Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as if environment really mattered.

Abstract

This article discusses the possibility of integrating deep ecology (DE) and animal rights (AR) perspectives within environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD). The focus of this article is on three questions: Why are DE and AR not currently central to EE/ESD debates? What is the probability that DE and AR will be central within EE/ESD? What can be gained if they were? Different ethical frameworks in relation to non-humans are examined. Both non-consequentialist and utilitarian approaches suggest that DE and AR could be linked to the conception of underlying duty as well as consideration of utilitarian value. From cultural relativism and subjectivism perspectives, DE and AR could be central to EE, but this possibility is contingent on socio-political and cultural context within which educational practices are embedded.

Keywords: animal rights; deep ecology; education for sustainable development (ESD); environmental education (EE); environmental ethics

1. Introduction

It is estimated that the current species extinction rate is between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than it would naturally be. The main drivers of this loss are converting natural areas to farming and urban development, introducing invasive alien species, polluting or over-exploiting resources including water and soils and harvesting wild plants and animals at unsustainable levels (IUCN 2014).

There are many testimonials to increased global environmental concerns, particularly related to issues related to human security, welfare, and health, such as climate change or pollution. There is also increased ethical concern about species of or individual animals or plants, there is no consistent discussion about the scale of instrumental use of other species, either through direct or indirect actions. This scale has increased exponentially with human population growth and an increase in consumption and a simultaneously growing disregard for non-human species (Crist 2012). While human rights are widely accepted, concern with the rights of species not instrumental to human ends is marginalized.
While the fate of a single slaughtered giraffe in the zoo may capture public attention through the media (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marius_%28giraffe%29), there is no consistent discussion about billions of farm animals used daily for consumption, or medical experiments. This aspect of consumption is rarely discussed in ESD (Kopnina 2013c; Kopnina and Meijers 2014). While some environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO's) and concerned individuals express concern about the negative effect of economic development on biodiversity, habitat loss with associated rapid loss of biodiversity continues unabated. The framing of ‘nature’ as a ‘natural resource’ has become prominent in international political rhetoric and reflected in environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD).

1.1. Material and methods

This article is based on desk research concentrating on deep ecology (DE) and animal rights (AR) perspectives. This article will focus on three questions: Why are DE and AR not currently central to EE/ESD debates? What is the probability that DE and AR will be central within EE/ESD? What can be gained if they were? In order to answer these questions, we will turn to ethics since the inclusion of varying moral outlooks was recommended by several EE/ESD scholars (e.g. Jickling 2005a; Jickling and Wals 2008; Öhman and Östman 2008; Payne 2010a; 2010b; Wals 2010; Kronlid and Öhman 2013, etc.).

2. Theory/calculation

2.1. Deep ecology, animal rights, and pluralism

Within environmental ethics literature, there is a division between adherents of anthropocentric and ecocentric paradigms (e.g. Naess 1973; Goodpaster 1978; Rolston 1985; Taylor 1986; Callicott 1989; Merchant 1992; Crist 2012) and proponents of continuity between the two views (e.g. Latour 2004; Ingold 2006). An extended discussion about nature or animal rights involves debates about the rights should be granted to individuals within the species (Regan 1985), or the entire species (Taylor 1991), or even ecosystems (Singer 1975). It was noted that the inclusion of the whole of nature generates conflicts with the protection of individual animals which is central to the animal ethics literature (e.g. Callicott 1980 and 1988; Regan 1985; Jamieson 1997; Garner 2015).

Ecocentric or biocentric ethics authors, variously termed deep ecology, or dark green ecology adherents, argue that much of what passes for environmentalism, is anthropocentric in nature, condemning animals to be the servants of human interests, and argue for the inclusion of the entire
ecosystems into the moral realm. Both DA and AR are inspired by philosophical underpinnings of
Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Arno Naess, and Peter Singer. Some of DE and AR philosophy
is said to have inspired the ‘radical’ environmental movements (Switzer 2003; Sunstein and Nussbaum
2004; Scarce 2005; Taylor 2008). DE and AR are largely based on a solid common ground of trying
to defend the place of nature or animals and – to varying degrees – nature’s value and associated
rights - in relation to humans. While the range between DE and AR perspective is wide, many authors
have argued for a reconciliation of divergent views for the sake of mutual strengthening of the fields
that typically place the interests of non-human species at the forefront of moral agendas (e.g. Callicott
1988; Kahn 2010; Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina 2011). The cohesiveness of these two perspectives
lies in the shared ‘love of nature’ or its individual elements (Milton 2002). This position can be
characterized by and the assumption that individual nonhuman entities or even ecosystems have
intrinsic value beyond their instrumental value (e.g. Rolston 1985; Taylor 1986; Callicott 1989;
Drengson 1991; Plumwood 1999; Postma 2002). In education, this position is often associated with
education for deep ecology, concern with ecological justice (Bonnett 2007; Payne 2010a) and the
‘naturalist current’ in EE (Sauvé 2005).

By contrast, the position variously termed pluralism, weak anthropocentrism or pragmatic
environmentalism states that there are a variety of ethical positions in regard to the environment some
of them mutually conflicting. As Weston (1992:323) has argued, ‘rather than trying to unify or fine-
tune our theories, we require more pluralistic and exploratory methods’. For environmental
pragmatists, the sustained practice of social reconstruction—experimental, improvisatory, and
pluralistic—is the most central ethical practice of all. In that view, DE and AR perspectives are seen
Unlike deep ecologists, environmental pragmatists argue that it is impossible for humans to relate to nature other than through our anthropocentric perception and that environmental activists should take a plurality of ethical positions into account. Among the plurality of ethical perspectives presently advocated within EE and ESD (e.g. Læssøe and Öhman 2010; Kronlid and Öhman 2013), perspectives defending the intrinsic value of nature (or animals) are perceived at best ‘as good as others’. At worst DE and AR are completely overshadowed by the dominant anthropocentric perspectives that render nature and animals nothing more than natural resources and ecosystem services in the human quest for sustainable development. Ethical issues in EE/ESD include decisions on how competing versions of human needs are to be judged, what is to be the basis for a moral responsibility towards future generations, and what the rights and responsibilities of humankind are towards the rest of nature (Bonnett 2013).

Sustainable development rhetoric is very much based on the taken for granted assumption that saving every human life is a moral imperative (e.g. the medical care should be available to all); that material wealth should be divided fairly (e.g. poverty needs to be eradicated); that women and men have equal rights, that members of different races and ethnic groups have equal rights, that democracy is paramount to a fair political process, etc. Most of the readers of this journal will be probably in broad agreement about the ‘goodness’ of these moral positions.

Yet, these ‘indisputably good things’ were not necessarily taken for granted a hundred years ago. Even in the most ‘enlightened’, ‘advanced’, or ‘civilized’ societies (let alone the ones that used to be known at the time as ‘primitive cultures’, or ‘savage tribes’, or presently ‘developing’ countries), the universality of these ‘goods’ is questionable.

Not so long ago, the idea that all human lives everywhere are worth saving would have been unthinkable. Have we morally evolved to the point (or to use a more popular term, have we developed) or reached a certain progressive moral plateau, an apogee of what the ‘true morality’ should be? If so, is it possible to reach an even higher moral level and recognize the equality and rights of non-human species?

Below we will offer an array of simplified ethical positions from which we can view today’s and reflect upon the possibility of integrating DE and AR perspectives into EE/ESD. Due to the limited scope of this article, the summaries of ethical traditions below are broad sketches, based on central features of the arguments, rather than nuanced representations.

2.2. Cultural relativism
Within this position, the ‘good things’ are far from universal. According to the moral relativism standpoint, propagated by anthropologists since the end of nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century (e.g. V. Turner, B. Malinowski, and M. Mead), what is right or wrong can vary cross-culturally as well as temporarily. Anthropological as well as historical evidence points out, for example, that there are practically no exceptions to human societies where all human life was (equally) valued. Nor was there a single society where members of different ethnic groups, tribes, or geographic areas were seen as equally worthy than others. By implication, the acceptance of ‘moral goods’ such as ‘every human life is sacred’ is time and culture-specific.

Pluralism embraces multiple ethical positions without attempting to impose any fixed ‘truths’. By the same token, we may wonder whether teaching support for what is currently seen as a ‘radical’ - or in the United States ‘terrorist’- practice of Animal Liberation Front (ALF) activists, or the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) movement can be tolerated in educational institutions which are respectful of cultural relativism. From cultural relativism perspective, we can deduce that DA and AR perspectives are better or worse than others. However, considering the fact that all moral conventions are culturally variable, at one point in history the actions of ALF or ELF activists could be labeled as heroic (Curry 2011).

Recognizing the rights of other species however will never be the apogee of human moral development, just as the abolition of slavery or the celebration of every human life could be reversed sometime in the future. Our present moral underpinnings of EE/ESD are not set in stone and are likely to change in the course of history.

2.3. Moral subjectivism

Subjectivism experienced through emotions, translated into educational practice refers to ‘learning by experience’. In order to enhance appreciation of nature and animals children should be encouraged to express and communicate their experiences, ideas and emotions in and about the environment (e.g. Louv 2005; Tsevreni 2011; Bonnett 2013).

Subjectivism celebrates the diversity of intellectual and ideological positions. The position of moral subjectivism can be discerned in Wals’ (2010) call for transformative social learning including space for alternative paths of development, space for new ways of thinking, valuing and doing, for participation minimally distorted by power relations, for pluralism, diversity and minority
perspectives, but also for respectful disagreement and differences space for counter-hegemonic
thinking, for self-determination, and, finally, space for contextual differences.

Subjectivism dictates caution in using environmental advocacy in education. In *Education and
Advocacy: A Troubling Relationship*, Jickling (2005a) asks: ‘How does a person work on behalf of
what he or she cares about – but in an educational way? Can you? If you remove care from the
equation can you really have an educational experience? Or, if you want people to care – about each
other, the environment, ideas, and noble action – can education play a legitimate role?’ (Jickling
2005a:91).

In Jickling’s concern for advocating his support for the wolves, Jickling reflected that he faced the
class of pupils, some of whom had parents who supported a wolf kill program. Another source of
doubt was the question: ‘How can we ensure that educational programs provide a sufficient breadth of
alternatives for learners to ponder, and use to construct meaning in the face of important
decisions?’ (p. 93).

Jickling reflects that educationist’s responsibility was served by open advocacy of those who spoke on
behalf of wolves: ‘If education enables social critique, reveals hidden assumptions for public
discussion, and disrupts the status quo, then citizens who spoke on behalf of wolves certainly did that.
There was a vigorous public debate. And many community members gained confidence in their non-
conformist positions… This too has educational merit’ (P. 109).

It is also clear that Jickling sees advocacy as serving the goal of education, not another way around:

In the end, our job is to tell good stories and to live good stories. In my own story, the
politically charged atmosphere of the Yukon wolf kill demanded that more attention be placed
on educational integrity. It was important that my public agenda did not pre-empt educational
opportunities, that my students had the intellectual space to think about their own values and
to disagree, if they wished, with the positions that I have publicly declared (p. 110).

And what about the wolves? In subjectivism, as in the case of cultural relativism, DE and AR
perspectives are likely to remain a tool for advancing open and democratic learning, without moral
claim upon why these positions should be privileged over others.
However, in his influential article *Why I Don't Want my Children to be Educated for Sustainable Development: Sustainable Belief*, Jickling (1992) does mention the fact that in the case of ESD, he wants his children to recognize some positions may have greater or lesser merit:

> I want them [my children] to realize that there is a debate going on between a variety of stances, between adherents of an ecocentric worldview and those who adhere to an anthropocentric worldview. I want my children to be able to participate intelligently in that debate. To do so they will need to be taught that these various positions also constitute logical arguments of greater or less merit, and they will need to be taught to use philosophical techniques to aid their understanding and evaluation of them. They will need to be well educated to do this.

I fully agree with this position on education. In this article, however, I want to emphasize that the criteria for attributing merit to one of the other position should take into consideration not only various ethical positions but also the realization of power hegemonies that shape these dominant ethic positions.

### 2.4. Domination of power

Critical scholars brought into doubt the idea that culturally specific or subjective ethics are independent of structural constraints and dominant ideologies. Both cultural relativism and subjectivism say little about the power of one group over another or the ‘tyranny of the majority’ in which one opinion is privileged over another just because one group is more numerous or structurally powerful than another. Arendt (1968; 1998), much of whose work was concerned with the nature of power, warned that technocratic discourses can work to alienate individuals from their own everyday experiences, creating perfect conditions for authoritarian solutions. These solutions are disguised by mainstream discourse that presents certain views and solutions as moral imperatives. Arendt inspired eco-pedagogy which prompts people to be responsible for and accountable to all of the ‘other others’, both human and non-human entities (Kahn 2010).

To give a simplified example, if most people on this planet happen to be anthropocentrically oriented (which is plausible, as any species is conceivably self-oriented), the democratically chosen political assemblies are not likely to make DE or AR their priority. It might be also the case that while the majority of people might be ‘by nature’ (if one believes in such a thing as human nature) inclined to be mildly ecocentric, the dominant political and corporate elites, with their not so well-hidden agenda of commodifying nature, might be able to establish the human supremacy over ‘natural resources’ as the most normative and morally neutral concept.
Such underlying ideology translates ‘nature’ into ‘natural resources’ with moral concern about the future generations of exclusively humans through the dominant sustainable development rhetoric (WCED 1987). Having a large human population is celebrated by the economists as large population promises provisions for pensioners in the greying society, as well as new markets in developing countries, and neoliberal dream of endless economic growth (The Economist 2012). The powerful elites may consciously manipulate the ethical discussion into the politics of exclusion in which only human lives and welfare are recognized as the moral right.

Strang (2013) notes that we manifest the beliefs and values that we promote. If we compose a worldview in which human needs and interests are prioritized, we will act accordingly, invariably giving insufficient weight to the needs of the non-human. In this context the answer to the question ‘Why are DE and AR perspectives not central to EE/ESD debates?’ becomes because the power holders’ anthropocentric ideology of neoliberalism and economic growth has been internalized by the majority of EE/ESD researchers and practitioners (Crossley and Watson 2003).

2.5. Non-consequentialism

Two types of non-consequentialist approaches to morality can be distinguished: that propagated by in some religious traditions, and the “respect for persons” Kantian philosophy. The categorical imperative concept refers to the way in which one determines what one’s duties are, dictating what is right and wrong since it is an imperative, a duty, a command. Following Kant, we only have a duty to treat rational moral agents as ends, not animals who lack the ability to judge and thus are not part of the moral community. Kant reflected that we should strive to treat animals well, but not because we owe them any direct moral duty but because in refraining from animal cruelty, we cultivate good behavior towards ourselves. We can find similar undertones in religions. Bron Taylor (2010) reflected that both past and ‘new’ religions (such as nature spirituality) may offer both hope and reason to despair as to the future of DE and AR to be part of our categorical values. The study of the grassroots resistance movements, such as Earth First! show similarities with both Judeo-Christian and non-Western religions (Taylor 1991). In Jickling’s reflection on religion and education, he draws on his First Nations colleague Louise Profeit-Leblanc who said that religious ethics is about doing that which ‘enables’ us. She asks, ‘What makes us noble? . . . What do I do every day to prepare myself to become the creature which the Creator wants me to be?’ (in Jickling 2005b:22).
The most important point in regard to non-consequentialism and DE and AR can be summarized as a moral imperative to protect nature and animals—simply because it is a duty. An imperative to protect and preserve non-humans can thus stem from human reason, or love, or sense of duty and responsibility. In this way, Rolston (2015) formulated this imperative very clearly: The ultimate unit of moral concern is the ultimate survival unit: this wonderland biosphere.

Presently, however, categorical imperatives are presently ‘out of fashion’ in EE/ESD research. Instead of talking about absolute morals and duties, educational researchers have warned about the normative dangers of EE/ESD, the risk of indoctrination, totalitarianism, and authoritative tendencies and above all called for enhancement of pluralism, democratic or open education (e.g. Jickling 2005 and 2009; Wals 2010; Öhman and Östman 2008). The fear of indoctrination of environmentalist advocacy in EE is expressed by Wals and Jickling (2002:225):

If we juxtapose more instrumental views of “education for sustainability” with more emancipatory views of “education for sustainability” we can imagine, on the one hand, an “eco-totalitarian” regime that through law and order, rewards and punishment, and conditioning of behavior can create a society that is quite sustainable according to some more ecological criteria. Of course, we can wonder whether the people living within such an “eco-totalitarian” regime are happy or whether their regime is just, but they do live “sustainably” and so will their children. We might also wonder if this is the only, or best, the conceptualization of sustainability.

Although as humans we cannot know what makes non-human animals ‘happy’, we may be too easily brushing aside the very consideration of whether abandoning sustainability efforts is fair to those who cannot speak for themselves. In rendering of non-human world as ‘natural resources’ (Crist 2012) entailing habitat destruction, extinction of species, and intensive animal farming (CAFOs) that present the current model of economic development, arguing for abandoning efforts of sustainability through education can simply mean resigning to the existing power hegemonies (Kopnina 2012; 2013a). As Cherniak has argued, ‘If we want to achieve a sustainable future, we cannot rely on a deliberative democratic education. There is no guarantee that within the classroom, green values will triumph’ (2012:30).

Ironically, many EE/ESD scholars seem to take for granted moral imperatives such as ‘respect for all races’ or ‘gender equality’. How would proponents of pluralism in education react to the proposition that the members of some ethnic minorities are instrumentally ‘useless’, or that the poor should be left to their own devices since the rich are more ‘fit’ to survive in this world, or that it is ‘natural’ for
women to be subservient to men, or that human population has to be controlled so that other species
can be, to use Jickling and Wals’ expression, be more ‘happy’?

Such proclamations will deserve the label of ‘social Darwinism’ at best, and educators bringing doubt
to human supremacy would be probably fired from their teaching positions. Racism, fascism, slavery,
eugenics and other challenges to conventional morality are simply unacceptable in polite academic
society. Jickling (1992) reflects ‘education is concerned with enabling people to think for themselves.
Education for sustainable development, education for deep ecology (Drengson 1991), or education
"for" anything else is inconsistent with that criterion’. Yet, it is doubtful whether Jickling would argue
that his children need to be educated for positions that promote racism, sexism or other views seen as
‘radical’ or even ‘criminal’ in today’s plural society. I think Jickling, like most other parents or EE
scholars, would probably prefer to have his children learn respect for other human beings, for their
lives, and their diversity. Why not teach them respect for the lives and diversity of non-humans?

It seems that inherent in sustainable development discourse is the anthropocentric bias (Kopnina 2014;
Kopnina and Meijers 2014). Crist (2012:150) re-examines sustainable developments’ focus on the
quandary: What is the maximal number of people that the Earth can provide resources for without
severely degrading those resources for future human generations?

The question we should be asking instead is: How many people, and at what level of
consumption, can live on the Earth without turning the Earth into a human colony founded on
the genocide of its nonhuman indigenes? The latter is rarely posed because the genocide of
nonhumans is something about which the mainstream culture, including the political left,
observes silence. Academics largely follow suit, perhaps because they view raising an issue
about which silence is observed as a non sequitur.

In the current moral non-consequentialism approach discrimination against certain human groups is
seen as morally wrong. By contrast, arbitration in the case of non-humans is marginalized to the
minority perspective, perceived as both radical and undemocratic.

2.6. Consequentialism: utilitarianism

Utilitarianism holds that the context or consequence of one’s conduct is the ultimate basis for any
judgment about the rightness of that conduct. Unlike non-consequentialism, this approach advocates
that it is not the moral principles that are set in stone but the outcomes of ethical decisions that matter.
The famous utilitarian maxim that actions are right in as far as they bring the greatest happiness to the
greatest number of people, articulated by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, found a seat of
morality based on feeling. Bentham (1965) has argued that we should not limit our ethical
consideration to the interests of human beings alone, arguing that animals can experience pleasure and
pain, and strive to avoid it, just as humans do, thus demanding that ‘non-human animals’ should be a
serious object of moral concern. Since pain and pleasure ‘govern us in all we do’ (p.33) both humans
and animals are driven by these twin forces of desire and avoidance and form the basis of ethical
judgment on what is right or wrong. This discussion has led to twentieth-century environmental ethics
debates as what should be considered the right actions in order to ensure that ‘happiness’ is justly
distributed not only amongst a greater number of people, but also individual members of species or
entire species.

The well-known example of utilitarian thinking is that propagated by many ENGOs and conventional
environmentalist strategists that attempt to reconcile human-environment dualism. Proponents of
continuity in human-nature relationships argue that humans and nature are ultimately interlinked,
pointing out the Earth’s intertwined destiny with the associated need to protect all of its creatures
(Rolston 2015). Some natural scientists and economists (e.g. de Groot 2002) argue for high
interdependency of all species and the importance of their preservation for human welfare. These
scholars argued that ‘all’ biodiversity is needed in order to address human needs (e.g. Polasky et al
2012).

Yet, this perspective might not be enough to protect the ‘useless’ species. Empirically, it is clear that
human-created ecosystems and monocultures can materially support the growing human population.
Many species have already gone extinct without any indication of the collapse of human food
production. Kareiva et al. (2011) and Marris (2011) have argued that we must give up our romantic
notions of pristine wilderness and replace them with the concept of a global, garden planet managed
by the rightful rulers of the Anthropocene, humans.

A similar case can be made for the limitations of utilitarian concerns about farm animals. In Western
Europe, concerns about meat safety and expressed preference by a (small) group of ‘responsible’
consumers for biological meat often have more to do with consumer health awareness that
considerations of animal welfare. While there is a small number of consumers concerned about animal
welfare, neoliberal economies at large and the majority of price-conscious consumers do not address
the scale of CAFO’s – industrial production system in which animals’ welfare is secondary to the
efficiency and affordability of meat production. In this way, ESD threatens to abandon concerns about
nature in favor of social and economic agendas (Kopnina 2013b and 2013d).
Within utilitarianism, DE and AR could be central to EE/ESD only if the greater utility—defined in terms of ‘happiness’ for the majority of planetary citizens, then in purely ‘useful’ terms, is recognized. Thus, utilitarianism alone cannot help establish the importance of protecting all species or caring about farm animals beyond basic concerns about healthy meat.

What can be gained if DE and AR were integrated is the obvious freedom from suffering for the non-humans? For humans, detachment, alienation, and loss of their ‘natural roots’ can be healed by reintegrating humans within nature in a mutually beneficial relationship.

3. Discussion.

The logic and reason appear not to provide cogent grounds for thinking that humans are ‘better’ than or superior to other animals and living things. Suppose humans are not provably better or more entitled to the Earth’s resources, then how should they relate to members of the other species?

In examining environmental ethics in connection with EE/ESD, we note that there are many arguments as to why DE and AR perspectives should become central to EE/ESD. Within cultural relativism and subjectivism, any ethical position might be acceptable, as long as they are culturally, socially, or individually accepted. From cultural relativism and subjectivism perspectives, DE and AR could be central to EE/ESD, but this possibility is fully contingent on socio-political and cultural context. This, obviously, does not guarantee that DE and AR will be given priority or will not be substituted by yet another dominant perspective in the future.

The non-consequentialism approach suggests that there might be a sense of duty, inherent right or wrong. In this perspective, recognition of entitlement to a certain right can also imply a kind of ‘progress’ that more relativistic positions do not have. It might be argued that while at present we have not (yet) recognized that DE and AR are indeed part of our core moral duty and obligation, sometime they will be as we ‘moving forward’ to the moral summit in which all true values are progressively achieved.

Returning to the ‘power’ argument, we may wonder how the dominant ideologies of neoliberal industrial capitalism have succeeded in propagating the illusion that humans are superior, and that moral right lies exclusively with our species. In this hegemony, anthropocentrism appears ‘logical’ from the contextual perspective of capitalism, as the claim is taken to be universal—due to the global spread of this ideology.
4. Conclusion.

Potentially, both non-consequentialist and utilitarian frameworks can be well suited for adapting DE and AR as central perspectives in EE, as both instruct us that moral consideration of non-humans can be both a question of underlying duty and responsibility (in as far as caring for non-humans can be seen as a moral imperative) as well as of utilitarian value (in as far as humans – and non-humans – can actually gain from mutually beneficial relationship with nature). Cultural relativism and subjectivism might be too weak to overcome the domination of neoliberal industrialist ideology, both in broader society and in education. We need a more robust theoretical and ethical framework that would recognize the artificiality of dualism, reintegrate the human and non-human, and thus enable reconciliation between the critical perspectives on the issues of social and ecological justice (Strang 2013). Perhaps it is neither innate morals, nor reason, but plain common decency that can instruct us – educational theorists and practitioners – to consider non-humans as a worthy subject of moral concern.

The main reason why DE and AR could – and indeed should be central to EE/ESD is that it will allow us, students and educators, to share this planet to the benefit of the majority of the earth’s citizens. By privileging DE and AR as central perspectives we could go beyond the one-species-only ‘pluralism’ and teach our students about the value of the true planetary democracy.

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