

## Goodwill Toward Nature

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### ABSTRACT

It is sometimes claimed that an ethical relationship with nature is analogous to Aristotelian friendship. Aristotle claims that friends are valuable principally in virtue of providing reflections of ourselves; yet extant accounts of environmental friendship do not explain how nonhuman organisms can satisfy this role. Recent work in neo-Aristotelian metaethics delineates a theory of value that underscores the similarities between the biological evaluations we make of living things and the moral evaluations we make of ourselves. I argue that these similarities help us make sense of the claim that nonhuman organisms can be reflections of ourselves and thus the object of a relationship akin to friendship. I conclude by suggesting that Aristotle's conception of goodwill may be even more appropriate than friendship as a model for a virtuous relationship with nature.

### KEYWORDS

Environmental virtue ethics, friendship, Aristotle, natural goodness

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The extensionist strategy for specifying environmental virtues proceeds by arguing that the moral considerations that justify a trait as a virtue in interpersonal contexts also justify that trait as a virtue in environmental contexts. Friendship is sometimes justified as an environmental virtue in this way. Our reasons for valuing friends and our reasons for valuing nature are *prima facie* similar. Aristotle, for instance, identifies utility and pleasure as the grounds for two of the three basic sorts of friendship. We value nature for these reasons as well. Just as we can value the utility of a friend who buys us apples from the market, we can also value the utility of an orchard for its production of apples. We enjoy the sight of a beautiful human being as well as the sight of a beautiful redwood. But if we appreciate friends and nature *only* for their usefulness and appearance, we err. Aristotle's third and most important sort of friendship – complete friendship – is not rooted in utility or pleasure. To appreciate friends in a complete way is to value their good for their own sake; to appreciate nonhuman organisms in a complete way is to value their good for their own sake as well.

In this paper, I articulate an original account of the analogy between Aristotelian friendship and an ethical relationship to nature. Prevailing accounts of this analogy, in particular those offered by Geoffrey Frasz (2001) and John O'Neill (1993), are not sufficiently sensitive to possible disanalogies between Aristotelian friendship and a virtuous relationship with nature. Aristotle argues that friends are 'second selves', valuable principally in virtue of providing reflections of our own lives and actions. But can non-rational organisms play this role of a second self? The very idea is obscure – we do not normally think of plants and (most) animals as even having selves. Moreover, Ronald Sandler has recently argued that friendship cannot generally be extended to nonhuman nature because friendship requires *mutual* concern for the good of the other and nonhuman nature typically cannot reciprocate our concern for its good (2007: 12). Thus, it is a puzzle how friendship can properly model a virtuous relationship with nature.

My argument appeals to a neo-Aristotelian theory of value that underscores the similarities between the biological evaluations we make of living things and the moral evaluations we make of ourselves. Philippa Foot (2003) and Rosalind Hursthouse (1999) claim that ethical, ethological and botanical evaluations share a conceptual structure. This theory helps us make sense of the claim that nonhuman organisms can be reflections of ourselves and thus the proper object of a relationship akin to friendship. The analogy between friendship and a virtuous relationship with nature is revealed to be more apt, and more fecund, than prevailing accounts suggest.

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Furthermore, I argue that Aristotle's conception of goodwill supplies a model of environmental virtue that does not succumb to Sandler's critique of friendship. Goodwill, for Aristotle, is unreciprocated friendship. Goodwill therefore preserves those features of friendship that are analogous to a virtuous relationship with nature and dispenses with those features that are disanalogous. Like friendship, goodwill involves a concern for the other's good for the other's own sake; unlike friendship, goodwill does not require that this concern be mutual. I suggest that humans can literally extend goodwill toward nature.

The paper proceeds as follows. In section 1, I review Frasz's and O'Neill's accounts of environmental friendship. Section 2 canvasses the basic features of neo-Aristotelian metaethics as articulated by Foot and Hursthouse. In section 3, I discuss Aristotle's theory of friendship and sketch a revised account of environmental friendship. I then suggest in section 4 that Aristotle's conception of goodwill may be even more appropriate than friendship as an analogy to a virtuous relationship with nature. Section 5 explores the practical significance of goodwill toward nature. Section 6 concludes.

### 1. ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDSHIP

The prevailing accounts of environmental friendship focus on the formal similarities between friendship and a virtuous relationship with nature. That is, they argue that we ought to value the good of nature as an end in itself, not merely as an instrumental means to our own good, just as we ought to value the good of a friend as an end in itself, not merely as an instrumental means to our own good. However, these accounts do not undertake the crucial task of showing a resemblance between the *reasons* why we ought to value the good of a friend as an end in itself and the reasons why we ought to value the good of nonhuman nature as an end in itself. Consequently, the justificatory work performed by the friendship model in their accounts is limited. I wish to suggest that, in spite of a crucial disanalogy, the friendship model is more fruitful than supposed.

Geoffrey Frasz argues that we should adopt a friendly relationship with the future peoples for whom we are preserving natural environments. Just as one seeks the good of a friend for the friend's sake, we ought to seek the good of future generations for their own sake. Being a friend is intrinsically good, Frasz claims, enabling us to derive joy from the friend's existence (Frasz 2001: 9). Knowing that future generations will inherit a healthy and flourishing land should give us pleasure, too.

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Frasz suggests further that we should also appreciate the health and flourishing of living things as an end in itself. He writes, 'We can enjoy our awareness that the land is healthy and will be healthy in the future the same way we can take pleasure in the happiness of a friend' (Frasz 2001: 10). Thus, we can value non-human living things as we value friends – as constitutive of our own good, not merely an instrumental means.

John O'Neill situates a similar analogy within an explicitly Aristotelian theory of value. O'Neill argues that nonhuman organisms have intrinsic value, i.e., 'they are not simply of value as a means to human ends' (O'Neill, 1993: 10). Nonhuman organisms have intrinsic value in virtue of having goods of their own.<sup>1</sup> Plants and animals, but not hammers and paperweights, can flourish or languish. Things can be said to go well or poorly for a living thing in a way they cannot for inanimate objects. Furthermore, whether a plant or animal flourishes does not depend on what human beings happen to think of it (O'Neill, 1993: 19). A gardener might exclaim in exasperation, 'I've sprayed these weeds with poison every day for a month! Why are they still doing so *well*?' Similarly, when we say that sunlight is good for plants, we are not expressing any pro-attitude toward sunlight or plants. O'Neill writes, 'The goods of an entity are ... given by the characteristic features of the kind or species of being it is. A living thing can be said to flourish if it develops those characteristics which are normal to the species to which it belongs in the normal conditions for that species' (O'Neill, 1993: 20).

Yet locating intrinsic value in nonhuman nature does not suffice to justify an appreciation of such value. O'Neill notes that the biological use of 'good' does not necessarily implicate reasons. That water is good for a kudzu vine does not, in itself, generate an obligation to actually supply water for the kudzu.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, we might have reason *not* to supply it, as a flourishing kudzu can be menacingly aggressive. That the intrinsic values of nature do not necessarily provide us with a reason to appreciate and promote them poses a problem for those who claim that we *do* have reason to appreciate and promote them.

O'Neill attempts to ground a reason to appreciate and promote the intrinsic values of nature in an analogy with Aristotle's theory of friendship. We care for a friend for that friend's sake, and yet we think that having friendships is part of living a good human life. The good of a friend is constitutive of one's good. O'Neill suggests that we can view the flourishing of other living things as constitutive of human flourishing in this way (O'Neill, 1993: 23). Just as we miss the greatest values of friendship if we see our friends as mere means to our ends, we miss the greatest values of nature if we see living things as mere resources for meeting our needs.

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O'Neill argues that awareness, appreciation and promotion of the flourishing of the natural world as an end in itself are parts of realising distinctively human capacities such as perception and observation. Following Aristotle, O'Neill holds that human flourishing consists in the exercise of characteristic human excellences. Aristotle's veneration of contemplation as the greatest of human activities supplies a powerful reason to appreciate nature: 'The value of knowledge lies in the contemplation of that which is wonderful and beautiful. Such contemplation extends our own well-being since it realises our characteristic human capacities. There is a relationship between our capacity to appreciate the value of the natural world and human well-being' (O'Neill, 1993: 159).

As noted, Frasz's and O'Neill's accounts focus on the formal similarities between the valuing of friends and nature (i.e., as constitutive of, rather than merely instrumental to, human well-being). Yet they do not appeal to similarities between the reasons why we ought to value the good of friends and nature as constitutive of our good. Aristotle's conception of friendship, articulated below, rests on the claim that friends are 'second selves'. That is, friends provide a reflection of our own actions and character. Friends afford us the opportunity to contemplate our own characters and actions as they find expression in another person. But this idea is not at work in either Frasz's or O'Neill's account of environmental friendship and it is difficult to see how it could be. We do not generally think of non-rational organisms as possessing selves; they therefore appear unable to play this role of a second self. Yet if non-rational organisms *can* play this role, a crucial consideration that justifies friendship in interpersonal contexts would also justify a similar relationship in environmental contexts, thus further strengthening this model of environmental virtue.

## 2. NATURAL GOODNESS

We can reconstruct the friendship analogy by appealing to recent work in neo-Aristotelian metaethical theory which further articulates themes found in O'Neill's theory of value. These developments reveal why, despite appearances, there is considerable overlap between the reasons that favour valuing friends and those that favour valuing nonhuman nature.

Neo-Aristotelianism's signature metaethical thesis is that botanical, ethological and ethical evaluations share a conceptual structure. Philippa Foot argues that living things form a singular evaluative category.<sup>3</sup> Things that are good in virtue of being effective means to human ends possess what Foot calls 'secondary goodness' (Foot 2003: 26). Secondary goodness is thus

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entirely derivative of human values. The goodness of a hammer, for instance, is defined strictly in terms of its role in serving human purposes.

Living things, in contrast, possess what Foot calls 'natural' or 'intrinsic' goodness (Foot 2003: 26). They can serve ends of their own. We can judge a kudzu vine as good in virtue of its success in achieving the kudzu's ends, not simply its success in achieving human ends. Foot writes that natural goodness 'is attributable only to living things themselves and to their parts, characteristics, and operations, [and] is intrinsic or "autonomous" goodness in that it depends directly on the relation of an individual to the "life form" of its species' (Foot 2003: 27).

Foot's conception of natural goodness is nearly identical to O'Neill's conception of intrinsic value. As in O'Neill's account, Foot evaluates the goodness of an organism by how well it does what organisms of its kind characteristically do. Specifically, we evaluate an organism as a good specimen of its kind by how efficaciously its parts and operations contribute to the ends characteristic of that kind of organism. As Aristotle notes, the criteria of goodness are generally associated with the exercise of natural capacities – e.g., flight for birds, swimming for fish, rational thought for humans.

Rosalind Hursthouse provides a more detailed account of the criteria by which plants and animals ought to be evaluated. She argues that a good plant is one whose parts and operations efficaciously advance its survival and the continuance of its species in ways characteristic of the species.<sup>4</sup> A kudzu vine is a good specimen of its kind if it is well endowed to survive and reproduce. When we consider more complex organisms, like birds, we evaluate specimens according to a third end – 'characteristic freedom from pain and characteristic pleasure or enjoyment' (Hursthouse 1999: 199). Finally, when we evaluate social animals, we add a fourth end: the 'good functioning of the social group' (Hursthouse 1999: 201).

Foot and Hursthouse argue that the metric of natural goodness applies to human beings just as it applies to any other species. One distinctive feature of Aristotelian ethics is to begin evaluative inquiry with nonhuman instances of goodness. Value is not something that arises solely in human beings and therefore is not something that only can be projected onto nature anthropomorphically. We can understand goodness by initially investigating it in nature and then turning to moral evaluations of humans.

Thus, Aristotelians claim that the meaning of 'good' does not vary between biological and moral contexts.<sup>5</sup> Foot denies that the content of a good human life can be specified in reductively biological terms; her claim is rather that 'the logical structure that belongs to the evaluation of all living things' can be extended to evaluations of human beings (Foot 2003: 66). By applying

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the norms of natural goodness to moral evaluation, Aristotelianism locates humanity as ‘part of the natural, biological order of living things’ (Hursthouse 1999: 206). A human that has virtue is like a plant that has strong and healthy roots or a lion that has tough jaws and sharp claws. Humans need the virtues to flourish as evolved rational animals.

Because humans are social animals, Hursthouse claims, the four criteria articulated earlier – survival, continuance of the species, characteristic pleasure and freedom from pain, and the good functioning of the social group – remain part of human ethical evaluation.<sup>6</sup> As we ascend the ladder of biological complexity, criteria used to evaluate more primitive life forms are supplemented, but not supplanted. For instance, social animals are judged partly by how well they achieve the ends of individual and species survival, even though they pursue further ends. Unlike plants, we evaluate social animals by their experiences of pain and pleasure as well as their contribution to the functioning of their social group. But we do not dispense with survival and reproduction as relevant criteria of evaluation for social animals.

We are, of course, importantly different from other animals – we are rational. It is in virtue of our rationality that we can instantiate *moral* goodness. Still, moral goodness is properly considered a kind of natural goodness. Practical rationality should be understood within the naturalistic framework articulated above. To determine whether or not a trait qualifies as a moral virtue, we must consider whether or not that trait fosters or frustrates the four ends (Hursthouse 1999: 224). Although humans are the lone rational animals, the norms of natural goodness remain appropriate standards of human evaluation. They constrain what counts as a reason.

Ronald Sandler writes that ‘the ends appropriate to us as living, sentient, social animals gain further support because they cohere well with commonly held pre- and post-theoretical beliefs about the role that the virtues play in our lives, as well as with beliefs about what makes a character trait a virtue’ (Sandler 2007: 22). Hursthouse’s evaluative criteria reflect deep-seated features of our ordinary moral judgments. We generally think the fact that an action promotes our survival is a consideration in favour of doing it. Or that something promotes the interest of a family member is reason to do it. Intuitively, we have stronger obligations to family than strangers, although our obligations extend to all of humanity. Furthermore, we have obligations to contribute to social cooperation and to abstain from free riding. Contrary to some forms of consequentialism, not all pleasures are to be pursued. Pleasures taken in mental and physical exercise and sociality are to be welcomed; pleasures taken in sadistic or anti-social behaviour, or, for instance, drug abuse, are not.

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3. ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDSHIP: A REVISED ACCOUNT

We are now in position to return to Aristotle's account of friendship. A friend, Aristotle says, is a second self. We consequently wish good things for this friend, for his own sake, just as we wish good things for ourselves, for our own sake. Friendship conduces to our good partly in virtue of a friend's ability to mirror good action, thereby enriching our understanding and enjoyment of our lives. Aristotle writes,

Now to know oneself is a very difficult thing – as even philosophers have told us – and a very pleasant thing, knowledge of self being pleasant. Direct contemplation of ourselves is moreover impossible, as is shown by the censure we inflict on others for the very things we ourselves unwittingly do – favor or passion being the cause, which in many of us blind our judgment. And so, just as when wishing to behold our own faces we have seen them by looking upon a mirror, whenever we wish to know our own characters and personalities, we can recognize them by looking upon a friend; since the friend is, as we say, our 'second self' (Aristotle 1947: 681, 1213a9-24).<sup>7</sup>

Friends are moral mirrors; they enable us to view and enjoy our lives from the outside. By observing good action from a third-person perspective, rather than the usual first-person perspective, we see its nature more clearly.

This principle applies equally well to excellent activity of a non-moral sort. Consider an actor-playwright who pens a brilliant soliloquy. He judges the soliloquy to be good and takes pleasure in performing it. Yet he will experience another sort of pleasure at *seeing* it performed well by another actor. Seeing someone else perform enables the monologue to 'come to life' for the actor-playwright, to see the work expressed in external reality, not simply his own mind. In a way, it makes the piece fully real for him in a way it would not be if he only performed it himself. He gains a new appreciation of the beauty of the work from the balcony, beyond what he gets simply from the stage.

Aside from fostering self-knowledge and personal enjoyment, excellent activity is valuable as a model. Aristotle writes, '[T]here would also be a sort of training in virtue from living among good people' (Aristotle 1998: 38, 1170a11-12). One commentator notes that this passage 'seems to draw attention to the way in which the *example* of others who are engaged in the same activity as oneself, and who do so in some striking or excellent way, provides a stimulus for us to act excellently ourselves' (Pakaluk 1998: 205). By observing another's excellent activity, we can see concretely what excellence consists in. By watching another actor perform his soliloquy,

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the actor-playwright has an example of how to perform it himself – where to place emphasis, how to inflect properly, and how to gesture effectively. The actor provides a model to emulate. Similarly, by conceptualising a friend's flourishing life, we contemplate the nature and structure of a life well-lived.

Foot and Hursthouse stress that in spite of their apparent differences, there is a common conceptual structure between goodness in humans and goodness in nonhuman nature. Foot writes that 'there is a "natural-history story" about how human beings achieve [their] good as there is about how plants and animals achieve theirs. There are truths such as "Humans make clothes and build houses" that are to be compared with "Birds grow feathers and build nests"; but also propositions such as "Humans establish rules of conduct and recognize rights"' (Foot 2003: 51).

The features that make a human's life a flourishing one may be dissimilar in terms of particulars from those that make, for instance, a bird's life a flourishing one. Humans build houses and constitutions to flourish, while birds build nests. Nonetheless, an excellent human and an excellent bird can both be said to exemplify natural goodness. In this way, *all* living organisms can model good action and thus present to us a mirror of our own goodness, which thereby enriches our lives.<sup>8</sup> Even plants can crystallise the general features of flourishing life – the successful pursuit of species-specific ends in the face of environmental obstacles. We have reason to value the plurality of beings that can instantiate natural goodness generally, just as we have reason to value the plurality of human beings that can instantiate moral goodness in particular. Through contemplation of a virtuous friend, the virtuous person experiences a vicarious sense of his own goodness as a moral being; through contemplation of a flourishing plant, he experiences a vicarious sense of his own goodness as a *living* being.

Moreover, a number of environmentally virtuous human beings have argued that nonhuman organisms can, and do, serve as exemplars. Commenting on Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, Philip Cafaro writes, '[I]t is striking how often Leopold praises the virtues of the nonhuman world: the "grace" of a plover, the "valor" of a chickadee, the "accumulated wisdom" of a stand of pine trees – a natural wisdom that silences the people who walk below – the "harmony" of a river ecosystem. These expressions are more than metaphors. Humans and nonhuman beings may share some virtues because we are in some respects similar' (Cafaro 2005: 34).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Leopold notes that nonhuman nature is exemplary for own behaviour: 'How like fish we are, ready, nay eager, to seize upon whatever new thing some wind of circumstance shakes down upon the river of time! And how we

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rue our haste, finding the gilded morsel to contain a hook. Even so, I think there is some virtue in eagerness, whether its object prove true or false. How utterly dull would be a wholly prudent man, or trout, or world!' (Leopold 1970: 42).<sup>10</sup>

Henry David Thoreau argues similarly for the courage of shad, writing, 'Armed with no sword, no electric shock, but mere Shad, armed only with innocence and a just cause, with tender dumb mouth forward, and scales easy to be detached ... Not despairing when whole myriads have gone to feed those sea monsters during thy suspense, but still brave, indifferent, on easy fin there, like shad reserved for higher destinies' (Thoreau 1911: 44). Leopold's and Thoreau's remarks suggest that there are strong empirical, as well as conceptual, reasons to believe that nonhuman organisms can, like human friends, serve as both mirrors and exemplars.

However, Aristotle's conception of friends as mirrors may obscure a crucial dimension of friendship. We appreciate excellence in others even when it is not a mirror of our own particular excellence, and sometimes *because* it is an excellence we cannot hope to attain in our own lives. This is perhaps also a reason why people do, in fact, find value and joy in an appreciation of nature.

Human beings tend to admire excellence in all manner of activity. We sometimes take pleasure in the contemplation of another's goodness precisely because it provides a window into a kind of life we cannot enter directly. There is, to be sure, a friendly warmth in a philosopher's recognition of, and respect for, the fact that her physician exemplifies an excellence typically unavailable to a philosopher, and vice versa. Both understand and appreciate that the other exemplifies a virtuosity that he or she cannot exemplify in his or her own life. We can understand this kind of mutual affection as friendly, if not as friendship proper. Here the crucial feature of Aristotelian friendship – recognition and appreciation of another's goodness – remains operative.

It is eminently plausible to claim, with Thoreau, that there is much to be won from an appreciation of nonhuman nature's distinctively nonhuman excellences. Thoreau writes, 'Away with the selfish phil-*anthropy* of men, – who knows what admirable virtue of fishes may be below low-water-mark, bearing up against a hard destiny, not admired by that fellow-creature who alone can appreciate it!' (Thoreau 1911: 44). Thoreau chastises human beings, the only species that can appreciate the unique virtues of fish, for consistently failing to do so. As with friends, we sometimes appreciate nature's excellences precisely because they are excellences that we cannot achieve in our own lives.

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### 4. GOODWILL

The friendship analogy, for all of its virtues, remains imperfect. Friendship requires *mutual* concern for the good of the other. But generally speaking, nonhuman organisms cannot reciprocate our concern for their welfare. Although he notes that certain psychologically complex organisms may be exceptions, Sandler writes, 'The land is not concerned with our or anything else's welfare, since it lacks the necessary psychological capacities ... So we may be able to speak literally of friendship with certain individuals within ecosystems, but we can speak only metaphorically of the virtue of friendship with the land' (Sandler 2007: 12). Regardless of how highly one regards non-rational beings, one cannot befriend them.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, and this is crucial, one can exhibit what Aristotle calls 'goodwill' toward them.<sup>12</sup> For Aristotle, goodwill is a cognate of friendship: 'To a friend, they say, one must wish good things for his sake. But those who wish good things in this way, when the same is not found on the part of the other, are said to have goodwill – for friendship, they say, is reciprocated goodwill' (Aristotle 1998: 3, 1155b31-33). When humans desire good things for other organisms for their own sake without reciprocation, they extend goodwill towards nature. This may indeed *be* goodwill, not simply a sentiment analogous to goodwill.<sup>13</sup>

Goodwill is not strictly a moral concept. Aristotle says that it can even arise in the case of cheering on an athlete (Aristotle 1998: 31, 1166b30-1167a3).<sup>14</sup> Goodwill arises simply in recognition, and consequent appreciation, of goodness in some form. Aristotle writes, 'In general, goodwill arises on account of virtue and some sort of goodness – whenever someone seems noble to you, or courageous, or something of that sort' (Aristotle 1998: 31, 1167a19-22). We can accurately describe Leopold's admiration of the pine trees or Thoreau's affection for shad as expressing the goodwill attendant on appreciating *natural* goodness.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, we may be speaking literally when we assert that the natural goodness of another living organism inspires goodwill.<sup>16</sup>

Hursthouse has recently written that *wonder* may be an environmental virtue (Hursthouse 2007: 161–162). Wonder seems closely related to goodwill. Goodwill toward other human beings often arises in virtue of our admiration for – and sometimes amazement at – their lives and actions. A proper reaction to nature involves, as Hursthouse puts it, 'the joyous thought that we are part of something glorious', just as interpersonal goodwill can be an expression of the sentiment that we are part of something glorious as human beings (Hursthouse 2007: 161).

## 5. GOODWILL IN PRACTICE

We can locate goodwill among what Frasz (2005) has called *virtues of benevolence*, and in so doing, begin to explore its practical implications.<sup>17</sup> Virtues of benevolence are distinguished by their direct concern for the well-being of others. Standard examples include compassion, friendliness and generosity (Frasz 2005: 123).

Goodwill, as we've seen, is similarly characterised by a concern for the flourishing of others for their own sake. To take up Aristotle's example of the athlete, spectators of goodwill desire that the athlete succeed, not from an interest in their own well-being, but from a direct concern for the athlete. Yet it is still expected that such spectators will enjoy the success of the athlete – that they will, in a meaningful way, *share* in the success of the athlete. The athlete's success may be a constituent of their well-being without being pursued as a means to their well-being.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, individuals of goodwill toward nature properly enjoy the flourishing of nature without conceiving its value in strictly instrumental terms. Benevolent practices, Frasz writes, 'allow us to feel joy and happiness when all the members of a biotic community flourish and to feel distress when confronted with the suffering of living beings or with distressed, disturbed ecosystems' (Frasz 2005: 133). Goodwill, both toward humanity and nature, is part of living a good human life. Yet how, specifically, does goodwill influence our habits and actions?

Reflection on how goodwill and the associated virtues of benevolence apply in interpersonal contexts can illuminate their application in environmental contexts. It should be noted, however, that goodwill, like other virtue-oriented concepts, does not provide guidance for action in any concrete detail. As Frasz puts it, 'The actual content of benevolent acts will vary from place to place and reflect the context of the action. What is required to promote the well-being of one group of things may be different from what is needed to promote the health of a particular ecosystem' (Frasz 2005: 128). We can state the point in Aristotelian terms: knowing how to properly express goodwill requires practical wisdom. Such wisdom is acquired through moral experience, which equips us to respond appropriately to the particulars of a given context.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, examining goodwill among humans is a fruitful place to begin drawing some general lessons about what goodwill requires in environmental contexts. We can start by noting that goodwill involves working to learn what the good of others is, and how to advance it.<sup>20</sup> A genuine concern for others' well-being prompts one to figure out what their well-being

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consists in. If we express goodwill toward someone by sending them a gift, for instance, we ought to know something about their interests and life plans. Offering a steak dinner as a gift to a vegetarian shows a thoughtlessness that would lead us to doubt whether the gift-giver genuinely cares about the recipient of the gift.

A similar point applies with respect to a proper relationship with nature. A person of goodwill toward nature will endeavour to learn what living organisms' and ecosystems' flourishing consists in as well as how her actions affect it. An individual interested in advancing the flourishing of nature may, for example, decide to serve that end in part by changing her consumption habits. Someone who is sincerely committed will display more than a merely superficial interest in, say, buying environmentally friendly products. She will take the time to educate herself, to research and avoid those products which have been 'greenwashed' – that is, those products advertised as environmentally friendly while being nothing of the sort. This is simply one example; the relevant sort of education can take many forms.

Becoming informed – and acting accordingly – will often require sustained effort. But goodwill begets generosity. In interpersonal contexts, when we truly want the best for someone, we are willing to give of ourselves to help. Upon learning of a child stricken with a disease and faced with mounting hospital bills, a person of goodwill may be motivated to donate money to help restore the child to health. Similarly, upon learning of a languishing natural environment, a person of goodwill toward nature may be motivated to fund a project to help restore it to health.

We can also specify the idea of goodwill toward nature by examining what sorts of practices it *prohibits*. For one, it seems clear that exhibiting goodwill toward someone is incompatible with undertaking actions that will thwart his or her flourishing. Those interested in the excellence of an athlete won't attempt to sabotage her performance; those interested in the health of natural environments won't imperil their flourishing.

We can thus say that people of goodwill toward nature won't be wasteful or destructive. This suggests that they will display temperance, a command of their desires and appetites, in their interactions with nature. Temperance, as an Aristotelian virtue, is thought to be beneficial not only to others, but also to the person of temperance. An excessive preoccupation with one's appetites can distract one from more meaningful, and even more enjoyable, pursuits in life, such as those made possible by an appreciation of nature. Richard White notes the connection between temperance and 'environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviors' and 'the appreciation of simple pleasures that testify to our appreciation of the world around us' (2008: 70).

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These are preliminary suggestions and are not meant to supply an exhaustive account of goodwill and its connection to other environmental virtues and practices. Much remains to be explored. Yet in suggesting a promising way of understanding a proper relationship with nature and its contribution to a life well lived, goodwill provides a model of environmental virtue that will make further philosophical attention worthwhile.

6. CONCLUSION

A number of prevailing accounts of environmental virtue draw an analogy between friendship and an ethical relationship with nature. Yet they do not account for the possibility that nonhuman organisms can play the role Aristotle assigns to human friends. Recent work in neo-Aristotelian ethical theory suggests a reconstruction of the analogy that underscores the resemblance between friendship and an ethical relationship with nature. Friendship is revealed to be a rich and robust model of environmental virtue. I have argued further that Aristotle's conception of goodwill retains friendship's important analogies to an ethical relationship with nature and dispenses with those features that are crucially disanalogous. To cultivate a proper appreciation of other living things might literally be to extend goodwill toward nature.

NOTES

For helpful comments, I am grateful to Jason Brennan, Philip Cafaro, David Schmidtz, Elizabeth Willott and two anonymous referees for this journal.

<sup>1</sup> O'Neill notes that this is one conception of intrinsic value among others. See O'Neill (1992) and chapter 2 of O'Neill (1993).

<sup>2</sup> The example of the kudzu vine is from Thomson (1996: 142–143).

<sup>3</sup> 'Intelligent Martians', writes Foot, 'who themselves did not think in terms of goodness and badness might realize that the plants and animals on earth could be described in propositions with a special logical form ... They would rightly see the existence of this different order of things in the world as an extremely interesting ontological fact, allowing them to invent and employ a range of concepts that they did not have before' (2003: 36).

<sup>4</sup> We can say that plants 'characteristically' convert carbon dioxide into oxygen because that particular operation was selected for. Plants do not perform this function 'accidentally', as a plant may accidentally shed its leaves on a road.

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<sup>5</sup> Foot says there is ‘no change in the meaning of “good” between the word as it appears in “good roots” and as it appears in “good dispositions of the human will”’ (2003: 39).

<sup>6</sup> For insightful criticism of Hursthouse’s account of human goodness, see chapter one of Sandler (2007). Sandler argues that the prevailing neo-Aristotelian theories are too parsimonious in specifying the content of human goodness. Hursthouse’s list of ends must be expanded to include values like autonomy, the accumulation of knowledge, and meaning. This criticism seems plausible, however I believe that it can be accommodated within the basic framework of neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism. Neo-Aristotelians need not claim that Hursthouse’s ends are the only ingredients of human well-being. Sandler’s criteria can supplement existing accounts. For discussion, see also McShane et al. (2008).

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the authenticity of the *Magna Moralia* is a matter of dispute. Yet Aristotle suggests the notion of a friend as a second self elsewhere in his writings. See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IX.

<sup>8</sup> Frasz hints at a similar idea, writing, ‘When the land is healthy, when it is functioning well, it has equalities that resemble a person when that person functions well’ (2001: 10). However he does not develop the idea further.

<sup>9</sup> I would deny that non-rational beings can exemplify *moral* virtue, however, where that is understood as acting for the sake of certain reasons.

<sup>10</sup> Thanks to Philip Cafaro for bringing this passage to my attention.

<sup>11</sup> Human friendship and a ‘friendly’ relationship with nature are disanalogous in another respect: human beings can serve as models for human friends, but not for nonrational organisms. Thanks to David Schmitz for this thought.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the proper translation of the Greek term ‘*eunoia*’ – here translated as ‘goodwill’ – and its relationship to friendship, see Hadreas (1995).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Frasz (2001: 10) for a discussion of environmental goodwill, albeit in a form much different from the account developed here.

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle writes, ‘Goodwill is like a characteristic of friendship; however it is not friendship, since goodwill arises even for people we do not know, and without their noticing it, but friendship does not ... Yet neither is it friendly affection, since it implies no striving, nor any desire, yet these things are involved in friendly affection; and although friendly affection requires familiarity, goodwill even arises suddenly, as happens in connection with contestants, since people acquire goodwill for them, and cheer them on, but would not *do* anything to help them, since (as we said) people acquire goodwill suddenly and love superficially’. Of course, we need not follow Aristotle’s account of goodwill to the letter. Nothing in our common sense understanding of goodwill precludes one from taking action on behalf of those toward whom one displays goodwill. For instance, we might think that goodwill can prompt an individual to offer an anonymous charitable donation to those whom he wishes well in spite of the fact that it will not be reciprocated.

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<sup>15</sup> The intensity of Leopold's and Thoreau's relationship to nature involves suggests that we might appropriately characterise it in terms of something more intimate than goodwill, such as friendship or perhaps even love. This seems plausible; nevertheless, relationships of friendship and love involve goodwill even though they go beyond it. Goodwill will not always be the most relevant moral consideration animating a relationship with nature. However goodwill might be a more attainable goal for individuals to initially pursue both in interpersonal and environmental contexts. We might think of it this way. Leopold and Thoreau are extraordinary in their appreciation and devotion to nature, just as some humanitarians are extraordinary in their devotion to humanity. Most moral agents, in contrast, don't have such devoted relationships beyond their local circle. Yet they can and should display goodwill beyond this circle, even if they do not realise a humanitarian ideal. Ordinary moral agents may thus aspire to goodwill toward humanity and nature as an intermediate goal. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for prompting this clarification and for helpful suggestions on this point.

<sup>16</sup> It is unclear whether Aristotle would agree that goodwill can arise towards non-rational beings. He writes that 'goodwill is "inactive friendship"' (1998: 31, 1167a12-13). At times, he seems to view goodwill as a constituent of complete friendship or the beginning of complete friendship. Objects possessing secondary goodness, however, clearly cannot be the objects of goodwill. It is not *possible* to wish hammers well for their own sake – they have no ends we can wish them success in achieving Aristotle makes a similar point, noting, "Friendship" is not applied to friendly affection for inanimate objects, since there is no return of friendly affection, and no wishing for their good. For presumably it would be ridiculous to wish good things *for the wine*; rather, if anything, he wishes it to be preserved, so that he may have it himself' (1998: 3, 1155b29-31).

<sup>17</sup> Frasz (2005: 132) also speaks of goodwill between humans and nonhuman creatures.

<sup>18</sup> For a similar point about friendship, see O'Neill (2008: 134).

<sup>19</sup> See also Hursthouse (2007: 170).

<sup>20</sup> Frasz (2005: 127) writes, 'The task facing an environmentally virtuous person is how to determine what is in the best interest of nonhuman others'.

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