On Not Being Alone in Lonely Places:
Preferences, Goods, and Aesthetic-Ethical Conflict in Nature Sports

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This paper is about what we want and what we owe to others who live in the spaces that we use for personal enjoyment and recreation, whether that takes the form of strenuous sport or more relaxed aesthetic appreciation. In particular, it is about the potential conflicts that may occur between ourselves and those others with an interest or dependence on the environments into which we venture. There are a number of ways in which such conflicts may arise. Many of these will be between humans. For example, disputes concerning the right to roam, where we have disagreement about the nature or extent of competing claims, or about responsibility and regard for damage (snowmobilers and farm damage), or cases where enjoyment of a natural area is mutually incompatible (wake-boarders and rowers or mountain bikers and hikers).

These kinds of cases are often relatively simple ones of prior claim and so can be adjudicated in terms of something like priority and/or a right to exclude. There might be options available for mutual accommodation under certain circumstances, such as mandating alternate use at different times or in different specific locations. But often such accommodation cannot occur without one party giving up usage altogether or only having a diminished opportunity, such as when environmental damage occurs or the effects of one activity spill into the space of another. All these examples are about humans interfering with the enjoyment of other humans. These, however, are cases where we have competing activities within a social environment and what is needed is cooperation between humans or some sort of regulatory intervention, which is still about humans regulating themselves.

Most conventional sport can be thought of, somewhat inexactly, as presenting artificial societies, ones that we can opt in or out of but whose laws we are obliged to adhere to for as long as we remain participants. As in the wider civil society in which we live, we give consent to have our rights mutually constrained in some ways under the expectation that other rights will be respected in order to be able to engage in a competitively coherent practice. Most sport, then, is a compromise collection of obligations that we owe one another both as members of our broader society, and as participants in a kind of subsidiary society for the purposes of performing a definable and repeatable set of athletic activities. And so, we don't get to do whatever we want in our chosen sport any more than we do outside of it: we either follow the rules designed, ideally, to ensure fair competition or we find something else to do.

Nature sports have a slightly different ethical architecture. These activities generally lack the pseudo-judicial structures of organised urban sport; there are no referees and the self-governance of participants is unreliable. While some inter-human conflicts do occur, whether direct conflict in a group or questions relating to rescue, for example, the pursuit of these sports *tend* to affect no other human(s) than the one(s) doing them. There are remote indirect

effects possible but I will put these to one side for the time being.[1] For some, an attraction of nature sports may be precisely this relative lack of social and hence ethical encumbrance.

But we may well also need to think beyond immediate *human* interest alone. This paper aims to raise a number of considerations that need careful thinking through by those devoted to those sorts of broadly sporting activities that rely upon and variously engage with elements of the natural environment and which centre that environment in their practice and the legitimation of their practice.[2] To do this, I will discuss human rights a great deal rather than the rights of nonhumans. I shall not argue that plants, animals, and ecosystems have rights, as the point cannot be made without this stronger claim. Since most of us would grant that humans do have rights in this area, I shall devote much of my time to exploring whether having rights just by virtue of being human does as much for us as individuals as we often assume, particularly in our relations with the creatures and objects of the natural world on which we depend and of which we are a part. And, to do this, we need to get a conceptual grip on why or how we have rights at all, how they are limited by our interrelationships, and how those limitations affect our sporting activities.

Aesthetic Preference vs Ethical Judgement

Generally, sports of both the urban and nature type are pursued for what can be described as broadly aesthetic rewards, i.e., how they make us feel. While it may be possible to do so, few people voluntarily take up sport out of some notion of moral duty. Children may persist in sport out of a sense of duty to their parental wishes, or due to external compulsion, or for instrumental reasons, e.g., getting funding for academics, but none of these are obviously examples of ethical behaviour rather than something like self-interest or avoidance of conflict. Certainly, once participation is voluntary the motive can be read as a cluster of aesthetic outcomes that one hopes or expects to get from the activity, including cases where someone endures an activity purely for the sake of anticipated health benefits. I will use the term "aesthetic" here because this is about how sport makes the participant *feel,* whether that is visceral pleasure, relief from the stress of other parts of life, or some deep happiness that borders on the "spiritual", so-called.[3]

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[1]These might include things like noise, environmental degradation that effects a loss of enjoyment for other humans, or costs incurred on the public purse.

[2]I am not here relying on any specific distinctions between types of "nature sport", i.e. Nature Instrumental, Nature Specific, or Nature Oriented Sports; the discussion here could apply to any broadly Nature Based Sport. See Howe (2012).

[3]I am broadly influenced in this ideal division of the aesthetic and ethical by Søren Kierkegaard. Note that Kierkegaard classes the intellectual within the aesthetic.

In the following I assume that for human beings, as beings capable of determining their actions on the basis of a recognition of themselves as (ideally) autonomous and relatively rational agents operating within a social context of similar agents, that capacity to act as moral agents is more important to us, and more definitive of us as a species-capacity, than our capacity for aesthetic experience. Again, not because the latter is *un*important but because aesthetic experience gained at the expense of our ethical commitments or responsibilities is sometimes illegitimate. In saying this I do not intend to defend a sort of moral puritanism that would demand that we ethically justify each enjoyment. Moreover, I take it that a great many of our aesthetic experiences inform our moral perspectives in a positive way; it is possible to behave ethically without sympathy but seeing that the other matters in our choices does tend to rest heavily on our ability to see that they feel as we do. And our ability to be moved by art, music, theatre, as well as the beauty and intricacy of the natural world is important in our developing a sense of the not-solely-aesthetic value of those outside ourselves. Indeed, I take the concept of *friluftsliv* to rest on such a view of the moral relevance of the aesthetic experience of natural interconnectedness and of the fact that we, too, are natural beings. The experience of both ordinary sporting situations and natural environments are not simply pleasant but life enhancing on aesthetic, intellectual, and moral levels (even when rather unpleasant). The concern here is those situations where our pursuits exact nonhuman costs that are not justifiable or for which some careful working out of the balance of needs and preferences is required.

Humans have “human rights” because they can recognise each other as self-determining agents who can follow ethical principles of action and who can recognise that, as human, they are each worthy of moral respect on that basis. These rights are based in the ontological character of humans as the kind of creature they are, but would presumably apply to anything that could meet these qualifications. Humans are also biological creatures with organic needs and, largely because of these, unavoidably social in character and dependence. Again, this is why “human rights” matter to us. We declare ourselves to have these rights because there are things that we need to survive and thrive (food, shelter, clothing, education, etc.) and because by living in society with others we acquire the goods and the evils of sociality and thus need just ways of distributing those goods, and of obviating the evils.

We describe these rights as abstract ideals but neither humans nor actual societies are abstract. Freedom of speech, for example, is defended as a social right, based in our moral agency and fundamental to our moral autonomy and social flourishing, but it is politically guaranteed or regulated through legislation, as are most of our important rights, because our interaction is not abstract but concrete. Two individuals have the same right to food or to movement, but you have no right to play tennis in my kitchen or in the middle of the motorway, and I have no right to your breakfast. We may prefer our right to movement or food to be satisfied in a particular way, but that way may violate someone else’s more fundamental right in a way that is not trivial, such that we must forego our particular preference.

Consequently, what we want is not always as important as whether we get it by harming others or by denying others what they want in ways that violate ethical values such as fairness, justice, respect for persons, etc. To take sport so seriously that one is willing to kill or cheat for it is to have a disordered attitude toward sport and in one's values. It isn't because sport is unimportant, but because its value to us is conditional on an at least minimal observance of some basic standards of ethical conduct, even though that often seems a very low bar. The pleasurable rewards of sport, interested as we are in them, rank as of less *human* importance than ethical ones.

A liberal attitude to aesthetic pleasure concedes that a person is free to pursue whatever activity makes them happy, but that licence to do so becomes contestable at the point that such pursuits deny the same consideration to others; it at this point that "do as thou wilt" meets "do no harm". In general, we don't get to take from others what they need, and often what they prefer, *unless* there is a good moral reason to do so and that reason has to be evident and defensible. Murderers, rapists, burglars, arsonists, and paedophiles are not free to pursue their specific pleasures because of the harm they do to others, who not only do not *want* any of what is inflicted on them but have a claim not to be prevented from getting what they *need* to live. This ethical claim is more important than what another person merely *wants*.[4]

Consequently, there is an important difference between preferring one's ale be served at 12°C and needing food, heat, and shelter. Some goods are things we would, all things considered, like (prefer) to get; others are ones we must have. We do a real and a moral harm to deny the latter to others, *because* these are things without which we cannot live or without

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[4]It might be thought that one person's preferences are in some respect more worthy than another's, because they are better able to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the experience than is the other, or because the experience itself is of a superior quality in some regard, e.g., the musician's loss of hearing is worse that the tin-eared, the parfumier's olfactory loss, etc. But is poetry really better than push-pin? (See Bentham (1830), Book 3, Ch. 1, for this observation; also Mill (1969) II, 211-212, re: higher and lower pleasures.) Both are aesthetic pursuits and a preference for one over the other is an *aesthetic* preference. Perhaps appreciation of Bach requires a more developed intellect than appreciation of trip-hop or Morris dancing, but this intellectual component is also aesthetic–it allows us greater pleasure or it doesn't. Who hasn't been informed by some earnest and condescending individual that the reason they find some art form unbearable is that they "just don't understand it"? The claim here is not that there is no difference between pleasures but, rather, that even the most earnestly pursued explanation of why one "ought" to find something pleasurable is an intellectual defence of: *pleasure*. Hence, any justification of pleasure, whether "low" or "elevated" that involves pain or exploitation of others does not succeed so long as we regard those so used as of comparable moral standing to ourselves.

which life is not recognisably humane. “Mere” preference encompasses the ideal temperature for ale rather than lager, and, reluctant as many of us are to admit it, climbing versus hiking versus football versus ball room dancing. All of these may be goods–to someone, but not necessarily to everyone. We may be unhappy about not getting what we want, but we are not *solely for that reason* mistreated or degraded as humans.

No matter how much it *feels* like a need, sport falls into the “mere” preference category. Although the freedom to physically move about and use our bodies is a basic need and the sort of thing that must qualify as a human right. But *how* we move is very much a matter of individual preference. I have a right to safe drinking water because without it I cannot survive, but I do not *without further qualification* have a right to my preferred water-based tipple. This makes sport a possible good, but not a candidate for a fundamental human right. It might become the subject of a civic right if, for example, sporting facilities are publicly provided to interested citizens I cannot be denied participation without good cause. On the other hand, if I don’t happen to like any of the available options, this does not by itself violate my civic rights. Physical movement is something that has a role in the functional good of humans, but no specific movement form, such as a sport, can be designated as necessary for human life and dignity, except under extraordinary circumstances.[5] Thus, any given sport or movement form is an optional good, i.e., preference.[6] Could the same be true of a presumed right to nature sport?

Are we alone in the moral universe?

Up to this point in our discussion it would appear that the basis of the constraints on following our preferential whims, whether in society or in sport, is the circumstance that we are not alone as isolated individuals. Other people have claims to advancing their own goods and we have procedural arrangements to ensure that goods are distributed according to the rules of that society or sport, which may or may not be fair, though this is important in making these institutions both instrumentally and ethically well-ordered. That other people are affected by our actions requires us to move from consideration of our own preferences alone

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[5]E.g., if a particular skill was tied to social status, such as weapons training in a warrior society, etc. But there might be better solutions to this situation.

[6]These issues are discussed in Howe (2021), and in Pike, Hilton, Howe (2021), 26-29. “Without further qualification” because there would need to be a justification for refusal to serve me in a public establishment where others are served, just as my meeting eligibility and performance requirements ought to grant me a place in the relevant competition–unless some other reason consistent with the aims of (the) sport, subject to rational justification, could be adduced for excluding me.

to those of others.[7] It is not only what I want that matters but what others want as well. As beings capable of thinking outside our own feelings and desires, we reason to principles of action that build on a respect for others as morally equal to ourselves, as persons whose goods we need to take into account. This is where we move from being creatures tied to inclination alone and begin to act as ethical individuals. We become free when we constrain our own actions on the basis of moral principle rather than being led by fleeting and relatively trivial preference.[8]

So, while the ethical athlete in conventional or urban sport restricts her pursuit of sport pleasure to fair play within the rules and in accord with respect for teammates and opponents, doesn't cheat, or seek to gratuitously harm opponents, or interfere with the regulation of contests, and so on, what of the participant in nature sports? Since nature sports are not defined by human inter-agential activity, there would appear to be no grounds for any ethical constraints on their pursuit comparable to those in conventional urban sports, beyond respect for property, etc. If we only owe duties to rights-bearers and these are co-extensive with moral agents, then since deer, squirrels, and lynx are not moral agents, any more than are rivers, trees, bogs, and mountains, there would therefore appear to be no possible ethical conflict between humans pursuing nature sports and the nonhuman others they might encounter in the natural environment.

This would follow *if* this were an exhaustive characterisation of the moral community or even just of the moral life of humans. Notice that what allows the human moral project to get off the ground is our capacity to make our subjectivity the object of thought and intention, combined with the awareness of one's reciprocity with others, i.e., the fact of intersubjectivity. Let's say for the sake of argument that the business of ethics is to determine who has what rights or duties and why this ethical principle applies in this case and the other one in that case. These questions about what is the correct line of action would appear to only arise for moral agents, because moral agents can choose their actions. When they do so, they do so for reasons, good or bad, rather than simply responding to impulses. That means that the agent must be able to do some reflecting on what she wants, why she wants it, what value it has for her, and so on. It requires reflecting on and evaluating her own condition and the likelihood of the thing willed providing some good for her as she understands it. Any choice, including moral choice, presupposes that an agent have *some* conception, no matter how faulty, of what is a good for them and what is a good for others.

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[7]Others may think they are affected when they aren't; that doesn't affect the current discussion as any complainant has to make a case for infringement.

[8]Cf. Frankfurt (1971) on the importance of having not just second-order desires, but second-order wills, to having a self (as opposed to being a wanton who is blown hither and yon by whatever desire is dominant).

There are some more or less plausible conclusions we might draw from this. For one, some conception of what is good for humans and other creatures would seem to be, either prior to or coincident with that of right. A large proportion of those things that are good for us have a natural origin: ordinary pleasure, of course, but also whatever enhances our ability to function well as the kind of animal we happen to be, which includes a considerable capacity for self-consciousness, and thus moral concern. We are moral creatures not because we are "superior" to nature but because of the nature of, and in, our bodies–because of the kind of organism we are.[9] The fact that we have a good at all is, in the first instance[10], pre-moral, i.e., about what we are rather than what we do.

In view of this, Christine Korsgaard's analysis (2018) provides a useful way of thinking about the good of humans and of animals that also pushes against the conventional assumption that the moral community is only about us and some hypothetical aliens. Specifically, Korsgaard relies on a contextual or perspective-dependent concept of the good of a creature in terms of its own well-functioning (Korsgaard, 27). Simply put, it is a good for a human or nonhuman animal to be well-functioning, i.e, in good condition and able to thrive as the kind of creature that it is, because that is what keeps it alive and thriving as that (kind of) animal.

> "It is almost a necessary truth that for an animal who functions by taking her own well-functioning as an end, her life itself is a good for her, her very existence is a good for her, so long as she is well-functioning, and in good enough condition to keep herself that way. The reason is simple: to be well-functioning is the good, but to be well-functioning is also simply to be alive, and in reasonably good health, in the manner characteristic of your kind. So life itself is a good for almost any animal who is in reasonably good shape. " (Korsgaard, 21)

The point is basically that all living animals have an optimal state in which their organic systems operate as well as their structure allows them to, so that they can feed, move, reproduce effectively, and thrive in whatever ecological niche they have evolved to exploit. They are able to do what they are best able to do in a way that maintains the individual or species. For animals, as opposed to plants, this functioning includes being able to represent

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[9]See Mary Midgley (1995): if we hadn't evolved a capacity for reason, and from thence, morality, which gives us a way to negotiate between our conflicting impulses (especially aggression and nurturance) we quite possibly would not have survived as a species.

[10]"In the first instance" because, for moral agents, the good of a being can become an explicit object of ethical action, i.e., acted for *because* of its status as a good. Thus, we can have as a moral project the provision of clean water for others besides ourselves because we judge it to be a moral duty to provide this good. But first, clean water either is or is not a material good for those individuals, i.e., their health.

their environment to themselves through the senses, which allows animals to distinguish those things in their environment that are good-for or bad-for them, and thus significant for their well-functioning (Korsgaard, 20).

An important aspect of this for Korsgaard's account is the perspective-dependence of the notion of functional good. What is good-for the functioning of a creature is necessarily dependent on what supports or enhances the functioning of that creature from the creature's own perspective; it is not dependent on the perspective of something else that is outside that creature. For example, what is good for the functioning of a fox is dependent on what is good for the maintenance, activity, and furtherance of the ends of the *fox*, not the lemmings and voles caught by the fox, nor for the human observing the fox (even though the human may have an instrumental interest for or against the fox-perspective). Rather, "values exist in the perspective of a certain kind of creature, a creature who values things, in the sense of having evaluative or valenced attitudes towards things" (Korsgaard, 27).

Thus, unless one is prepared to argue that there is some sort of absolute value, one that is independent of any valuing being, human or nonhuman, Korsgaard argues that value must be seen as "tethered", i.e., that value is relative to the being for whom it is a value. This is not "relative" in the sense that it is arbitrary or that anything claimed to be a value is infallible,[11] but that there cannot be free-floating values independent of something for which it is, in fact, valuable. If so, then

> "if everything that is important must be important to someone, to some creature, then there is no place we can stand from which we can coherently ask which creatures, or which kinds of creatures, are more important absolutely. Things are important to creatures; the creatures themselves do not stand in some absolute rank ordering of importance." (Korsgaard, 10)

Korsgaard's analysis undermines the notion that what humans value is what is most important just because it is humans who value it. For something to be good absolutely it would have to be the case that it would be good *for everyone* that *everyone* get what is good for them–which isn't necessarily equivalent to what humans happen to value. Humans only come out as most important *if* it is good for *everyone* (every creature) that *humans* get what is good for humans, which, as Korsgaard points out, is not even remotely plausible (10-11).

On the view Korsgaard presents, consciousness matters to value, since the model is of an animal striving to get what it values for its own well functioning and this requires it to have

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[11] "I do not want in general to identify final good with what actually appears good to us, because I want to say we, and all animals, can get it wrong. It happens all the time." (Korsgaard, 28)

some degree of consciousness. As she states, "Any animal who is conscious or sentient has a self, in the minimal sense of a point of view—there is something it is like to be that animal at any given time". And it is because of this that "many animals can learn, and that means that what happens to them at one moment changes the way that they respond to the world at another. Animals also do other things that systematically influence and so unify their points of view over time" (32). It takes consciousness to value anything and that includes awareness of some sort of self as a locus of experience. So the difference between humans and other animals is not self-consciousness as such, but what we humans do with ours, that we "play a particularly active and responsible role in constituting our selves, our own minds and identities" (35). This kind of work is what is involved in being an ethical subject.

The conclusion to draw here, then, is that all sorts of things besides humans have a good of their own, which those creatures aim at obtaining in their normal activities, and that the goods of others should not be assumed to be of lesser importance simply because they are of lesser importance to us.[12] That doesn't mean that we should not value what we do–only that what we value is not more important simply because we do value it, even though it is more valuable *for us*. Simply, reason is likely of no importance whatsoever to banana slugs; that does not mean it should not be valuable to or for us. But because we are self-conscious, reflective, self-constituting and rational beings, and thus capable of ethical deliberation and action, and because these are goods for us, the question must arise for us of how substantively we should direct ourselves to thoughtful pursuit of these goods–because this is how we pursue what is good for us.

Justifying Nature Sports

If all this is so, then, we owe ourselves consideration of what moral obligations we might have in respect of if not directly to, nonhuman animals, supposing that they have goods that are as important to them as ours are to us and given that we are moral agents able to consider how we should act in relation to them and their goods. For present purposes, I am only concerned with how this ought to affect our pursuit of sport in the natural environment.

The first thing to note is that this isn't about whether human rights override animal rights or vice versa. In part this is for the reason that, as Korsgaard argues, animals are not moral agents and so cannot be holders of the kinds of rights appropriate to moral agents, so talk about our rights overriding theirs simply adduces an irrelevant distinction, not least since even the rights of individual humans are not immune to exception. The question of whether animals have rights or not plays no critical role in the claims being advanced here. As stated above, morality is a human endeavour because we are self-conscious, reflective, self-

[12]Paul Taylor (1986), Ch. 3, especially 129-156, makes a similar point. See also Korsgaard (2018), Ch. 4.4.

constituting rational beings who can form (rational) moral principles concerning our actions, and recognise others as reciprocal moral agents with reciprocal claims. The other animals don't do this. But it does not follow from this that other animals do not have any moral claim on our consideration, given that they are ends in themselves with goods of their own (Korsgaard (2018), Chs. 4, 5, 8). The obligations we have with respect to animals are ones we owe ourselves (Korsgaard (2018), 8.7.1).

It is also an outcome of the earlier discussion about aesthetic preferences. Recall that sport is a voluntary good. That is, a good that is not mandatory for the overall good of a human being. It is something that some humans very much enjoy doing. We need to move and exercise our bodies; sport is a way of doing so but by no means the only one, not to mention that many people detest sport and opt for other forms of physical movement instead. So, strictly speaking, sport is not a need, but a personal preference, and so not any kind of fundamental right. Insofar as participation in sport only affects other humans, the permissibility of any given individual's participation is a matter of fairness between humans, about the just allocation of human resources. Therefore, rights are only relevant between participants, i.e., intra-specific.

Nevertheless, our pursuit of sport in natural environments may well provoke a conflict between our preferences and those goods of animals that are more central to their existence. We bring noise and waste into their homes, interfere with their roaming territories and their efforts to find food. We disrupt their normal patterns of behaviour which may be especially important for them to follow. What seem like harmless activities can cause stress to animals that would normally not have to deal with the noise, smells, and unknown threat levels of humans passing through their environments, as well as what those humans leave behind. We do actual damage to elements of their environment, degrading slopes and riverbeds, blocking or disturbing nesting sites, migration routes, spawning streams, or access to forage or prey. These damages are often particularly evident around areas of particular attraction to humans, such as national parks and popular recreational sites, where, for example, garbage build up leads to the normalisation of dumpster bears and the learned association by large or small predators of food and humans–which in turn leads to efforts to remove or destroy "problem animals". And, of course, the road kill left behind on the highways by motorists on their way to experience the "untouched nature" of mountain, lake, or ocean.

Lots of environmentally disruptive events are entirely natural: the limestone wall that slides off due to normal weathering, or the mudslide or flood due to seasonal rains, forest fires sparked by lightning, and so on. These events occur even without the human effect on climate change that might make them more frequent or unpredictable. But that some destructive events occur without human intervention does not cancel out the ones that do, not least because we have choices about what we do–not always, but certainly when it comes to sport, which is, by definition, voluntary.

And this is the point: at minimum, the human pursuit of recreation in wilder places presents a conflict between human and nonhuman wants; at maximum, between some human wants and nonhuman flourishing or survival. A degree of conflict is unavoidable–to live at all is to affect others, human and nonhuman, and we have no obligation to make ourselves go out of existence (not yet, anyway). We cannot but eat and make places for ourselves to live in, move from one place to another, and to do all those things that permit us to survive, flourish, and pursue our species' own good. It is also good for humans to know what the world outside human society is like, to experience what the rest of our planet and its inhabitants are like and how they live, to discover what are their various goods, to see and experience the natural world outside of our human-centred social and digital lives. We will inevitably intersect and it will not all go happily, and that a given being has a good of its own kind does not mean that we are required to encourage that good (e.g., malaria, *yersinia pestis*, Sars-CoV2). Human existence is a continuing complication of exigency and ethical ambiguity. But that just means that we need to be aware of the weight of our decisions and think them through more than we do, and take the responsibility for them.[13]

Consider Korsgaard's criticism of the argument for human superiority advanced on the basis of greater human cognitive sophistication–basically, that human lives and experience matter more because humans have a greater ability to understand and appreciate their lives and what is happening to them, and hence the loss of their lives is a greater loss than that of an animal's. As she argues, when we lament a life lost it isn't just that this vague but somehow valuable property of "life" is removed from the world but that a definite creature, that subject of a life, is wronged by having their life ended. The being has a life that is brought to an end. What is in the life, its inventory, isn't really the point.

> "Rather, what is in a life matters because it matters to the subject of the life, and he matters. When we combine this thought with the requirement that a creature who is an end in itself should never be treated as a mere means to the ends of others, this has an important implication: that the value of a life is, first and foremost, its value for the creature himself or herself.... For even if the rabbit's life is not as important to her as yours is to you, nevertheless, for her it contains absolutely everything of value, all that can ever be good or bad for her, except possibly the lives of her offspring. The end of her life is the end of all value and goodness for her (65)."

There is then a sense in which, when we take the life of an animal, as opposed to a human, we take everything that it has or that belongs to it, whereas humans, because of our narrative interconnection and capacity for reifying memory, are much more likely to "continue" in ways that animals do not–except when memorialised by humans, which would mean nothing to

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[13]See de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, especially 114-145.

them.[14] Korsgaard again:

> "Value is a perspectival notion: values arise from the point of view of valuing creatures. And the values that arise from one point of view can be discordant with values that arise from another. There may be a way in which it is true that a more cognitively sophisticated creature loses more by death, but there is also a way in which both the sophisticated creature and the unsophisticated one lose everything that matters (74)."

Apart from hunting and fishing, nature sports don't generally result in the deaths of nonhuman animals, not directly anyway. But our activities do cause various kinds of disruption and potentially destructive stress. And given our capacity for reason it should not be a surprise to us that we do. The vast majority of our experiences with wild animals involve seeing them run and hide from us. Those of us with domestic animals can readily observe the distress inflicted on them by fireworks. Is a few minutes of sparkly lights and sound worth it?

It might instead be worth noting that in Kant's analysis of the sublime (Kant (2007) §§28-29), neither the natural objects that provoke aesthetic experience nor the immediate experience itself constitutes the real value of the sublime, but how we use that experience to appreciate our capacity for rational judgement and ethical action. The notion that engaging in nature sport, away from our everyday social entanglements buys us an escape from ethical life by plunging us into pure aesthetic pleasure may be just as delusional as it would be to view conventional urban sport and our participation in it as similarly exempt from moral scrutiny. That does not, however, rule out the possibility that certain kinds of aesthetic experience in nature can enhance and contribute to not only a more aesthetically informed but a more moral conception of self in relation to our own nature and that of the full environment with which we are engaged.

Just the same, this does make our moral lives more complicated. But, in the end, the more singularly focussed character of any given nonhuman creature's desires and motivations for action suggests that not interfering with the few or one thing that matters to it would be the least destructive thing we could do towards that being. Whereas, the complexity of human aesthetic possibility means that we can usually find other things to do that give us satisfaction. Moreover, given that it is our particular evolutionary fortune that we are capable of considering how we *should* act toward other beings that have a good the pursuit of which fills their lives, and not only considering what we might *prefer,* in other words, taking a moral view toward other beings, then surely we should get on with doing so. Once we acquire knowledge of other beings, about how they function, how they depend on each other to survive, and about what matters to them (putting aside the self-interested concern we might have regarding viable ecosystems in which we participate and from which we profit), what action

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[14]See Howe, "Fame, Narrative, and the (Im)Permanence of Memory", forthcoming.

should follow on our part? Is our aesthetic preference, our desire for certain kinds of pleasure that infringe upon the capacity of other beings to carry out their own lives and goods, sufficiently important to override their life-centred activities, or simply to cause them gratuitous distress and disruption? This is an ethical question, not a matter of what we only happen to prefer and so it needs an ethical argument why a preference for flinging yourself off a mountain side on a piece of high tec plywood, as opposed to doing something else, is more important than the life-centred activities of anything else that lives there.

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