

OPEN-CENTRED ECOSOPHY
OR HOW TO DO ENVIRONMENTALLY
INTERESTING THINGS WITH
DR ROGERS' THERAPEUTIC CONDITIONS¹

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This paper is the record of an enquiry that is probably still ongoing. It is also, in a way that its author does not quite understand as he writes this, product and exemplar of the circumstances that bore its subject. Not disparate, but different voices carry the burden because they do not, they cannot, integrate. Therefore, they will speak for themselves and separately.

1. The Wind in the Sycamore Trees

I pause—the first opening paragraph discarded—and I watch as the wind rolls across the garden and booms against the brickwork of my room. I watch the sycamore trees reflected in the mirror by my desk. The booming intensifies; the sycamores are dancing. Love moves inside me, and it seems—even mediated by a mirror—that my love is reciprocated. It has been like that as long as I remember, and really, there's nothing to be said about it. I love Earth; it feels that Earth loves me: that's just how it is. But working as a therapist, I know that I am not alone in my experience. And working as a philosophy teacher, I know too well that I am not alone in my concern for what humankind may be doing to Earth. I became a philosophy teacher on the back of my concern, and the same impetus led me to counselling. Those threads that root in love, and in Earth, and stretch across my lifetime, and some of the conclusions they seem to reach towards, are what I want to speak about.

In a nutshell, **nutshell number one:**

A consensus grows that human activity is causing huge changes on Earth. The weather is shifting; an extinction of species to rival geological disasters seems underway; molecules found in water, food, breast milk, and living tissue originate in human technology, and those molecules are not benign. Like many others, I am concerned.

Change itself is nothing new; Earth is a dynamic system. Weather, species, chemistry vary across time. Like all living organisms, humankind is part of

1. This chapter has been typeset according to the author's specific requirements.

this process of change. Are people only now noticing that? Is the real issue just that some of us don't relish change?

Perhaps we want to age beneath the trees we cavorted under as children, hear the same birdsongs in the morning, walk the same trails, and for increasing numbers of us that cannot be. Social and technological change plus population growth equals childhood landscapes obliterated faster than children grow.

Is this why, in the industrialized nations of the north, there is so much agitation about 'the environment': change is just too much and too fast for us?

Well, suppose you and I belong to a large, extended family which has inherited a beautiful old house. I get busy remodelling it, but you don't like that. You protest; you have grounds for protest, it is your house too, but you cannot say I am destroying the house. It is just that I want it modernized, and you like things the way they were. Now suppose you find me up on the roof one morning, chopping a great hole, and the next day I'm hammering down an outside wall. Our family will be in trouble if I am not stopped.

Which scenario best represents human activity on Earth?

The jury is out; we don't know for sure. The changes humankind has initiated may not cause long-term physical harm to our species. On the other hand, publications like *New Scientist* routinely report on models that are the stuff of environmental nightmares.

And there is a detail to consider: if our beautiful old house is located in Yukon, and I am making some summer time changes, we really are courting disaster come winter.

Ours is a delicate species. The weather doesn't have to get very cold or very warm before humans cease to function; we need a particular blend of gases in the atmosphere; we need sunlight, but it has to be filtered, and so on. Humankind fits a particular Earth environment; we are in big trouble if that environment changes very much.

Playing it safe in terms of environmental change would seem the wiser course, and my guess is that most people want that security for themselves and their children. But what can they say in support of their concerns?

Let's go back to that first scenario: you don't *like* the changes I am making. More literally, perhaps you don't want to live in a land where the megafauna are extinct and even the little guys fast disappearing. You don't want the night sky obliterated by orange haze and your sleep disturbed by traffic. You don't think that Earth needs six and a half billion people and growing.

Most people's homes and many of their choices suggest they want to live amongst a diverse and flourishing flora and fauna, to be able to watch trees dancing in a summer wind, and to see the stars at night.

What can those people say about the changes which are happening?

The *What can people say?* question is the subject of this paper. Or, more accurately perhaps, this paper is an expression and taking forward of my relationship with the *What can people say?* question. The language and history of philosophy dominate the first half because it was philosophy that matured the relationship and gave the question shape. In the second half, attention shifts to counselling practice and theory; they offer what is needed for a fuller answer than once seemed possible.

2. My Young Self Asks Some Questions

Circa 1985, I fetched up on the intellectual shore sketched in section one propelled by a very personal quest. Like some clients I have subsequently worked with, my childhood experiences of love and acceptance mostly involved dogs, and cats, and wandering where I would find grass, and trees, and an open sky. In consequence, I had a longstanding, deep, and loving relationship with the non-human world, the *created order*. I had also learned what environmental destruction meant as I moved from an English industrial city to what I thought of as 'countryside', then to Western Canada just before the last of the great old-growth forests were assigned for telephone directories. Back to England, on to the Himalayas—where paradise was only partially ravaged—and over to Western Canada again, where I was trying to develop a radical environmental ethic against the background radiation of analytic philosophy.

The pain, the hope, the experiences that drove me are not material. What matters here is that above everything else I loved Earth, its non-human inhabitants, and its ultimately transient ecology. I didn't want these things destroyed or interfered with, and I figured that if human morality and philosophy were worth much, then they should be able to explain why my beloved should not be harmed. After all, there was a long tradition of trying to establish the sanctity of human beings, now what about the rest?

I asked the question and went looking for answers. What I learned and what I resisted ate a decade, provided an approach to Deep Ecology which—although it has aged well and pleases students—seems to have been designed to offend professional philosophers, and finally led me to train as a person-centred therapist. My hunch was that, amongst its other blessings, the training might provide what I needed to complete the task.

And now I remember how the quest began: I was in the lower sixth form of an English grammar school, and I wanted to know why it was okay to kill a cow for dinner, but it was wrong to kill a human being. Or maybe it all began much earlier when I first learned about 'heaven'. The dog had died, and heaven sounded wonderful until I was told that dogs didn't go there. My four-year-old response was brief, the Christian Church lost another soul to scepticism, and I began to be aware there were things which I needed to understand.

3. A Brief, Tendentious, History of Ethics

I didn't know it in the sixth form, but Jeremy Bentham beat me to that cow

question by well over a century. Reasoning from Utilitarian principles enunciated by David Hume, Bentham famously announced that, regarding the way humans treated ‘the rest of animal creation’, ‘The question is not, Can they *reason?* nor Can they *talk?* but Can they *suffer?*’

Contrary to notions of morality revered since Aristotle’s day, Bentham loudly asserted that any creature capable of suffering had to be taken into account when human actions might affect it. No longer could one kick the cat with impunity: because it suffered when it was kicked, the cat was a moral person, and it deserved what later philosophers called *moral consideration*.

Bentham’s advocacy was a radical move. Traditional systems of morality and most moral philosophy never ask who the moral persons are. It is *assumed* that human beings are both moral agents *and* the proper recipients of consideration. Bentham asked *why* that should be so, and he found against tradition. In the process, Bentham exposed a fundamental question central to moral practice and thought. I think of it as *the moral umbrella question* because morality is like an umbrella which shelters some things from arbitrary usage—traditionally they are human beings—and it leaves the rest out in the rain exposed to human whim. The question is, *What things belong beneath the moral umbrella?*

Whether the Zeitgeist was in an ironic and playful mood, or whether there is some more serious explanation, I do not know, but it wasn’t until the 1970s that Bentham’s legacy began to bear fruit, and by then even more radical moves were afoot. The non-specialist press was just noticing that there was a case to be put on behalf of non-human animals, and philosophy itself was starting to make the moral umbrella question explicit, when Arne Naess introduced the concept of Deep Ecology and a moral umbrella so large that pretty much everything is sheltered by it: cats, amoebae, trees, mosses, rocks ... the lot, the ecosphere at a minimum.

That’s where I came in; I think it is where I first began to be aware that I had different voices. Some people just find Deep Ecology intuitively obvious, and I was one of them. Arne had it right; traditional morality had things terribly wrong. But when I began arguing for this, I met incredulity and near total incomprehension. Sure, I could speak the language of the academic culture, but I could not speak what looked to me like truth in that language. Yet it *was* my language. I began to try to build a conceptual bridge between the world and language of my love for Earth and the world and language of academic philosophy.

Was the attempt to build the bridge futile? I still don’t know; perhaps this paper is the attempt ongoing. I still cannot blend the two languages, and I still do not fully understand what that means. Of late, I have allowed myself the luxury of writing in two or three different voices, like a conversation, and found it easier. Trying to write this paper was initially a nightmare until I realized that the attempt to speak univocally was strangling me.

But the bridge ...

The bridge has heuristic value—my students like it—and with hindsight I

do think it helped me achieve a degree of personal integration, the kind of integration you get when members of a family recognize and accept each other's existence and start talking. In **nutshell number two**, here is the beginning of that bridge:

Any system of moral practice and theory must answer or assume an answer to the moral umbrella question. Traditional moral systems assume an answer—*All and only human beings*—and they can be thought of as *moral humanism*. Jeremy Bentham and his Utilitarian heirs come next, answering roughly: *All and only sentient creatures, that is, creatures capable of suffering or having 'interests'*. This is known as *sentientism*. After that there are brave and radical attempts to answer on behalf of all living things: *All and only individual living organisms whether sentient or vegetative*. I call this *vitalism*. And finally, there are attempts like Arne Naess's which seek to morally enfranchise all living organisms, plus the natural infrastructure they depend upon, and in some cases simply whatever else the universe might hold. This is *ecosophy*.

So far, then, I've identified that there is a moral umbrella question out there and roughly four kinds of potential answer: moral humanism, sentientism, vitalism, and ecosophy. But there is a problem out there, too, and for a time I made myself quite unpopular banging on about it: most if not all answers to the moral umbrella question founder on explanatory difficulties.

There is always a sceptic around who asks *So what? or Why? So what if non-human creatures suffer? Why are the vital interests of organisms lacking experience of any importance to me? So what if the new road cuts through ecologically unique chalk downs and woodland?* A lot of work has gone into the answers, but my own conclusion is that there are enough undefended commitments and axiology lurking behind the various ramparts to give a sceptic sufficient reason to remain aloof.

For me, this problem bites. The moral umbrella question is not theoretical; it is part of the attempt to live a mindful, moral life. As Socrates said, *We are discussing no small matter, but how we ought to live.*
What to do?

For a long time, I really thought Arne had the right idea. He junks traditional moral philosophy, abandons all pretence to a rigorous, knock-down proof of his position, and says: *Try it and see; I think you will find that what I am advocating will work and will satisfy you.* But amongst the things Arne and his colleagues advocate is a return to Stone Age population levels. You won't sell that in the Forum without a good argument upfront; and there *is* a serious, hard-nosed alternative.

4. Captain Sensible and Friends

I got into these difficulties by asking what one might say to someone who is remodelling humankind's family home. If it was a literal house, like the one in Yukon, and someone *was* chopping holes in the roof and knocking down walls,

we could appeal to self-interest: you are going to die come winter. This is precisely the argument most environmental advocacy deploys: *Earth is a complex ecosystem and human beings one small and fragile part of it. We need to protect and maintain the ecosystem for our own well-being.* I call this the voice of *Captain Sensible*.

The good Captain is a very attractive figure, utilizing 'objective' criteria and speaking with the voice of 'reason'. Even better, walking beside Captain S. doesn't entail much moral or philosophical exertion because he offers compatibility with moral humanism and a small moral umbrella.

Unfortunately, the Captain suffers from ailments which his friends prefer not to talk about. First, there is no evidence that humans are capable of acting in their own long-term best interests environmentally speaking. We want wealth, economic growth, knowledge, as many toys as possible; we want them now. We sail as close to the wind as we think we can; we take risks. My hunch is that humans are wired that way. Speaking for myself, I delight in risks which make no rational sense. Second, the calculations that Captain Sensible must make are beyond human competence in practice and probably in theory. We don't know what consequences small environmental changes might eventually have, and that is not just a matter of remediable ignorance. Complex, chaotic systems are involved, and it may be that they cannot be accurately modelled. Third, for those of us who do love Earth, prudence is a cheap and shabby substitute for moral status.

So back to that family home again—the Earth-shaped one this time—and there are now two options on the table, neither of them good ones: there's a series of flawed attempts to open up the moral umbrella, and there's an alliance with Captain Sensible.

For simplicity and symmetry, I characterized all those umbrella opening attempts as the work of *Agent Sage*. Then I floundered with a Captain Sensible-Agent Sage dichotomy for a year or two—and initiated one of my periodic petitions for divorce from philosophy—before I saw a way to appropriate an idea from the academic grapevine. I called the refurbished strategy *Deep Humanism*. In **nutshell number three**, and forming the final part of that bridge I spoke of earlier, it is built like this:

- Step one, for the sake of argument, accept moral humanism and its claim that all and only humans are morally considerable.
- Step two, recognize that we *do* depend upon a quite particular environment; we *are* fragile; there *is good enough reason* to believe we are endangering that environment; and we are *not Sensible*.
- At step three, moral theory is tailor-made to deal with this situation because we can now stand back from all moral beliefs and commitments and ask what human morality would *need to be like to best promote human welfare*. This is taking what the trade calls a *meta-ethical* view of morality, and it is consistent with the usual moral humanist claim that morality's *raison d'être* is human welfare.
- Step four, descend from these dizzy heights and conscientiously set about following the morality now reconstructed.

In other words—and I am leaving most of the detail out of account—moral humanism and its traditional anthropocentric self-interest, plus a realistic assessment of humankind’s predicament and our needs as a species, furnish a powerful argument for *renouncing* moral humanism and moving in the direction of Deep Ecology. As a bonus, and with an eye to the ancient practice of brokering a marriage with which to end longstanding dispute, this argument weds Captain Sensible (who is concerned with human welfare, and guides our meta-ethical deliberations) to Agent Sage (who is the bearer of that generously opened moral umbrella the argument delivers).

It is a clever move, and it does work. Technically, Deep Humanism is a meta-ethical argument about the kind of morality which best serves human interests plus the entirely reasonable requirement to put the argument’s conclusion into practice. Logically, philosophically, Deep Humanism is sound, and it has been recognized by Deep Ecologists as an alternative point of entry to the Deep Ecology programme.

However—and in moral philosophy there is usually ‘however’—there is a rather large and embarrassing question outstanding: *How does one develop a particular kind of moral commitment? How does one learn to relate to the non-human world as something worthy of moral consideration?* Well, I know what happened to me, but it probably isn’t replicable, and it certainly wouldn’t be kind to try experimenting. So, in 1995, I concluded work on Deep Humanism by making a few noises about education and the benefits of getting young children involved in gardening, and I began to think about training as a person-centred therapist.

5. Process Reflection

There was close to just one voice throughout that last section. I don’t know what that means, but there it is, and it feels important.

And now, starting from that very here-and-now and personal reflection, I want to step back from the details of what I’ve been discussing and take a more contextual look at it all. Stepping back initially from my own contribution, it is probably more idiosyncratic than I realized.

For one thing, traditional moral philosophy involves either *ethics* or *meta-ethics*; it doesn’t mix and match. Ethics is the kind of deliberation a moral agent engages in once committed to certain principles or a particular outlook: for example, *I am committed to acting rationally; how should I behave?* Meta-ethics holds this kind of question in abeyance and treats morality and moral reasoning themselves to critical investigation. I think people who worry about these matters for a living probably mistrust the mix-and-match approach.

A second oddity is the idea of seeking to become something one isn’t at present. This is not at all odd in the context of religious practice, but it is when transposed to analytic philosophy. The name of the game there is to seek truth—capital letters and flashing lights—and truth, as all undergraduate philosophers know, is to be had by diligent reasoning from principles which ... well, isn’t that the problem? *Where do they come from?* What I’ve suggested is that we can

obtain the ones needed for an environmental ethic from a proper appraisal of our own predicament plus concern for our skins.

Is this approach cynical? Does that give offence?

These are the rules of the game (logic etc.); these are the unquestionable values (human welfare etc.); and oh look at that: they support the conclusions I wanted. I guess that's how I understand academic philosophy in the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

And maybe I was also up to something less cynical but more sub-textual. And maybe *that* gives offence.

Traditionally, answers to the Socratic question, *How ought we to live?* grow from one of two cultural sources—religion and philosophy—and those two sources have grown increasingly apart since ... when? The Reformation? Erasmus Darwin? I'm not sure, but they have. And without any clear sense of what I was up to, I was tugging them closer again.

That may seem novel, but it is consistent with what the *Zeitgeist* has been up to. There are many signs of change in ethics, and environmental philosophy hosts its share. That is because humanist assumptions are so woven into mainstream moral thought and practice that anyone wishing to seriously expand the moral umbrella has to reach outside tradition. What's more, I'm not the first to reach in a direction now more associated with religion. Arne Naess' work is informed by the apprehension of connectedness and others have taken that further.

But back to that humanist commitment entrenched in traditional moral philosophy. I allied myself with it as I cleared the ground for Deep Humanism. I pointed out that *nobody* had a really good argument for moral expansion. They couldn't have because the materials available denied it to them. Arne Naess and most others who seek radical expansion offer *no more* than an alternate *moral option to try* because nothing stronger is left to them.

That can sound such a sad little whimper beside the traditional cry of *Reason requires this; resist on pain of irrationality!* And in my anger, and in my pain, I used that seeming weakness to establish the need to work with the assumptions of the moral humanists.

Don't let me give the impression that Deep Ecology and other brands of ecosophy are hopeless causes. Far from it; they are fascinating, challenging, ground-breaking, paradigm-busting works. The trouble is that they cannot answer the sceptic who won't even give them a try. It is essential to get people to give them a try because they are built around personal and cultural change on a scale and of a kind which only makes sense when attempted. To put this in other words, most ecosophy proffers a different *way of being* and says, *Suck it and see*. The way of being in question can be characterized by saying roughly ...

... what?

Whatever is, is of value; whatever is, is in a sense, myself; whatever is, is not there simply for my use or comfort or amusement, it self-subsists, deserves respect, has goals, directions of its own.

That kind of thing?

That kind of thing.

I don't know whether anyone except me feels the resonance with person-centred counselling practice and theory, but I get a lump in the throat and maybe goose-bumps about now. Here is why, in **nutshell number four**:

Answers to the Socratic question traditionally have one of two sources: religion or secular philosophy. Answers rooted in religious tradition often invoke personal change and ways of being; answers rooted in secular philosophy major in logic and reason. In the latter half of the 20th century at least two secular responses to the Socratic question have leaned heavily on notions of personal change and ways of being. One is the client/person-centred tradition of counselling and human relationship. The other is the newly emerging ecosophist tradition of environmental sanity and relationship to non-humans.

The former, the client/person-centred tradition, is the more developed, and I believe it has a great deal to offer ecosophy. Therefore, what I shall do with the rest of this paper is expand upon that claim.

First, there is something more to note. My own reaction to the possibility that the person-centred tradition and ecosophy may be travelling convergent roads is strong and physical, and that is surely because it promises an integration in which I have a large personal stake.

6. A Short Critique of Certainty

There is a sentiment amongst practitioners that *person-centred* goes hand-in-hand with Carl Rogers' statement of the *necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change*. For example, in its requirements for entry to the list of person-centred counsellors, the British Association for the Person-Centred Approach has come close to making them an article of faith. But without intending any disrespect to Carl, taken at face value, the statement is absurd. *Necessary and sufficient* means *if and only if*, and even hard science is not often given to claims that strong. It all dates to the sunset of a dream of certainty our intellectual culture has renounced.

I am not the first to think this, and I am not the first to make public noises. Campbell Purton has argued powerfully and elegantly that the necessity and sufficiency statement is a step too far. As Campbell points out, it rests on the hypothesis that all psychic distress is rooted in introjections of conditional acceptance usually experienced in childhood. The conditions posited as necessary

and sufficient for healing are the unique antidote to this wounding experience.

However, it really doesn't seem to be the case that conditional acceptance *is* the aetiology of everything that brings clients to therapy. Campbell cites other common factors such as post-traumatic stress, lose-lose choices, bereavement, and childhood *deprivation* rather than *conditionality* ... just two days ago a student was telling me how their experience of therapy fit Campbell's argument.

I feel sure Campbell is on to something. My sense is that what he is onto is no less than a need to re-vision the client/person-centred tradition for the 21st century. I say *re-vision* not replace, or lose, or throw out with a little old-fashioned bath water. What is more, re-visioning is integral to the spirit of that tradition. In the theoretical paper offering the most succinct and powerful delineation of person-centred theory, Carl Rogers writes of 'the network of gossamer threads' which comprise it, and of the damage caused by Freud's students when they turned gossamer into 'iron chains of dogma'.

So let me map out a little revisioning which converges with my environmental agenda:

- First—as Campbell notes—the therapeutic way of being which characterizes client/person-centred practice predates the theory. Client-centred therapy was around long before those gossamer threads woven to explain its efficacy, and it is *that therapy's way of being*, not any particular theorisation, which is the heart of the tradition. Although interesting and important, theory is an inescapably flawed attempt to enunciate—and provide a doorway into—a logically and existentially prior body of practice.
- Second, if we will hold the theory lightly enough, it becomes possible and reasonable to ask whether the way of being is *necessarily* anthropocentric in its focus. Client-centred and person-centred therapies are anthropocentric because they seek to help wounded human beings, but *What about the way of being itself?*
- Third, once shorn of their claim to absolute sovereignty, the therapeutic conditions enunciated by Carl Rogers still remain an insightful way to conceptualize the client/person-centred way of being, and their practice remains a useful way to begin acquiring it. In consequence, the *What about the way of being?* question can be approached by asking, *Do the conditions map onto a non-human locus of attention?*

7. Opening the Locus of Attention

Six conditions were described by Carl, and some possible later additions were suggested by others. I shall just pay attention to the six originals here, and I won't be discussing them in their original order.

The unconditional positive regard, or UPR, the prizing which a therapist offers their client, maps onto trees, cats, mountains ... without difficulty. It is easy to love a tree; sometimes, it is easier than loving human beings, I find.

Empathy, too, is not that difficult to extend to most living things. Cats have feelings, purposes, furry cat-shoes to step into. And I don't think we need be put off by disparaging comments about anthropomorphizing so long as we

don't get too soft-headed; anthropomorphizing is a respectable ethological tactic these days. Trees may seem a bit harder, but I think most gardeners know empathy for their floral friends. Mountains? Speaking personally, I feel things for mountains that are sometimes overwhelming, and the well-being of a loved mountain is of great importance to me. I'm not alone.

UPR, empathy ... that's two out of the three *core* or *counsellor* conditions, the oft-cited keystone of person-centred being. The other condition is that the therapist be congruent, or genuine and authentic, within the counselling relationship. Can genuineness and authenticity be offered to a non-human? I think the answer is, *Of course it can*, but this probably only applies to creatures enjoying a high degree of sentience.

However, there are two stages to congruence. First, there is openness to one's own experiencing, a kind of inner honesty and acceptance. Second, there is congruent relating and being in the world. The first stage is about how one relates to one's self, and the second stage is about relating to others. Even if one cannot easily be said to be in congruent relationship with a mountain, one can be congruently oneself upon the mountain and act towards the mountain from a place of personal congruence. Furthermore, the counsellor conditions go together; they are one ball of wax: I cannot be empathic and acceptant while holding back on congruence.

I now want to turn the traditional story on its head for a short while. The counsellor conditions are intended to contribute to the right environment for growth and psychic healing in human beings. They are there for the sake of the client. However, they affect the counsellor as well. Routinely seeking to offer the counsellor conditions to others changes the person who is making that offer. At least, that is my experience, and I think I see the same thing in my colleagues and students. Speaking personally, I find that the changes run in two directions. I am more acceptant, fractionally less ego-laden, gentler, more perceptive, more empathic, more desirous that whatever is gets its moment in the sun, its chance to flourish. And I am often more angry, more enraged by the suffering and damage which humankind causes. It begins to seem that offering non-anthropocentric, counsellor conditions to the non-human world is not only possible, but doing so will tend to promote personal changes which will help safeguard Earth from human depredation and foolishness.

What about the other three original therapeutic conditions?

Contact, psychological contact, was the first of them. The therapist needs to work at that. And I see no harm and much good in a genuine attempt to be in contact with the non-human. I don't mean that we should get silly; we just need to notice the way the leaves move, the paws go down; put ourselves in the way of experiencing rain against the cheek; be open to the other, the non-human other, in a way analogous to the openness of a counsellor to their client.

Condition number two was that the client be anxious, vulnerable, incongruent. Does it map at all? In a way, I think it does. Earth and everything on it is vulnerable, much more vulnerable than humans ever imagined until recently. We need to be aware of that, I think, and hold it in awareness.

The really tough condition is the last one: 'the client *perceives*, at least to a minimal degree ... the *unconditional positive regard* ... and the *empathic*

understanding of the therapist.' With highly sentient creatures again, both are possible, and I don't mean only those which have evolved alongside us as dogs and cats have. Try walking in the Canadian bush, in moose country, without a gun and without any ill intent towards moose. They abound. Take a gun and go look for dinner. Where are the moose? It may be said that moose just know what guns are. But I remember meeting a mother moose with her young when I was lost and on a very narrow lakeside trail. Mother moose with young are dangerous. I forgot that in my delight at meeting Mistress Moose that afternoon. We stopped, and gazed, and I felt her lack of ill intent towards me as she felt mine. We both moved aside a little, and we passed on that narrow trail.

Can vegetative lives somehow experience or otherwise be affected by our intent, our feelings towards them? There is some positive evidence; science is interested in this question. As for the rest of creation, how much do we really know?

In **nutshell number five** then:

I am suggesting that Carl Rogers' therapeutic conditions can be read as a recipe for a way of being with the non-human world, with Earth's other creatures and living things, with her bones and substance. That will serve the cause of environmental sanity in two ways. It will tend to change how humans relate to and behave towards the non-human. It will tend to change humans in ways which will make us better suited to live as citizens of an ecological community.

Now what about the moral umbrella I once so badly wanted to expand and the Deep Humanist programme of personal and moral change?

If I step back from a precise statement of the therapeutic conditions, it seems to me that, as a therapist, what I offer to a new client is genuineness, acceptance, absence of judgement, and a willingness to try to understand what it is like being them. Over time, and as I give my close attention to the client, I find warmth, tenderness, and a deep desire for their well-being has grown within me. I am inclined to think that is just how it is to be human. If we offer this stuff, and if we attend, a kind of love takes root within us. And I can find no reason why the offering, and the attending, should not be to the whole of what some call *the created order*. In time, a kind of love will take root inside one if it is not there already, and then there will be no doubt that it all belongs beneath the moral umbrella and warrants our consideration.

In a way, that writes *finis* to a story that started roughly fifty years ago. If we will only *notice* and remain relatively open and non-judgemental, what we will then experience answers or even obviates the moral umbrella question. By force of circumstances, I guess, noticing and being open was where I started.

To conclude this section, I want to venture onto a branch which feels even thinner and newer than those I've climbed so far. I spoke earlier of Campbell Purton's thoughts on necessary and sufficient conditions, and the clients who

do not seem to fit person-centred orthodoxy. My hunch is that every client who benefits from client/person-centred therapy arrives impaired in their ability to accept and to relate. The aetiology of impairment may vary, but what hurts us does not. We fail to accept our own experiencing; we fail to accept ourselves; we fail to accept others. Therefore relationship fails. At the heart of current environmental problems, I think I perceive similar failure. We really are stardust; we really are children of a planet that is fecund, beautiful, and mostly well-disposed towards us. We really are amazing creatures. We really cannot accept any of it. Therefore, we need therapy, and we need to change our way of relating to ourselves, each other, and the world about us. We need both therapy and an ethic much like that offered by the client/person-centred tradition but with an open locus of attention.

8. A Feminist Influence?

My usual practice is to leave feminism, and feminist discussion, to women. (Is that sexist? I hope not, but untangling what it *is* would take too long.) However, usual practice has now entailed an omission which must be rectified. Reading a draft of this paper, a colleague noted that there were no women in it. Yet where I have now taken what was once Deep Humanism *must* have been influenced by reading, and teaching, the work of ecofeminists. I need to speak to that.

Deep Ecology offers a vision of relationship with Earth which, in my experience, appeals more to men than to women. Female philosophers can be quite critical of its assertion that each of us is really just a part of a much bigger entity. Using the terminology of small-s 'self' and Capital-S 'Self', Arne Naess encourages us to experience the loss of small-s *self* in Capital-S *Self*. Feminist critics respond that this *self-in-Self* stuff misses the point, is arrogant, and even dangerous. I perceive two main reasons for thinking that.

One reason—developed by Val Plumwood—has to do with how our sense of self comes into being. As the colleague who took me to task pointed out: there isn't simply a 'Charlie' or a 'Clive'. There is 'Charlie in relationship to ...' 'Clive in relationship to ...', and, out of the many relationships we both enjoy, we gather a dynamic sense of who we are. In other words, *self* is not prior to *relationship*; self comes into being *with* relationship.

A second reason—and I recommend Karen J. Warren as its exponent—has to do with the *consequences* of *self-in-Self* perception. She finds that this encourages us to ignore the important *boundary* between self and other, splurging them together, and making it impossible to hold the other in a 'loving perception'. Instead, perception becomes 'arrogant', conquering rather than prizing difference. That loving perception is precious and needs reclaiming because it brings warmth and caring back into a traditional ethics overly focused on dry, faceless principles.

For me, both claims hold water, while Deep Ecology may not be guilty as charged. I see no reason why there cannot be a kind or level of experiencing such that you and I are entirely separate beings, recognition that this sense of

our selves as separate persons is dynamic and grounded in relationship, *and* a kind of experiencing such that we sometimes feel we merge.

It also seems to me that my suggested revisioning of the client/person-centred tradition is consistent with—and is probably informed by—these two insights. There may be other feminist objections which I cannot take on board, but from what I know of eco-feminist literature, I think we are moving in a broadly similar direction. For example, Karen J. Warren also objects to what she calls *value dualisms* such that, for example, Charlie and Clive are hierarchically ordered and one of us has greater worth than the other. Human-human value dualisms are anathema to the client/person-centred tradition, and a human–non-human value dualism would be equally repugnant to its new and ‘open-centred’ cousin.

9. Voices, Introjects, and Glittering Prizes

My voices ... What are they, these different voices I must speak with? Are they just an expression of my own lack of integration, perhaps my lack of literary skill, or something more interesting?

Roughly speaking, I need a minimum of three voices. There is a cerebral, educated voice: the voice of argument and reason. There is a more passionate, inward, and personal voice: the voice of feeling, of experiencing, and sometimes need. And there is a kind of commentary voice that breaks in occasionally and notices things the other voices are close to and may not quite have in focus. The first two voices are the really important ones; without access to both of them, I lose my fluidity. What’s going on?

As I have been writing, I have formed a hypothesis: the division represented by my voices is not innately *mine*; it is an introject from a culture grounded in dissociation.

My professional life and my personal search for understanding have involved exploring at length and in depth aspects of being which are routinely separated, and from whose vantage points people view each other with suspicion. On the one hand, to ‘do philosophy’—or engage in most academically respectable tasks—one must set aside and even deny whatever is not resolutely cerebral. But on the other hand, to offer a healing, therapeutic relationship to clients; to engage in spiritual practice; and—I would argue—to enjoy relationship of any kind, one must engage with the inward and the personal.

Academic, professional, and personal credibility attach to skilful and consistent denial of personal experiencing, and honour and financial reward usually accrue to the most cerebral voices. In this way, integration is discouraged, and the paradigm ‘rational person’ becomes a study in dissociation. In some quarters, however, the valuing system is reversed. Logic and reason are viewed with mistrust, and emoting is celebrated. I think counselling and counsellor-training sometimes offer examples of this.

If I am right, then our culture is sick: we tend either to lead with our heads, which is surely not what heads evolved for; or we lead with our hearts, which is usually a disaster. The client/person-centred tradition—with its emphasis on the wholeness of being and on personal integration—can be seen as partly a

response to this sickness, and it has evolved at least two ways of working specifically with the dichotomy. Carl Rogers' colleague Eugene Gendlin continues to develop a means of bringing what he calls the *felt sense* into awareness. It is a source of knowing grounded in experiencing and in the body rather than in our cranial vapours or evanescent emotions. To a similar end, but using different means, there is André Rochais' *Personality and Human Relations* (PRH).

Therefore, these days, when I teach philosophy, I encourage my students to work from their felt sense of the issues. The idea is not to ignore their cerebral talents and emotional responses, but to let those things serve rather than lead. As students get the hang of what I am proposing, they write more fluently and more creatively, and many seem to grow in ways which surprise them. At the University of East Anglia, Campbell Purton is teaching focusing to trainee counsellors, and I am doing the same at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. We find that many students gain a way of knowing their experience—and therefore the world around them—which profoundly changes their lives and therapeutic practice. My hunch is that if and when enough people are living in awareness of their felt sense—whether conceptualized that way or not—then environmental issues, too, will take on a whole new aspect.

There is a voice not yet spoken of or written. I'm not sure it is my voice in the same sense as the others. I don't really know what to do except let it guide me, but it is part of the story.

I love Earth; it feels that Earth loves me. Is that it? Or is there something more than Clive and Earth involved in this relationship?

It seems to me, sometimes, that there is more, but I don't pretend to understand or be able to theorize that seeming. My *experience* is that just as offering a person-centred kind of relationship to Earth is a doorway leading to a different way of experiencing Earth, so that different way of experiencing Earth becomes a doorway ...

If so, then any person or tradition serious about spiritual experience and the spiritual dimension of human life must tend *all* relationships with care, not just human or divine relationships.

NOTES

Section 3

The Bentham quotation is from (1948) p. 311. Hume's thoughts on ethics are presented in Hume (1752).

In April 1973, both Peter Singer's article 'Animal Liberation' and Arne Naess' 'The Shallow And The Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary' were published. Singer's article should not be confused with his later (1977) book of the same name. A translation of Naess' book-length exposition was eventually published under the editorship of Rothenburg (1989).

Section 4

Deep Humanism was formally introduced in Mountford (1995) but it may have appeared in some earlier talks. Who first suggested the idea? I don't know; it came via Professor Earl Winkler, but I doubt either of us can lay claim to it.

Section 5

Socrates asks his famous question in Plato's *The Republic* (circa 390 BCE).

Signs of change in ethics? Alasdair MacIntyre caused some serious rethinking beginning with MacIntyre (1984). In the same year, Nel Noddings (1984) gave impetus to a more feminist and less cerebral approach. Personally, I have always found Richard Rorty's (2003) critiques of great interest. And within environmental ethics, Warwick Fox (1990) developed the 'apprehension of connectedness' and beat a first track from environmental ethics to counselling.

When I say, 'humanist assumptions are ... woven into mainstream moral thought and practice' I do not exaggerate. Moral humanism remains the norm in related academic disciplines like economics, and philosophers still argue that language itself prevents attributions of moral status to anything which is not sentient. This last position is probably best represented by Joel Feinberg (1974).

Section 6

Carl Rogers' necessary and sufficient conditions first appeared in Rogers (1957) reprinted in Kirschenbaum and Henderson (1990). They re-appear in Rogers (1959) which is now out of print and hard to obtain. Kirschenbaum and Henderson (1990) contains an edited version, but personally I think it is worth the effort to secure a copy of the larger and more elegant original. The comments about 'gossamer threads' appear on p. 191 of Rogers (1959).

Campbell Purton's ideas first appear as 'Person-centred therapy without the core conditions' in Purton (2002), and are now more fully explicated in Purton (2004); see particularly pp. 39–41.

Section 7

Anthropomorphizing is recommended by no less an ethologist than Frans de Waal (1996). Current scientific thought about the possible analogues of sentience and intelligence in plants can be tracked through the pages of *New Scientist*. The most recent article I have found is 'Not just a pretty face' in vol 175 issue 2353, 27 July 2002, p. 40.

Section 8

That this section exists at all is due to the intervention of Charlotte MacGregor; thank you, Charlie. Val Plumwood's ideas are contained in Plumwood (1991), and the material I cite from Karen J. Warren is in Warren (1990). Judging by what I find in recent anthologies intended for environmental ethics classes, these papers remain current.

Section 9

The most accessible book on Focusing is Eugene Gendlin (1981). More depth and detail is to be found in Gendlin (1996). Campbell Purton (2004) is also a good place to start particularly for anyone interested in how focusing fits into the development of client/person-centred therapy.

A new and accessible introduction to PRH has recently been published (2004) although I think it fair to say that PRH must be experienced to be understood.

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