protecting and managing habitat and got laws passed to conserve wildlife” (Samuel 1999: 45, 43). The involvement of hunters in the emerging ethos of conservation, as well as in actual conservation work, is undisputed. Historian Lisa Mighetto, in a study of American views of wild animals, argues that: “Sportsmen were among the first to protest the wanton destruction of animals. So significant were their efforts that one historian has

credited them with spearheading the conservation movement” (1991: 5). Even ecofeminist Marti Kheel, who is explicitly opposed to the hunting ethos, says that “few historians deny that hunters played a significant role in the development of the early conservation movement” (1995: 93).

If there is any question about the efforts of the sport hunter/conservationist they do not concern his actual accomplishments, but his *motives*. Mighetto explains: “[The] rationale of sportsmen was almost wholly utilitarian; alarmed by the rapidity with which game animals were disappearing, hunters, for the most part, were more concerned with the continuation of their sport than with the welfare of individual creatures of species” (1991: 5). Hunters too seem to acknowledge this, as Jim Posewitz reveals:

There would be no hunting if there were no wild animals. The fact that there would be few wild animals if there were no hunters is not as obvious. Both of these statements are true, and they are things everyone should know about the American hunter/conservationist. (Posewitz 1994: 105)

Contemporary critics of the hunt claim that the selfish motives of the hunter’s conservation efforts invalidate the argument about the hunter/conservationist (see Baker 1985). As Posewitz demonstrates, the hunter’s main motivation is to conserve enough animals to hunt, an attitude which does not necessarily entail a “communion” with nature, or even a respectful attitude towards animals. Rather, this motivation seems purely self-interested. Admittedly, the hunter/conservationist does recognize human dependence on nature and realizes that action is apt to regulate this relation. Still, he casts the hunter in the role of manager rather than half-animal participant, and the rationale is always anthropocentric: human hunters need game, therefore they should make an effort to conserve them.

To counter the criticism of selfishness, some hunters voice the argument that hunters are the most efficient means of wildlife conservation, thanks to their exclusive knowledge of the field (Posewitz 1999). The hunter knows more than anyone, this argument goes, about the density of game, its health, its behavior, its location, etc. Thus, say these hunters, critics should not care about the hunter’s motivation as long as it has the desired result of ensuring plentiful populations of wild animals. Weight is sometimes added to this argument by claiming that hunters are in fact the only group to work actively for wildlife in this way, and that no other group could possibly fill the same function, because they lack the incentives of hunters (Swan 1995). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service explain that: “In order to conserve healthy wildlife resources, we depend on the support of

those who are equally invested in this goal. Hunters and anglers, who are often called the original conservationists, are among our greatest partners”.²⁹

Adding weight to this image of the hunter/conservationist, American hunters never fail to point out the so-called Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937, which places an excise tax on guns, ammunition, and some other hunting and shooting equipment (Pacelle 1998). This money, collected directly from hunters, fund the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as the state wildlife agencies, who in turn are involved in a number of conservation and restoration projects.³⁰ In Norway, the agencies responsible for wildlife management are funded by the state (which in turn, of course, is funded by the general population). In addition, the government collects an annual fee from hunters, which is spent on a variety of habitat and wildlife conservation measures. To add to their image as conservationists, Norwegian hunters often refer to their practice of “directed shooting” (*rettet avskyting*) which has contributed to plentiful populations of animals (notably of the moose, which is the most important big game animal in Norway).³¹ This management strategy involves shooting calves and 1^{1/2}-year olds, leaving adult males and females to reproduce, which is the most effective composition of a population in terms of reproduction. Norwegian hunters also sometimes add, with slightly less emphasis, that new methods of forestry (clear cutting) have been instrumental in bringing about abundant species of some game species, the moose in particular (see Pedersen 1999).

In addition, hunters never fail to point out the variety of conservation organizations that spring out of the hunting community, like the American *Ducks Unlimited* and the *Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation*. These organizations buy, restore, enhance, and manage habitats for their species of choice, as well as functioning as lobby groups for “their” species (and wildlife in general). The closest Norwegian equivalent to these organizations is *The Norwegian Wild Reindeer Council* (Villreintrådet i Norge), which works to benefit the vulnerable populations of wild reindeer in Norway. In Norway, though, the *Norwegian*

²⁹ <http://www.fws.gov/huntingandfishing/index.html> (Accessed: September 26, 2005).

³⁰ The funds from the Pittman-Robertson Act are apportioned between wildlife restoration and hunter education programs; in 2004, the national total of \$203,674,379 was allotted with \$38,377,906 for hunter education purposes and \$165,296,473 for wildlife restoration. Source:

<http://federalaid.fws.gov/apport/WRFINALApportionment2004.pdf> (Accessed: September 26, 2005).

³¹ http://www.njff.no/index.php?file=article.html&object_id=23660 (Accessed: September 26, 2005).

Hunting and Fishing Association (Norges Jeger- og Fiskerforbund) is by far the most important hunter organization, with local groups all over the country.³²

What is imperative for hunters, when faced with criticism of selfish conservation motives, is to point out that no similar effort or organization springs from the ranks of hunting's critics. For instance, animal rights activists, despite their apparent concern for animals, have nothing to show for when it comes to preserving wild animals (Swan 1995: 120). The hunter's thought goes: unless you can do better, you have no right to criticize. According to hunters, there are certain structures in place, thanks to hunting, that safeguard abundant populations of game species, and until another system emerges, hunting remains the best option. Hence, they conclude, hunting remains a necessary means to guarantee abundant populations of wildlife. Critics, obviously, will not rest with this conclusion, and would likely want to bring up other reasons why current populations of game are so plentiful, most importantly, the hunter-supported extermination of natural predators. And it would not be possible to discuss the success of the hunter/conservationist without touching upon this particularly controversial chapter of his history.

The Hunter's Enemy

The success of the hunting/conservation regime and the extermination of predators are clearly a pair, and hunters sometimes admit this. The early sporting ethos entailed an elaborate and fierce effort to exterminate natural predators like wolves, bears, foxes, ravens in Norway (Søilen 1995: 99), and wolves, bears, and wildcats in the U.S. (Mighetto 1991: 81). In a history of the Norwegian hunting and fishing association, Espen Søilen documents the extent to which programs of predator extermination were institutionalized in Norway in the first part of the 20th century. At this time it was part of the laws of the Norwegian Hunting and Fishing Association to "encourage the destruction of animal species harmful to game and fish", and this became the mandate of hunters when they "went to war against predators" (1995: 95). This program was kept up with zealous effort until the 1950s, when scientists began to argue that hunting was less closely related to the abundance of game than previously assumed (Søilen 1995: 207-209). This development was largely parallel to the situation in America, where the proposition of forester and environmental philosopher

³² See respectively: www.ducks.org, www.rmef.org, www.villrein.no, www.njff.no (Accessed: September 27, 2005).

Aldo Leopold to “think like a mountain” had the effect of shifting focus away from predator extermination towards appreciation of a greater whole. Leopold proposed a new ethic, the land ethic, designed to encompass the whole of the biotic community, in which humans were changed “from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it” (1949: 204). In this new ethos, one could be a hunter and still wish for natural predators to exist.

That there has been a movement towards greater appreciation of natural predators among hunters in the latter half of the 20th century is sure enough, but this change has not been unequivocal. Some hunters still express their desire to exterminate natural predators, but now their arguments have expanded to include the interests of a wider audience. For instance, Sven Gjems acknowledges the interests of farmers whose sheep are killed by predators:

Considering that sustainable predator populations is a national responsibility, it is obvious that we all have to share the cost of keeping the destruction they cause at an acceptable level. In any case, it is unreasonable that farmers are forced to pay the price for society’s desire for a greater presence of large predators. (1999: 112)

And he adds: “If people are forced to leave their farms because city folk and managers want large populations of predators, then things have gone too far” (1999: 110). Gjems is typical, of Norwegian hunters in any case, in that he appeals to the rural interests behind predator extinction. In this perspective, the predator issue is no longer decided simply with reference to game species, but more importantly in relation to the destruction of domestic animals, people’s fear of predators, the symbolic statement of rural, local autonomy, etc. David Samuel sounds a similar plea. Commenting on the hunting of cougars, which is currently banned in his state of California, he argues that hunting can be effective in making mountain lions more wary of humans, and thus reduce the number of human/lion incidents. He notes that: “Though this approach seems rational, the truth is that society is changing and urban values differ a great deal from the rural values we all once held” (1999: 197). The rural universe Samuel envisions is one where different kinds of animal “uses” are hardly questioned at all. It resembles former president Jimmy Carter’s response to the objection to killing an animal for human consumption. He says:

I was brought up in an agricultural society, where chickens, hogs, sheep, goats, and cattle were raised for food. There was no real distinction in my mind between those animals and the quail, doves, ducks, squirrels, and rabbits that also arrived on our table after a successful hunt. (1996: 41)

Though rural hunters may fail to see a distinction between wild and domestic, they are surely aware of the distinction between useful animals (both wild and domestic), on the one hand, and “vermin” on the other. The latter category includes all animals that for one reason or another are considered to be a problem, a pest, or a nuisance. Punsvik and Storaas give a straightforward statement of the rural interests involved in categorizing animals:

When selling the right to hunt, the owner of the right, the farmer, makes more money if the land contains plenty of game. Natural predators are competitors for the game, and the farmer traditionally divides all living things into the useful, the uninteresting, and the competitors. He would like to fight the competitors and collect great harvests of the useful. (1998: 63)

Though this is painfully simplified, it does contain some truth. Many farmers, especially owners of pasturing animals, are convinced that predators must be fought with aggressive means to prevent damage upon livestock. This argument has some force, since it appeals to most farmers and all those who share their worldview, in short, to large parts of the rural population.

In contrast, the notion that natural predators should be hunted to leave more game for the human hunter, a relic from the 19th and early 20th century sporting ethic, is not likely to be as successful with the non-hunting public. That does not mean it has disappeared completely. Knut Brevik comes close to such a position, though he too is careful to include the interest of the land owner:

We now know (...) that the fox is the main predator of roe deer where there is no lynx or wolf. The fox can be responsible for as many as 60-70% of deaths in roe populations. Hence, it will be a good business for any land owner or owner of hunting rights with even the slightest interest in the hunting of roe, fowl, or hare, to let you hunt fox. Every fox you shoot will actually be a blessing for the land owner. (2001: 100)

And we could add, without interfering with Brevik’s general position: “a blessing for the hunter”. Some hunters accept predator extermination with reference to rural interests, while acknowledging that this is a difficult question that revolves around multiple interests. Others, like James Whisker, less hesitantly evoke the language of past times and speak of certain animals as a “nuisance” that were “in the way of progress or inconvenient to man” (1981: 81):

Without continuing to press the obvious point of the incompatibility of larger predators and cities, it is nearly as obvious that sub-urbanites and even farming and other rural families do not wish to have substantial numbers of these animals near

them (...) Generally, we find these animals increasingly confined to national wilderness areas, and with good reason. Man continues to build up, populate, and civilize America at an unparalleled rate. A portion of this process includes the removal of most wild animals. (Whisker 1981: 82)

Whisker's analysis is factually accurate, of course. Where man expands, wild animals must implode. However, Whisker's assumption that the continuing expansion of humanity is desirable, is becoming an increasingly hard case to justify, considering the pressure of our current numbers on the planet. Moreover, Whisker does not seem to realize that game species too, and not only predators, are affected by man's unparalleled building, populating, and civilizing. This domestication of land through human building is just what organizations like the *Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation* sees as the greatest threat to the habitat of game. It seems that the hunter who speaks so clearly in favor of the expansion of mankind becomes stuck in a self-defeating position, since "real" hunting, at least according to the ruling ethos in the countries in question, depends on wild land and animals for its existence (as we noted in chapter 2).

Though it is important to note lingering attitudes from the sporting ethic and its rather aggressive view on the extermination of predators, it remains clear that many hunters now urge greater appreciation of the presence of large natural predators. Punsvik and Storaas argue:

By expressing and practicing a negative view on nature, the hunter puts himself in a bad light in the rest of society. Hunters who express their hatred towards predators because they cannot accept that they are competitors for the game are detrimental to the reputation of the hunting community. (1998: 87)

Though this is more in line with Leopold's ethos to think like a mountain, we should note that it follows a strictly self-interested rationale. Hunters, they say, should not express hatred towards predators because that would affect their standing in society. There is no indication that they should appreciate predators in themselves, for what they are. Historically, hunters have had no trouble seeing the negative side of predation, and old habits die hard. However, dissenting voices can now be heard.

In "An Appeal to Hunters", Rick Bass urges hunters to radically revise their view of predators. He says that the hunter's "ambiguous relationship to fellow predators" is an "unswept corner of the closet" (1996: 194). It is an issue about which the contemporary hunter has not entirely come to agreement with himself, and hence, hunters sometimes let other interests "speak against these species' survival" (1996: 194). The target of Bass'

appeal is the acceptance of Whisker and other hunters that “Man continues to build up, populate, and civilize”. This process, argues Bass, imperils the existence of large predators. Instead of endorsing this development, hunters should appreciate the wolf for what he is:

We keep doing our thing – hunting – and becoming better at it each year, as we learn more, both from the woods and from the prey itself. I like to take pleasure from knowing that, after the snows come and we go back to our cabins or our homes, and turn on the lights or the lanterns, and put a log on the fire, that for others it is still going on, the eternal business of life – of life right at the edge. It gives me a strength, knowing that the wolves are somewhere out there. (1996: 198)

As far as the fluctuations of game populations are concerned, the importance of predators now seems exaggerated in accounts both *pro* and *con*. In contrast to previous assumptions, wildlife managers have since long asserted that the presence of large predators is just one of several mortality factors, and in many cases not even among the most significant ones (Søilen 1995). This does not mean that the anthropocentric ethos of predator extermination has disappeared, nor that its ties with the hunter/conservationist paradigm have been severed. However, the hunter/conservationist argument is increasingly being downplayed to leave room for another argument, equally managerial. While predator extermination was an integral part of the successful hunter/conservationist paradigm, the abundance of game that results (partly) from this extermination has paradoxically caused the hunter to turn his argument about *too few animals* into one about *too many animals*. From the argument that hunting is an essential tool in securing abundant populations of game, we now turn to the apparently opposite argument that hunting is necessary to check the overpopulation of those same animals.

The Merciful Predator and the Art of Growing Animals

The question of predator extermination is interesting, because it most clearly exemplifies the hunter as “fighter against wildness”. Every hunt entails an image of the prey, and that of the predator is markedly less benign than that of other prey. However, this too is changing, and Bass is a case in point. Interesting as the predator issue is, it does not always sort under “hunting”. For one, the predator is portrayed as an enemy and a competitor of the hunter, and he is designated as a “pest”, “nuisance”, or “problem”. Correspondingly, the hunting of these animals is termed “extermination”, “removal”, or the like. Also, the meat from predators is not employed to the same extent as the meat of other animals, which indicates

that there is a whole other rationale at play. The hunt for predators has more of a business, or duty, aspect to it, while the proper hunt is more likely to be seen as recreation.

However, there is another argument for hunting in general that also tries to picture hunting as a duty. It says that humans are part of a food chain, that we have been for thousands of years, and that, if we step back from this food chain, then ecological chaos ensues. Man, therefore, has a duty to continue to occupy his ecological niche, despite what his moral sentiments may say to the contrary. This argument is a response to suggestions made by critics of the hunt, who profess a hands-off strategy of wildlife management. If we stop hunting, say these critics, populations will collapse due to overpopulation, but then eventually stabilize. Hence, there is no necessity to sustain the hunt (Baker 1985). Most often, hunters do not question the logic of this argument; they agree that if the predatory pressure on a population is loosened, then it will eventually stabilize: “If we were to stop hunting deer, populations would shoot up for awhile, then growth would slow. The deer population would age as reproduction drops near zero” (Samuel 1999: 171). Instead of countering the scientific argument of critics, hunters counter criticism with a moral argument. Besides being a hunter, David Samuel is also a wildlife manager, so he should know what he is talking about. He says that:

It is true that if you stop hunting, something else will kill deer. If diseases don't, then extreme weather will. But the expense and damage to the habitat is huge, and the expense to deer in terms of painful death and suffering will be tremendous. Apparently winter starvation is a terrible, painful death for deer. (1999: 168)

David Petersen concurs, and at the same time he demonstrates the way this argument is sometimes framed in terms of a duty:

Rust never sleeps. And since we've either exterminated or severely contained the *Cervidae*'s primary nonhuman predators – wolves, cougars, grizzly bears – and so long as we as a culture remain unwilling to bring back these competing predators across all the deer's range, the task of evolutionary rust removal falls to you, if you so choose, and to me. (2000: 178)

Clearly, this is a vicarious argument. No hunter regrets having to perform this “task of evolutionary rust removal”, and few hunters consider hunting anything close to a duty. Indeed, the function of hunting in today's world is exactly the opposite of duty. It is exactly what one does to get away from duties. Not even all hunters are convinced by the culling-argument, like Knut Brevik, who reveals his more honest motives for hunting:

It is actually not true that the hunt is a burdensome duty that we work ourselves through...We hunt because we like it. Quite simply. We hunt because we like the excitement. We take pleasure in a well placed shot. We enjoy the hard work together with our buddies, and we like the thought of cooking dinner for good friends from venison we procured ourselves. (2001: 10)

Not all hunters are equally inclined to emphasize overpopulation/massive suffering, but they point to other problems with not keeping the populations at limited numbers. In general, Norwegian hunters seem less likely to argue that a hands-off management strategy is inhumane, and more likely to emphasize other troublesome aspects of abundant game populations. Lier-Hansen and Wegge, for instance, list “the negative importance of wild animals”, which includes destruction to agriculture (crops, forest, and domestic animals), traffic incidents, and reduced possibilities for non-hunters to experience nature due to fear of wild animals (2003: 14). Despite these negative aspects, they conclude that wild animals in general are a value for society. Unlike in the American accounts, Norwegians seldom point to the suffering animals are likely to experience if they are *not* hunted. Instead, they construct the animal either as a problem, as above, or alternatively, as a crop. Lier-Hansen and Wegge are suiting exemplars even of this:

The starting point for game management is that the wild animal is a *conditionally renewable* resource. *Conditionally* renewable means that the game can stand a harvest or taxation as long as the foundation for a new production is not destroyed. It is the annually produced *surplus* that can be harvested, while the *capacity* for production (the capital) must be preserved. (2003: 20)

Animal rights activist Wayne Pacelle argues that the whole system of game management imposes “an agricultural model on the killing of wildlife” where wildlife is “considered to be a crop to be harvested on an annual basis” (1998: 196), and we can easily see the truth in his statement. In the parlance of the managerial hunter, game animals are constructed as crops that must be harvested in a systematic and scientific fashion. The managerial attitude is purportedly neutral, in that it applies seemingly disinterested language, and objections to the managerial way of seeing things is often presented as sentimental. However, it actually represents an anthropocentric perspective, relying as it does on a fixed human-animal relation, where humans are in the privileged position of manager, while animals remain an unspecified and managed “mass”.

This kind of language is regrettable. It probably has practicality for hunters and wildlife managers in explaining the principles of game management, but I am afraid that it

glosses over some important facts about animals in the process. The managerial lingo may be a slippery slope where animals end up being thought of as things, rather than as living, feeling creatures. Treating an animal as if it were a crop may have the effect of eradicating the individuality of the animal. Although game management may occasionally require the kind of thinking that Lier-Hansen and Wegge exemplify, it should be clear that *any* animal, whether the victim of a cull, of regular hunting, of predator extermination, or a domestic animal, is not just a member of a species, it is also an individual animal with certain traits and characteristics. I am not talking about the dubious assumption of the “personality” of the animal, but rather, I want to state (what seems obvious) that the animal’s nervous system does not vanish just because we talk about it as if it were a plant. This critique is not an argument against hunting. However, I do think that if we challenged the assumptions of this kind of language, some of our conclusions about hunting could be different. The (more typically American) approach of focusing on the suffering of individual animals seems not only more accurate, but more likely to gain the support of the non-hunting public.

The Holist Sportsman

So far in this chapter we have looked at arguments where the hunter remains, if not a “fighter against wildness” as in Cartmill’s expression, than surely a manager, regulator, harvester, manipulator; in short, a paternalistic figure. What makes these arguments of webs is the interdependence of humans and nature; the hunter needs the game, or he can no longer be a hunter; likewise, the animals need the hunter, or they will die of starvation. These arguments sustain the imperial interpretation of ecology, where man remains something of an outsider in relation to nature. Unlike the rest of nature’s creatures, man is not just an integrated part; rather, his position entails the role of a manager, or a steward, of nature; a position which comes with certain responsibilities. Hunters are not always clear on the rationales involved in these arguments, and assumedly they range from pure self-interest to the interests of future generations, from the preservation of cultural heritage to some (slight) notion of intrinsic value of animals.

There is another variety of the argument of webs, however, which sees humans as more thoroughly integrated in natural processes. In contrast to the managerial view, this version claims that to view humanity as a manager of nature is not a solution, but rather part of the problem. This argument questions our tendency to think of human society as an

enclosed sphere with particular responsibilities *for* nature, and urges us instead to realize that we are natural beings immersed *in* nature. This view endorses the notion that “management”, “stewardship”, and “duty” are not terms that properly define hunting, because they all set up a distinction between man and nature. Instead, suggest these writers, hunting can be envisioned as the nexus of an integrated ecological lifestyle where humans blend into nature much like other animals. Chas S. Clifton argues: “We can no longer afford to think of nature as “out there” and separate from humanity – and, I would add, from divinity” (1996: 149). This *holist* perspective is much more than a rejection of managerial views; it is a fundamental defense of hunting as a natural and spiritual activity. It contends that only in the context of an environmentally benign mode of living, only in a holist perspective, can hunting be justified. In effect, then, this argument targets not only managerial defenses of hunting, but also ethically individualist criticisms of hunting (for instance, the animal rights objection).

Ted Kerasote reveals the vicarious character of the duty-to-prevent-suffering-argument, while simultaneously suggesting a shift of emphasis from human management of nature to their integration in it:

Of all the arguments for the cull, this is the lamest. Elk have starved with grace and dignity for thousands of years, and don’t need Florence Nightingales with rifles to sanitize their deaths. I guess if we were truly responsible, we wouldn’t put much emphasis on any of these management schemes. We would deemphasize our manipulation of wildlife for their purported good, and proceed headlong and without delay on what would really benefit them – manipulating ourselves. It is we who need birth control, not animals. (1993: 218)

In the place of natural predation and death by starvation, the managerial hunter places human intervention, the charity of the human race, “Florence Nightingales with rifles”. The human hunter steps in as the merciful predator. Holist hunters, like Kerasote, will have none of this. The culling argument is based on a utilitarian rationale, which Kerasote feels does not apply. Rather, he shifts the emphasis towards issues of our place in nature; he regrets humanity’s tendency to occupy steadily more land, and his suggestion that humans should be the targets of birth control signals his clear priorities. In this view, animals *deserve* their habitat, not just to figure as “prey” for the hunter (or as the object of a wildlife manager’s cull), but as members of the biotic community.

Other hunters elaborate on the disastrous effects of our current worldview, where the only function of nature is to function as raw material for human development and consumption:

What really threatens [the habitat of wild animals] is the so-called changing use of space. Until the end of the last war, Norwegian forests were mainly reserved for the production of timber, pastures, and production of wild animals. Water and air were clean, and the conditions were nearly idyllic. But then land lots for cabins became scarce; wetlands were filled, drained, and built; construction of housing and industry ate its way outward; roads multiplied and became straighter and better, leading to a colossal increase in traffic; the utilization of water power dammed huge areas;...power lines and other barriers cut through the fields in a criss-cross fashion. In some places the clear cut fields of the forest industry were frighteningly large, and heavy machinery grounded the earth apart... (Angaard *et. al.* 1983: 22)

Ole Kirkemo likewise argues that: “The nightmare for wild reindeer is tourists, snowmobiles, alpine skiing resorts, ski slopes, highways, paths, power lines, dams, cabin villages, and everything that goes with these things (...) The lack of shelter is an enemy that wild reindeer cannot guard themselves from” (2004: 46). Always serving his outbursts with a side portion of misanthropy, David Petersen argues that our taking over the natural world is not only ethically base and sickening; it is extremely consequential, for wildlife especially:

(...) every year more traditional wildlife habitat is transmogrified into obscene trophy houses for the conspicuous rich, redundant golf courses (three on the ground and a fourth on the drawing board), tacky commercial and industrial parks, noisy natural gas fields, and seas of suburban subdivisions to hold a floodtide of urban refugees that shows no sign of ebbing. The chamber of commerce calls it progress. Wildlife call it hard times. (Petersen 1996b: 151)

Petersen, like a number of hunters, takes “the wild” as his prime source of value. Following Paul Shepard, he sees human expansion and domestication as ecologically dysfunctional strategies. What inspires his additional pathos is that in modern society, wildlife suffers not just because of human needs, but because of their luxuries. While wildlife is vitally dependent on its habitat, decent food, and shelter, humans have no real *need* for trophy houses, golf courses, and tacky commercial parks. The interests of animals are granted much weight in Petersen’s account, and he clearly prefers that the vital needs of animals are met before humans may satisfy their whims of luxury.

Having set itself apart from the managerial hunting ethos, the holist hunter takes on a mode of relating to nature which has become even more common than the managerial,

namely outright alienation. The holist hunter contends that modern people have become alienated from nature and its processes, and that they have begun to see nature as a mere thing, as an object. Some hunters allude that urban people, because they lack natural surroundings in their everyday lives, have no real concept of nature at all. The result, argue some, is an inclination to be skeptical of hunting, and even of the natural world as such. Chas S. Clifton argues that the animal rights objection to hunting is imbued with “a fundamental disgust with nature that casts the predator as the bad guy”, and he contends that modern critique of hunting is a “sort of neo-Manichaeism” based on the notion that “humans are not really part of nature but are trapped in it and owe it nothing” (1996: 145, 146). To contrast this unreal view of nature, Clifton suggests that hunting is “a hands-on fascination with and participation in the natural world in all its aspects rather than a squeamish withdrawal from some of them” (1996: 148). Whereas animal rightists regard nature from afar, considering it a “botched job” (1996: 145), hunters “enter the cosmic give-and-take (...) admit our sometimes predatory nature and thus let the wild into ourselves, a true form of holy communion, a participation” (1996: 149). Clifton explicitly warrants the suggestion that, for holist hunters, hunting equals communion with nature.

Hunters sometimes argue that the modern view of nature, with its attendant disgust at natural processes, is caused by a tendency to learn about nature in the wrong way. Jim Posewitz argues that:

In the modern world, the land and its dimensions often become generated abstractions – the result of images created by writers, photographers, filmmakers, promoters, teachers, and even poets. They become images to be mass-produced, media-multiplied, and fed to the people. (1996: 138)

Implicit in Posewitz’ argument is that while nature for modern, urban people is created, even to the extent of becoming pure abstraction, the hunter experiences the real thing. In his essay, which is a sort of epitaph for a hunter he knew, he continues:

Montana was no abstraction for Phil Tawney. His land was real; its truth came to him molded by three generations of his own people, then tempered with his own experience as a hunter, timber cutter, angler, packer, ranch hand, wilderness wanderer, and conservation activist. (1996: 138).

The hunter’s hands-on experience with natural processes yields a real and true understanding of nature. In contrast, the urban view of nature cannot conceal its lack of

experience, and hence the “anti” does not understand the truths of life and death which hunting exemplifies so perfectly. Craig Medred explains:

So many are those who see nature through the mind-numbing fog of a picture tube. Nature is to them a game show. It has no reality. It is something that exists in the fantasy of television. There is no blood and gore and life and death to it. Television sterilized the savagery of nature, and the logical reaction of people exposed to this subtle propaganda is a growing desire to sterilize – neuter might be an even better word – the pagan hunters and fishermen. (1996: 60)

To remedy this situation, Samuel suggests that:

(...) one major way to get people to understand nature is to get them out of the cities. Only then can we educate them about the life and death struggles that occur in the woods. That is one of the beautiful things about hunting---Hunters see death as a part of wild nature when they go hunting, and they actually participate in the life death struggles. Wild nature is not wrapped in cellophane and labeled. It is not captured on film and readily available on television. Sitting in a tree stand lets us understand what real nature really is. People can experience it. (1999: 226)

Of course, not even the hunter is in the privileged position of understanding “what real nature really is”. The hunter’s representation of nature (because that is what it primarily is), is more or less accurate in relation to “real” nature, as it is more or less accurate in relation to other representations of nature. Against this, some hunters are doubly frustrated, in that they, firstly, do not agree with certain (urban) representations of nature, and secondly, that they cannot accept the notion that nature is not just real, but also represented. This leads to the conclusion that the urban view of nature is not just ideologically in opposition to the hunter’s view, but downright wrong. Though the hunter is not at fault in thinking that some things are factually wrong, we can question his assumption that “nature’s laws of life and death” sort easily in the category of disinterested “fact”. In contrast, there seems to be a significant aspect of ideology involved, not least in the desire to uphold a traditional rural practice that has been enormously important in maintaining social integration in rural areas. The main point of conflict between rural and urban representations of nature is that while the former relies on practices and attitudes that see humans as embedded in nature as active producers and consumers, the latter, by privilege of a farther remove in space and occupation, can envision nature as a place of leisure and contemplation (Syse 2000, Frykman and Løfgren 1994).

Though hunters are not exclusively rural, and though the hunter’s representation of nature is not unambiguous, the most important element of the holist argument is the notion

that the hunter, unlike the urban dweller, enters nature as a participant, not as a spectator. The holist hunting ethos entails, like Jim Posewitz remarks, that: “We are participants in the great drama of life, and our stage is the land” (1999: 112). Alluding to the urban alienated attitude to nature, Thomas McIntyre describes the value of active participation in nature:

(...) being an active participant in the timeless round of the hunter and the hunted, choosing not to try to place myself beyond the wild, *not* to hope to be able to observe it at some sterile, heightened remove, but rather to wade right into it and get some of its mud on my boots, and sometimes some of its blood on my hands. (1988: 4)

Pete Dunne admits that the desire to be a “part of nature” is an imperfect solution to the problem of killing the creatures you love, but he maintains that the violence of hunting adds another element to his experiences in nature:

Think of the natural world as a great play, an incredible drama held on a world stage in which all living things play a part. When I carry binoculars, I stand with the audience, an omniscient observer to all that goes on around me, and I enjoy this very much. But when I carry a gun, I become an actor, *become part of the play itself*. This I relish, too. (1996: 31)

The hunter, then, is a participant in nature. However, there is more to the hunting experience, as some hunters testify. In hunting, it is as though the hunter *becomes* nature, an animal among animals. For humans, this is a process that requires years of experience. Nature thus retains its character of being privileged terrain, in that it cannot be attained without elaborate training. As the only ones, hunters have learned to become animal, as Paul Shepard urges. Witness Jim Posewitz’ description of the hunter’s initiation into nature:

Go afield often enough and stay out long enough and it will happen. Little by little you will become less of an intruder. More animals will seem to show themselves to you. You are no longer a stranger in their world; you have become part of it. (Posewitz 1994: 5)

Then add the following statement by John Madson:

When you go into the woods, your presence makes a splash and the ripples of your arrival spread like circles in water. Long after you have stopped moving, your presence widens in rings through the woods. But after a while this fades, and the pool of silence is tranquil again, and you are either forgotten or accepted – you are never sure which. Your presence has been absorbed into the pattern of things, you have begun to be a part of it, and this is when the hunting really begins. (1996: 133)

At first, the human hunter cannot help but be human. He is easily revealed as an intruder by the creatures of the land, and consequently, his success is hampered. Then, in the course of a learning process, he becomes increasingly able to blend in unnoticed; his presence is absorbed, and he is no longer a stranger; he *is* nature. Richard Nelson adds to this image when he says that: “Hunting (...) deepens my sense of connection to the surrounding natural world, and sharpens my awareness that I am an animal” (1996: 2). In all these extracts the implication is that humans as we see them in modern, ultra-civilized society can never be a part of nature. Only as animal, can man become nature. Though this argument promised to cast humanity as a part of nature, it seems it can only grant man’s animal element to accomplish just that.

Often added to the assertion that we should become part of nature, are unashamed statements of some of nature’s basic laws. According to hunters: “Violent death is a daily part of nature and has been since the first fossil bed was laid” (Murray 1996: 67). Furthermore, hunters point out, death is not just a bad thing. Rather, death, as a natural phenomenon, is a prerequisite for life. If nothing died, nothing could ever live. Thomas McIntyre explains this law of nature:

The known cost of all animal life – and a great deal of nonanimal – is, one way or another, the death of the representatives of some other species. There is almost no way for one form of life to exist *except* at the expense of another. (1988: 100-101)

The clear message is that death is natural, and hence, cannot be changed. Despite desperate attempts to elongate our own life spans, we need to realize that in nature, death cannot be postponed. It is everywhere and at all times, and it must be so, because, in nature, death is a prerequisite for life. The message conveyed by the hunter is that we should accept this law of nature, and enter into the cycle of life and death as unashamed participants. For the law of nature does not just prescribe death, it furthermore ordains the task of death dealing to the class of predators, among them the human species. There is no hope in trying to evade this role, as Samuel explains:

While the actors may change from dinosaurs to warm blooded mammals, the scripts in nature remain the same. For thousands of years black-footed ferrets ate prairie dogs, and still do. Cold spring rains killed wild turkey and grouse chicks for 500,000 years and it still happens (...) For one million years, humans have been at the top of the food chain, and still are. Some people in today’s urban society do not want to be on the top of the food chain. Sorry, that can’t be changed. It’s the way things are. (1999: 24-5)

Only when immersed personally in this process of death dealing – only in accepting the fixed structure of nature and our place in it – can one achieve an honest relationship to the land and to whatever one removes from it to sustain life. Reflecting upon this idea, philosopher James Tantillo turns to the ancient Greek conception of tragic wisdom, in which he finds room for defining the hunt. According to Tantillo, the tragedy of life is that we live at the expense of others, and that death awaits us all. “One of the benefits of hunting”, he says, “is a form of contemplative tragic knowledge that comes from a familiarity and intimacy with death” (104). This tragic knowledge can only be “obtained firsthand”, by directly bringing about death, by *killing* (2001: 108). Non-hunters may be aware, on some abstract level, that they live at the expense of others, but they cannot attain the catharsis that authentic tragic wisdom yields; this comes only as a result of engaging in the full “hermeneutical experience” of confronting “the otherness of reality”, which in hunting is “death itself” (2001: 108). Tantillo concludes that:

(...) hunting is the primary way in which [hunters] come to enjoy and understand nature. Hunters “own” the deaths they cause. They possess a direct awareness of the fragility of life and the contingency of existence. Sport hunting, properly conducted and properly understood, can therefore lead to wisdom and contribute to human flourishing or *eudaimonia*” (2001: 110).

The contrast to this tragic wisdom is, again, the alienation and the stupidity of the city-dweller, who relates to the creatures of the earth only in a severely mediated form, namely as processed and packaged meat. “How can any man or woman, city born and bred”, asks M. R. James, “expect to know firsthand – to *understand* – that killing is a daily part of life for all of us?”:

They pay someone else to do their killing. The veal cutlet on the platter is simply meat, not a brown-eyed, milk-fed, living and breathing calf born and raised for the sole purpose of slaughter somewhere out of sight behind concrete-block walls. There is no blood, urine, and fecal matter mingling on the polished aisles of grocery stores. There are no steaming piles of intestines, no sounds of hide being ripped away from muscle, no odor of death in the conditioned air. No, the veal they eat appears miraculously among other choice cuts of meat, wrapped in sanitary cellophane, weighed and priced by the pound, waiting in stainless-steel coolers behind whispering glass doors. No dead animals. Meat.” (1996: 106)

James illustrates the importance of killing one’s own food, or at the very least, of knowing where one’s food comes from. The implication of this argument is that man must kill to live, but he must never fail to look the victims of his sustained life in the eye and honestly accept the consequences of his choice. This argument targets “hypocritical” meat-eaters

(those who eat meat, but are upset by hunting or the process of killing animals for food in general) more than it does animal rights supporting vegetarians, and many hunters express their acceptance of the vegetarian choice. Petersen is very explicit in his description of the horrors involved in producing domestic meat:

It would be a characterbuilding exercise and a worthwhile reality-check for every last supermarket and restaurant predator among us to watch, now and again, as the crucially domesticated animals whose flesh we eat and skins we wear are branded, castrated, ear-tagged, and otherwise harassed and abused, then a few months later packed tight as sardines into truck or train car and hauled bawling and anxious to a feedlot where they stand knee-deep in their own muck while gorging on doctored grain before being herded into the chanel house, laid down low by a blow from a hammer-gun and dragged off (not always entirely dead) to the cutting floor, where their blood runs deep as a river. (2000: 149).

Petersen concludes, succinctly: “We should always have to witness the suffering and deaths we cause”. (2000: 149) The holist hunter can make deeply emotional rejections of our society’s way of producing animal protein, and many hunters brag that they eat hardly any meat except what they have (hunted and) killed themselves (Petersen 2000, Kimber 2002). Swan contends that: “If people were responsible for killing even a small portion of the meat they eat, animals in general would be treated with more respect and compassion” (1995: 191-2) In our society, he says, one sometimes gets the impression that animals do not die by human hands at all:

We see the animals alive on farms, and then, magically, they are at the supermarket. The vital link in between is a secret viewed only by a handful. If we all could even witness what must be done to eat meat, we would be a much more reverent people. (1995: 268)

Although the argument to kill-your-own-food targets meat eaters who will not themselves hunt or kill an animal, hunters respond to the more radical challenge of ethical vegetarianism as well, this time with a more pragmatic, though still holist, argument. Woods admits that:

The killing bothers me. Even so, I haven’t stopped hunting. Killing is, after all, the only way to make meat, and I enjoy meat. Raising grain kills too. Every additional acre in cultivation is an acre not available as wildlife habitat, an acre lost to indigenous flora, an acre that loads another chamber in humanity’s slow game of pesticide roulette. (1996: 113)

Some hunters ridicule the talk of animal rights and ask why the supporters of such an agenda do not worry about the rights of plants. However, in contrast to such misplaced

objections, Woods realizes the distinction between the death of a carrot and the death of a doe; more relevantly, he points out that the prerequisite for a contemporary vegetarian lifestyle, agriculture, indeed also kills. Ted Kerasote makes a major argument from this point, and he thinks that from the perspective of the “least harm principle”, hunting is the most benign mode of acquiring food. He argues against “fossil fuel vegetarianism” that it indirectly, through fertilizer and pesticide use, causes more harm, in fact, that it kills more animals, than his preferred mode of hunting-gardening:

In short, being a supermarket vegetarian didn’t take me out of the web in which animals are constantly dying to feed humans, it merely put their deaths over the horizon, making them, in the bloodless jargon of cost-accounting, externalities. When I looked into that web, so full of pain, I came to see that my killing an elk each year did less harm, expressed in animal lives who I believe count equally, than importing the same amount of vegetable food to my bioregion” (1993: 233).

Man and Nature

In this chapter, I have looked at an argument that turns on the ecological and environmental contexts of hunting. It takes its scientific as well as its ethical inspiration from the discipline of ecology; a study which is demonstrably suitable for a variety of ideological purposes. Consequently, the argument of webs does not convey one unambiguous message; rather, it consists in a web of arguments about man’s place in nature. Despite differences, though, the varieties of this argument agree that man cannot be thought of as independent from nature. No matter what his place exactly, man must first realize that he *does* have a fixed place in the grand scheme of things. And among the distinctions of man’s ecological niche is that he is a secondary (or even tertiary) consumer, which means that man’s place in nature is at the top, as a predator. The structure of this argument is similar to the argument from origins in that it assumes the correct behavior in relation to hunting to be predetermined; to abandon hunting, and step away from our ordained position in nature’s food chain, is a crime against the ecological complex and against our natural selves, and hence, it cannot be the moral thing to do. Rather, the moral way is to follow nature, to unashamedly accept the role given to us as active participants in the life and death cycles of nature, to willingly play the predestined role of manager/predator.

Turning to the particular formulations of the argument of webs, it becomes clear that not all of them rely heavily on naturalness, but that several of them are, in fact, pragmatically based. One version of the argument says that without a class of managers of

nature, we have no safeguard against the fluctuations of animal species. (Lurking in the background of this argument is the historical experience of near-extinctions in mid- and late 19th century, brought about by meat and market hunting and certain other circumstances.) Obviously, the task of surveillance and management envisioned by this argument must fall on humanity, since we are the only species capable of an overview of the state of nature. As managers, our first task is to make sure that animal species do not go extinct. Paradoxically, we are particularly suited for this task as hunters, because when the hunter goes into the field in search of animals, he not only acquires a unique sense and understanding of the environment, he can also collect valuable information for the task of wildlife management. The bottom-line of this argument is that since hunting is a practical and relatively cheap institution that benefits the conservation of wildlife, and since no comparable institution exists, we should accept hunting as a social practice.

Though this argument has some merit, hunters have a tendency to overstate the importance of the hunter/conservationist, and correspondingly, to disvalue the effort made by non-hunters. While the hunter's contribution to conservation is obvious, it is far from clear that "there would few wild animals if there were no hunters", as Posewitz says. To make this argument one would need a few more (dubious) premises. Historically, the interest in preservation of land – and the animals therein – had by the late 19th century begun to be shared by a substantial part of the population, at least in America, and non-violent appreciation of wildlife (hiking, bird watching, etc.) had by that time begun to emerge (Nash 2001). In our time, these activities are widely popular, and concern for the continued existence and the welfare of wildlife is widespread in the general non-hunting public. Wildlife conservation societies that are not tied to the hunting community are numerous – WWF being the most prominent example – and this would seem to disprove the implicit notion that only hunters are concerned about conservation. There is nothing to support the idea that non-hunters cannot make a conservation effort equal to that of hunters, although there might be an argument that they historically have not. It should be granted, though, that the incentives of hunters to maintain wildlife are particularly strong, and moreover, that conservation takes on a more personal, practical, urgency for the hunter. As Posewitz says, "there would be no hunting if there were no wild animals". Against the critic's objections of selfish motives, we should assert that the hunter's motives are not terribly important as long they produce a result that the public at large agrees is desirable. Critics may want to see the institution of private, sport hunting replaced by another

institution with the same benefits for wildlife management, but as of today no such institution exists, and critics would be naive to expect hunters to supply, endorse, or even acknowledge, such a replacement for hunting.

The same is true even of the more troublesome argument of hunting-as-culling, where hunting performs much of the same pragmatic function as in the hunting-as-conservation argument. Without hunting as a practical means of checking overpopulation, says this argument, ecosystems will collapse, and individual animals as well as whole populations, will suffer. In this context, it seems fair to say that the burden of proof, or of alternative, rests on critics of the hunt. Hunting is, after all, established as *the* means of wildlife management. That is not to say it should not be challenged, but merely to point out that hunters are not likely to be the ones to do it. If alternatives for hunting are desired, then critics have to come up with those alternatives. And since critics have in fact suggested such alternatives, we should consider them before making a judgment of the culling-argument.³³

Firstly, some critics have voiced suggestions to the effect of replacing the hunting institution with teams of professional wildlife *cullers*. These people would be employees with impartial and disinterested public wildlife agencies who hunted only according to the rationales of wildlife management, like the need to cull in the cases of (potential) overpopulation. This suggestion has two main problems. Firstly, it entails the end of all sport hunting, which is currently a source of financing for wildlife management, while the hiring and training of professional cullers adds another considerable cost which the suggestion says nothing about. Though some solution to this practical problem could surely be found, the suggestion of professional culling has a more serious problem; it assumes that the professional culling of animals by “disinterested” cullers is morally acceptable, while the engaged hunting performed by private hunters is not. Presumably, this conclusion relies on a distinction of motives; the culler’s motive is society’s desire to ensure healthy, sustainable populations, while the private hunter’s motive is fun, sport, meat, camaraderie, or some kind of spiritual experience or feeling of being at one with nature. We should note, firstly, that this distinction is not easy to uphold, and secondly, that the practical difference between these two alternatives may be less than assumed. Though the professional culler is hired to do a job for society, there is no way to ensure that he does not *enjoy* his job;

³³ The suggestions mentioned here are mainly developed from Kerasote 1993.

probably, he would view hunting as no less fun than the private hunter does. Likewise, we cannot underestimate the private hunter's ability to regard his enjoyable pastime also as a service for society. More importantly, it is doubtful whether the animal, which should remain in focus here, could care much about the rationale of his nemesis. What can matter to the animal are the conditions under which it lives and dies. Consequently, what we should worry about, if we acknowledge that these interests of animals matter to us, is how the animal lives and how it dies. If animals die, we can go on to ask why and how it dies, and whether we can do anything about its death. In relation to the culling-argument, the important fact is not that animals die, because they are bound to die anyway, if not from hunting then from other, supposedly more painful, causes. Here the hunter has a strong argument that should appeal to the values of hunters and non-hunters alike, since most of us would not like to see great numbers of animals die slow, painful deaths. Though we might be divided when it comes to the image of the human hunter as predator, we are much more obliged when he acts out of mercy. At the same time, the hunting-as-culling argument should be challenged. If it is correct, as some critics say, that hunting creates overly large populations of game in a self-sustaining system of wildlife management, where no management is really needed (see Baker 1985), then the hunter's mercy looks more deceptive. The question of reintroduction of predators also enters into this picture, although that is beyond my competence.

In any case, we should point out that animals wounded from hunting can experience severe pain. Some would want to elaborate this fact into an argument that the poorer accuracy of amateurs in comparison to professional cullers will weigh heavily for the latter. However, an answer to the concern of the animal's suffering could just as well be stricter training for amateurs, and need not imply a professional culling corps. Also, we should not have any illusions that professional cullers would not wound animals on occasion. Though professionals, they would still be human. The pain inflicted on an animal wounded by hunting is highly relevant, and more study should be made on the animal's experience of being hunted. However, in the context of the current argument it seems that, if successfully hit, it is probable that a deer is likely to suffer less pain from a bullet than from going a whole winter with inadequate food, shelter, or immune system.

An argument that hopefully receives a hearing in both hunting and animal rights camps, is the one voiced by philosopher Gary Varner (1998). He argues, astonishingly perhaps, that the animal liberation position of Peter Singer and the animal rights position of

Tom Regan may both be compatible with, indeed that they may be forced to endorse, certain modes of hunting. Varner introduces the “therapeutic” rationale for hunting, which denotes “hunting motivated by and designed to secure the aggregate welfare of the target species, the integrity of its ecosystem, or both” (1998: 100). The cleverness of Varner’s argument is that it realizes that the interests of individual animals are not (wholly) distinct from those of the species (or population). Hence, Varner can conclude that the best way to secure the interests, perhaps even the rights, of individual animals may be to allow hunting. Varner’s argument rests on a few qualifications. It assumes that therapeutic hunting only applies to certain forms of hunting, specifically, for those species that tend to degrade their habitat if unchecked. It also assumes that notions of fair chase or any other requirement that compromises the interests of the animal, be dropped. Some of Varner’s conclusions may be unacceptable for the hunter, but I think we should nonetheless see Varner’s attempt to harmonize the perspectives of animal rights and hunting as commendable and largely successful.

Varner’s argument does probably have some hope of convincing utilitarian animal liberationists, but I fear it may have a harder time with deontological animal rights supporters. The latter, focusing more on the action than on its consequences, is likely to place greater weight on who/what causes death. In this (for instance, Tom Regan’s) perspective, killing is intrinsically wrong, and humans have a duty not to kill animals. Roughly, the thought is that if a deer dies of natural causes, then humans are not morally responsible, while if a hunter kills it, then that person has deliberately killed a sentient being, which is a clear breach of that being’s inviolable rights. This argument is not always very convincing. Most notably, it fails to show why humans are not morally responsible for the deaths of animals from natural causes. If we know that wild animals are dying, and we have the capacity to prevent those deaths, then why shouldn’t we? The supposition that “humans are morally responsible actors, while nature is not” will not hold in this instance. Although responsibility attaches especially to humans, that does not mean we are free from responsibility for what we have not specifically brought about. This goes for other situations as well. If I witness a hit-and-run car accident, I have no less responsibility to do what I can to help the wounded, even though I had no blame in the matter. As long as we are in a position to influence the situation, I see no reason why we have less of a duty (or at least, that we have *some* duty) to intervene. This is very central to the question at hand,

where there is no other morally responsible actor involved. If there is to be any responsibility, then, we must take it.

Some critics accept this objection, but suggest that human responsibility in relation to wild animals consists in helping them through the winter, feeding them, providing them with shelter, etc. The problem with this suggestion is that if we are to protect animals at such costs, then are we not also obliged to protect prey from their natural predators? If we decide to follow that course, are we not then obliged also to provide for the predator, who now suffers from loss of food? Following this scenario, more or less all animals would have to be domesticated. Hence, we would be eradicating what many people, most hunters included, take to be of great value, namely the wildness of wild animals. Though we should not be inclined to think of neither wild animals nor wild land as *completely* wild and pure (Nash 2001, McKibben 1989), it seems that professing the domestication of all animals for the sake of preventing suffering demonstrates “too strong a preference for human devising”, as Barry Lopez eloquently puts it (1996: 314). Despite human interventions of many sorts, wild animals still retain an element that follows a nonhuman, rationale. And if this wildness is a source of value for many people, as I am convinced it is, it should be respected, and we should try to incorporate it into our daily lives and policies. This is not an absolute refutation of the argument that we should prevent all suffering in wild nature. It is perfectly possible to see no value in wildness, and all value in the prevention of suffering. However, an additional problem with this suggestion is that it is highly impractical. Not only would it take an enormous amount of time, effort, and resources, but we could not possibly determine its success with any accuracy.

Slightly more realistic critics suggest the introduction of a management regime that employs contraceptives instead of hunting to prevent overpopulation. This might seem a promising option in theory, but there are some obstacles in the way of its practical execution. First, like the previous alternative, this one too is very inefficient. In contrast to hunting, a contraceptive regime of wildlife management would have to be professionally based, and would probably be costly. Also, as we know, not all contraceptives are perfectly reliable. In addition, the imposition of contraceptives is bound to be practically difficult. In addition, some would consider the imposition of contraceptives on animals questionable on account of what it entails of suffering, as well as loss of natural impulses, for the animal. Though the human intervention involved in the contraceptive scenario is certainly less serious than in the domestication alternative, some will find the imposing of contraceptives

unnatural. One cannot dismiss the suggestion of a contraceptive wildlife management regime without giving it a proper hearing. However, it has some obvious downsides. An additional hindrance to the success of such a regime is that the composition of wildlife management agencies, in both countries, seems heavily biased towards the hunting community, and they seem very seldom to consider alternatives which do not include hunting. Obviously, they are working from the assumption that hunting is morally acceptable, and hence, they have no incentive to look for alternatives. Although most people find hunting acceptable as a means of management, however, one should be receptive to those who object, especially if they are numerous, if they have good arguments, and if they have some plausible alternatives to offer. Nonetheless, there are still a number of reasons why we should pragmatically sanction hunting as a management tool in some cases.

It should be noted, however, that the problem of overpopulation is not nearly universal in nature. Only with ungulates and a few other species is overpopulation the rule if a hands-off policy is followed, while most other species seem to be regulated by other factors (see Varner 1998). The sanction of hunting as management tool to check overpopulation holds only in local cases.

Some would want to point out that the culling-argument, in the same way as the conservationist argument, is vicarious, and even dishonest. Hunting, these critics correctly object, does not constitute a duty for hunters. But again we should consider the practical point that even a practice that relies on vicarious arguments can secure values that are widely shared. However, it seems that the hunter should take the objection of vicarious argumentation as a danger signal; vicarious arguments are much less reliable grounds on which to build a controversial practice, and if the current reasons to accept the hunter's vicarious arguments should for some reason disappear or become less important, the non-hunter's support of hunting would likely wane. In addition, though we must relate to vicarious arguments, and though they can even cause us to accept hunting in some cases, they alone can hardly convince us to view hunting as more than a necessary evil. This is a distinction of quite some consequence, since if hunting were simply a necessary evil, we would seek to limit it wherever we could, while if it were a positive good, we would want to endorse it.

Hunting as a positive good is what the holist hunter somewhat paradoxically tries to establish. On the one hand, he urges us to see the integration of humans into nature's cycles

as good, while on the other, he must realize that nature's cycle, if weighed on a moral scale, is cruel. Death and pain, as the hunter repetitiously reminds us, is intrinsic to nature's cycle, so to the extent hunting can be good, it is, as Tantillo describes, as the tragic realization that some things must die so that other things may live. In much the same way as the argument from origins, the holist argument of webs challenges the primacy of ethical theory over natural phenomena; it takes what *is* as its primary value. It asserts that, with regards to hunting, we need not take recourse in fanciful ethical principles of fairness, equality, justice, or anything of that sort when nature's law is clear: eat and be eaten! As all representations of nature and its processes, however, that of the hunter is made from a particular view. The hunter sees nature from the perspective of predation, because that is the prime mode of hunting. From this perspective, nature is "red in tooth and claw". However, that is not all that nature is, nor is predation the only perspective from which to view nature. For instance, ecofeminists sometimes take the diametrically opposite view that mutuality and interdependency are important characteristics of nature (Adams and Donovan 1995)

Be that as it may, there is in any case a problem with the hunter's transition from nature's law (or rather, the hunter's conception of nature's law) to a moral recommendation for humans. Although the argument of webs sensibly urges us to see ourselves as a "part of nature", this appeal glosses over the fact that humans under any circumstances are more than that. Humans are also intelligent beings with a highly developed sense of empathy, organized in social and political structures far more complex than that of any other species. This is not just something we accidentally have become, like an unfortunate result of our moving away from nature, it is an inextricable part of us, of our nature, if you will. As humans, we can choose many things, but we can never choose to be nothing more than an animal. It might be true, as Paul Shepard says, that man must learn how to be an animal, but we cannot for that reason forget what it is to be human. And a central part of belonging to the human species is to take moral choices about how we should act. For humans to make moral judgments may even be termed "natural" in itself, as Gary Varner argues:

[The] argument from the naturalness of hunting employs a perfectly familiar and reputable sense of the term 'natural'. However, there is an equally familiar and reputable sense of the term in which the most natural thing for us to do is question the morality of the hunting that is natural for us in the first sense of the term. (1998: 120)

In this moral questioning of the naturalness of human hunting, we should ascertain that although “nature equals pain”, morality does not. In fact, in almost every other morally relevant case, the infliction of pain is regarded as evil. In the cases where pain is good, it is not good in itself, but good as a means, and so we need more importantly to review the end of that infliction of pain. As I argued in the previous chapter, there is no *a priori* objection against weighing natural goods (in this case, hunting) against moral goods (in this case, the principle of unnecessary harm). However, naturalness can only enter the discussion under serious qualifications. Firstly, we must produce a plausible account of what “natural” means. Considering the immense variety of ideas, meanings, and values that attaches to this concept, I am not sure whether this is even a viable option for ethics. But then, in addition, we must introduce naturalness into a context of moral choice, that is, we need to show *why* we should “follow nature” rather than some other principle. Though naturalness can be played as a card in moral deliberation, it cannot trump other considerations, and it is far more likely to be overridden by them.

However, there is one potentially acceptable candidate which we should not pass by so quickly, and that is hunting motivated by the least harm principle, as suggested by Kerasote, Petersen, Kimber, and others. These writers echo the traditional lifestyle of foraging peoples, of course, but their more recent inspiration comes from Aldo Leopold, who in his *Sand County Almanac* (1949) tells how he restored an old shack (actually a small farm), in which he and his family subsisted self-sufficiently on agriculture/gardening and hunting. For various reasons, the model life exemplified by Leopold does not have or any viability outside a group of dedicated individuals, but that does not mean one cannot approve of it as an individual choice. I cannot, for my part, condemn the practice of hunting in the context of a self-sufficient economy, which takes the least harm principle as its rationale. Animal rights supporters would perhaps voice the charge that Leopold’s land ethic is “eco-fascist”, and in a way, they would be right. Though Kerasote’s account, for instance, starts from the least harm principle, he essentially chooses the environment over the hunted animal, the whole over its parts. His suggested lifestyle, and in fact hunting in general, ultimately refuses to acknowledge certain interests of the hunted animal. However, if it is the more environmentally sound strategy, why should we not be eco-fascists? Are we not even, as Gary Varner suggests, obliged to endorse hunting where it is a presupposition for the satisfaction of the interests of wild animals? We do not need to endorse the land ethic specifically as it is worked out by Leopold and his students, but we do need, even

ethical individualists, to incorporate environmental concern into moral thinking. No matter how problematic those terms are, we are all dependent on nature, on our environment. Concern about one's environment is no luxury, it is a necessity.

That being said, environmental concern cannot universally be phrased in terms of a self-sufficient hunting/gardening lifestyle. The ideal the hunter/gardener wants to convey is important. The problem is that it is framed in a nostalgic context with scant application to our current situation. The suggestion that urban people need to know nature through hands-on experience, seems potentially disastrous, as does a general recommendation that we should "enter into nature as active participants". Have these writers really considered what it would entail, not least for wildlife, if the urban masses were to "enter into nature"? Considering current human population densities, cities are an absolute prerequisite to maintaining healthy populations of wildlife. Contrary to the hunter's assumption, cities can be good for wildlife.

Now the hunter's appeal to become a part of nature is not necessarily meant in such a literal and straightforward way. He could be talking about our mindsets as much as our choice of habitation. If so, we should point out that the hunter offers very little material from which the urban person can envision a life more integrated in nature. This fact points to the severe limitations of the hunter/environmentalist figure. He is trapped in a worldview that represents a very minor part of the population, where he cannot see how urban people can truly understand nature, they who have no intimate contact with it. (Incidentally, I would suggest the institution called "school" as a way for urban children to learn about nature and its processes.) The hunter's environmentalism is in most cases not more than conservationism, which is a necessary, but not sufficient, approach to dealing with our current predicament. Because how far does conservation go, if it is not coupled with the focus of mainstream environmentalism on pollution, consumption, and preservation? How long can one continue to "restore and enhance habitat", if the same habitat is constantly being lost and degraded by industrial emissions, fuel guzzling vehicles, and the building of second and third homes?

Hunters argue that they are the only true environmentalists, since they have hands-on experience with nature. This is a regrettable strategy. It does not appreciate the efforts or the perspective offered by mainstream environmentalism. Neither does it acknowledge that the term "environment" can encompass urban human settlements as well as natural wilderness areas. For conservation to have any credibility, it must seek an alliance with

mainstream environmentalism, rather than continue to distinguish itself from it. To test whether the hunter/environmentalists are serious about their commitment to nature and to wildlife, I would even suggest that hunters seek alliances with animal rights/animal welfare groups. Together, they could work towards decreasing the consumption of domestic meat in order to free space for wildlife. Now that would be a powerful pragmatic partnership!

5 Conclusion

Other beings simply live. Man, on the other hand, is not given the option of simply living; he can and must dedicate himself to living – which is to say that he must hand over his life, or parts of it, deliberately and under his untransferable responsibility, to specific occupations.

– José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting*

Sport hunting is an activity that deliberately and violently inflicts pain upon and kills sentient animals, apparently for no crucial reason. In any other case, widely accepted principles of ethics would categorize such an action among the worst of crimes, and some people do in fact categorize hunting in that way. From this perspective, it does seem that a hunting ethos is a contradiction in terms. However, such a conclusion overlooks the context in which hunting appears. To return to Ortega y Gasset's aphorism, "one does not hunt in order to kill, on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted". Whatever the truth of Ortega's statement, it does point to the fact that hunting is seen by its supporters as part of a greater complex. Thus, the infliction of pain and killing of the animal, which is the potentially objectionable aspect of the hunt, can be seen as a minor part, or even as a necessary evil. This argument, in itself, is not a plausible response to criticism. The mass killings of Jews in Nazi concentration camps were part of a larger complex of thoughts, practices, ideals, and goals, but that does not make those acts morally acceptable. However, we should acknowledge that when the hunting complex is presented in some detail, what will appear are some of the ideals that underlie the practice. What we need to consider in the assessment of hunting is not just whether we may be justified in killing an animal, but which contexts may add or detract from the argument. Still, unlike what seems to be the assumption of some of the hunter's arguments, it is ultimately *we* who make the moral choice, and not tradition, nature, or any such entity. In summary, we will look at the arguments, as well as the underlying ideals, reviewed in this thesis.

In the argument of origins, the ideal expressed is the ecologically noble savage, whose way of life is seen as socially harmonious and ecologically integrated. This argument implies that we moderns have moved away from what is good in life, and that our current ways are destructive, to ourselves and to our environment. Though something like this ideal may be shared by many hunters and non-hunters alike, the argument itself cannot be rid of its serious problems. Firstly, the image of the ecologically noble savage is likely to be overstated. Secondly, we cannot say with any certainty that humans have a hunting instinct, and if they do, it is highly unlikely that the suppression of that instinct has the kind of consequences that Paul Shepard and some other hunters claim. Thirdly, in an agricultural society such as ours it is unclear how to become hunter/gatherers can solve anything. Also, the function filled by the prehistoric hunter/gatherer in this argument may be filled by other things than hunting; for instance, we could make the same critique of modernity if we upheld the activity of gathering, which in any case seems to have been the primary food source in prehistoric societies. A more viable approach to making such critique, however, considering that we are such “incorrigible” agriculturalists, is to focus on some kind of primitive, or more ecologically integrated, agriculture.

With regards to the fair chase argument, two ideals fuse. On the one hand, there is an ideal of gentlemanly conduct, where it is acknowledged that the animal should be given its chance in a fair game; on the other hand, the fair chase constitutes a challenge for the hunter, and thus, the hunt becomes an arena for assertion of individual worth and capability. The problems with this argument are two: firstly, the ideals contained within it are remnants of an archaic attitude where “self-assertion” was seen as an appropriate mode of relating to animals; secondly, and more importantly, we cannot sanction this argument because it overlooks or, in some cases, actively opposes the interests of the hunted animal. Though other parts of the sportsman’s code acknowledge that animals are sentient beings, and consequently hold the minimizing of suffering as the hunter’s ideal, it is not clear how this is a response to the challenge posed against hunting. If we agree on the principle of unnecessary harm, then the notion to minimize suffering in hunting instead of abandoning the activity altogether, is insufficient. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, what the hunter needs is a context that tells us that the killing involved in hunting is 1) necessary, and 2) preferable to other ways of killing animals (or letting them die). This is partly what is supplied by the third group of justifications.

The ideal contained within the argument of webs is the integration and harmony of the human species within its natural environment. However, such harmony can only exist at the expense of wild animals, which according to the managerial variety of the argument must be hunted to avoid starvation and massive suffering. According to the second, more radical, variety of the argument, humans should not only be seen as managers of nature, but as intrinsic parts of that whole. This view ultimately sanctions hunting because it is the most animal-friendly *and* the most environmentally sound way to procure food in our society. Thus, in combination, the two versions of the argument of webs establish both that hunting is necessary and that the killing involved is more benign than in other contexts. Though both the managerial and the holist versions of this argument rest on a whole range of assumptions, not all of whom are beyond doubt, this argument does give grounds to sanction hunting in some contexts. It should be noted that the more practical formulations of the holist argument, like Kerasote's hunting-as-least-harm-alternative, are generally more successful than the rather lofty notions of "tragic wisdom" and "entering into the cycles of life and death", because the former appeal more directly to values that may be shared by a large public.

In this thesis it has been my objective to put the arguments of hunters into a slightly wider context than what is the norm in ethics. However, hunting is part of an even larger context which has mostly been beyond the scope of this thesis, namely human consumption of animals in general. Most importantly, the large majority of animals killed for human consumption are domestic, and the conditions under which these animals live and die are not irrelevant to our judgment of hunting. And we must add, the conditions under which these animals do live and die in our societies (see Singer 1975) are not acceptable under the animal ethic developed in this thesis, nor under any other reasonable suggestion as to how we should treat animals. So if hunting is a crime then the predicament of domestic animals makes it less of one.

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