

Chapter 1

Framing Food Justice

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The discussion of food justice norms tends to be focused on three main concerns.¹ One is distributive issues, for example, whether all people have access to safe and healthy food, or whether everyone working within the food system is paid fairly and able to work in a safe environment. A second concern is issues of representation and political voice. Here the focus is whether all people are capable of participating in relevant decision making and the construction of public policies relating to the production, consumption and distribution of food. A third concern is the normatively significant connections between, on the one hand, the values of food and food-related practices, and on the other, collective self-determination. This third focus is often expressed in terms of food sovereignty, and has its origin in peasant social movements, notably, La Via Campesina. Discussion of these three concerns is complex, subject to ongoing disagreement and practically fraught.

Different views of what justice requires always reflect particular framings of what questions or concerns are thought to be crucial. Not surprisingly, the question of which framing (or framings) is best is controversial. With this in mind, I assume it is critically important to consider sustainability as a relevant framing for any contemporary theorizing about justice. Articulating an account of food justice, specifically, in isolation from broader questions about sustainability would leave many important normative issues unaddressed. The primary aim of this chapter is to explore how our thinking about food justice norms might be guided, constrained and in general enriched if we consider these norms in relation to sustainability.

A difficulty for this proposed focus is that many philosophers (among others) have viewed the concept of sustainability with suspicion. Reasons for this range from concern about sustainability being hopelessly vague and

hence useless for policy, to concern that interest in sustainability is just the latest cover for business as usual and thus a betrayal of the environmental cause. While I believe such concerns are unconvincing, there is no question that sustainability is a contested concept—one that needs careful specification and defense if it is to do any work helping to frame discussions of food justice.

I assume that a significant reason to care about sustainability is the worry that we are shortchanging future generations through our collective conduct, giving them less than is their due.² This is partly a matter of justice, but it is also a broader question of what we ought to be doing to preserve conditions that will make life worth living in the future.³ With this in mind, a fundamental aim of discussions of sustainability should be to clarify the X that we ought to be preserving, insofar as we can, for future generations both as a matter of justice and as a condition for living worthwhile lives.⁴ The challenge is to clarify the relevant X and the normative account that supports it.

In my reading of the literature, there are basically three types of sustainability views. One, which I'll call "the minimalist view," aims to specify our obligations to present and future generations (of human beings) in terms of maintaining the capacity to be well off. A second, which I'll refer to as "the human flourishing account," rests on the belief that human beings need access to a variety of specific and disaggregated goods, experiences and relationships in order to achieve well-being.⁵ A third incorporates aspects of the first two, but includes in addition nonanthropocentric reasons; I'll call this "the demanding view." Depending on the view of sustainability one adopts, there can be significantly different implications for how we should think about, and try to realize in practice, food justice. I explore some of these implications with respect to each type of sustainability view sketched.

I. THE MINIMALIST VIEW

A number of economists and philosophers defend something like what I'm calling the minimalist view.⁶ Despite differences in detail, defenders of this view more or less share three basic commitments. First, the core ethical commitment of the minimalist view is that the obligation of sustainability requires the present generation to aim at enabling all people, present and future, to have the option or capacity to be well off.⁷ With respect to the X that we ought to be sustaining, defenders of the minimalist view answer that our collective aim should be to maintain a nondeclining stock of total capital assets, which is assumed to be necessary for maintaining welfare over time. This stock is understood broadly and includes a diversity of things—for example, infrastructure, knowledge, technology and savings and investment,

as well as the various resources and life-support functions provided by nature (commonly referred to as “natural capital”).⁸ Of course, there could be a nondeclining stock of the relevant goods and yet people might lack access to it. So defenders of the minimalist view should be read as assuming that all people should have access to the relevant goods as a matter of basic justice.

A second commitment of the minimalist view concerns the conception of welfare or well-being that is presupposed. Some prominent defenders of this view assume a desire or preference satisfaction account, where welfare consists in the satisfaction of an individual’s desires or preferences.⁹ Such a view faces serious difficulties. Desires and preferences are highly adaptable, largely dependent on what is, or is expected to be, available, and can be distorted in ways that give us no reason to aim at satisfying them.¹⁰ Further, the fact that desires and preferences are subject to great variation, dependent as they are on changing circumstances, presents a problem when we try to clarify the content of our obligations to future generations. After all, how can we know with any certainty what future people will desire or prefer? If we endorse a modest “ought implies can” principle, then a desire or preference satisfaction account has the result of potentially undermining, or at least leaving largely unspecifiable, our obligations to future people. This implication may be unintended, but that hardly removes the problem.

To avoid these difficulties, the minimalist view does best to incorporate a need-based conception of well-being. Though the specification of the relevant needs is theory dependent, and not without controversy, it seems reasonable to think that theorists and policy makers could clarify a set of “core” or basic needs that would focus and guide social and political decision making. A statement from James Sterba suggests the general idea here: “Basic needs, if not satisfied, lead to significant lacks and deficiencies with respect to a standard of mental and physical well-being. Thus, a person’s needs for food, shelter, medical care, protection, companionship and self-development are, at least in part, needs of this sort.”¹¹

A third aspect of the minimalist view is a commitment to a permissive view of substitutability. The economist Robert Solow gives expression to this idea when he writes:

Goods and services can be substituted for one another. If you don’t eat one species of fish, you can eat another species of fish. Resources are, to use a favorite word of economists, fungible in a certain sense. They can take the place of each other. That is extremely important because it suggests that we do not owe to the future any particular thing. There is no specific object that the goal of sustainability, the obligation of sustainability, requires us to leave untouched.¹²

Clearly, assumptions about substitutability have a direct bearing on the question of whether we ought to be preserving some particular X in order to fulfill

our sustainability-related obligations. While defenders of the minimalist view are not committed to the unlimited substitutability of (natural) goods and resources in practice, they are not opposed to this idea in principle.¹³ This commitment makes the view blind to some important normative considerations. The human flourishing account helps to illuminate these considerations, and I'll turn to this now.

II. THE HUMAN FLOURISHING ACCOUNT

As a focus for my discussion of the human flourishing account, I'll consider the recent work of John O'Neill, Alan Holland and Andrew Light.¹⁴ By articulating a normative basis for objecting to certain sorts of substitution, even if such substitutions are technically possible, the human flourishing account illuminates a significant potential shortcoming of the minimalist view.

The account developed by O'Neill et al. has two main elements. First, the authors defend a version of an objective state theory of well-being.¹⁵ The usual list of objective states or goods is endorsed (physical health, personal relations, autonomy, etc.), with one notable addition: the good of having a well-constituted relation with the nonhuman world.¹⁶ The relevant states are conceived as necessary constituents of a flourishing life, such that one is harmed if one lacks access to these states.¹⁷ Further, the authors suggest that the goods in question are disaggregated, meaning, a lot of one good cannot substitute for too little or none of another.

The second aspect of the account rests on an appeal to the importance of historical considerations for our thinking about value, human well-being and the natural (or partly natural) world. To value something in a historical way is to value it in virtue of its particular history, or because it is the product of processes of a certain sort.¹⁸ The contrast to a historical view is one that regards the value of an object as consisting solely in terms of its specific cluster of properties, where this cluster is understood in isolation from the history of the object or the processes by which it came about. O'Neill et al. focus on a subset of possible historical considerations characterized in terms of "narrative." Narrative considerations illuminate the ways in which particular environments are valuable because they embody the labors and history of individuals and communities.¹⁹ On this account, being able to perform one's identity in, or in relation to, narratively significant environments is partly constitutive of living a flourishing life. Put differently, one's life can be intimately bound up with a place in such a way that physical continuity with that place helps to "make sense" of one's life; conversely, alienation from a narratively significant place can diminish one's life.²⁰ According to O'Neill et al., an objective

state theory of well-being must be tempered by narrative considerations if we are to adequately appraise how a person's life goes.²¹

The account offered by O'Neill et al. has clear implications for debates about sustainability. The authors argue that "what we need to pass on to future generations is a bundle of goods that can maintain welfare across the different dimensions of human life."²² These goods include the objective state components noted above, as well as the various life-support functions of the natural world that figure prominently in the minimalist view (i.e., as a precondition for satisfying basic needs). There are, in addition, two main respects in which O'Neill et al. offer something that goes beyond the minimalist view. First, the authors emphasize the social and environmental context in which human flourishing occurs. This emphasis is especially clear in the focus on narrative significance. Second, O'Neill et al. claim that we are obligated to maintain "particular environments" in order to fulfill our sustainability-related obligations. Both of these aspects have clear implications for how we should think about normatively permissible substitutions, some of which have a direct bearing on issues related to food justice. I will consider each of these aspects in turn.

Defenders of the minimalist view typically say very little about the social and environmental context in which welfare needs arise and are satisfied. To discuss well-being in abstraction from the broader context of supportive relationships, social practices and specific environments presents some notable hazards. Recall Solow's remark regarding the substitution of one species of fish for another. By endorsing a permissive view of substitutability, defenders of the minimalist account deny or obscure a number of normatively significant issues. To stay with the fish example, some communities around the globe are dependent on fish as an important source of food. Fish and fishing are also intimately tied up with their way of life. Due in large part to the shift toward industrial fishing and aquaculture since the 1970s, aquatic ecosystems have become degraded to the point that in some places traditional fishing communities can no longer catch the fish they need.²³ To think, as Solow urges us to, that the main issue here is compensating people so they can find a suitable food substitute for fish is to miss a number of specific harms and injustices experienced by the people in question. Not only are the communities losing their access to an important food source, they are also, more generally, losing their ability to self-provision from nature in order to meet their needs. They may also be experiencing the destruction of their way of life. All of these losses may be very significant harms to the people involved. There may also be serious injustices, for example, if the people in question are (or have been) unfairly disadvantaged by a pattern of industrial development that they had little or no ability to influence the shape of.²⁴ There is much more to say about such cases, but the main point is that Solow's

claim “If you don’t eat one species of fish, you can eat another species of fish” is naïve and very likely to lend support to policies that would generate, and in some cases further exacerbate, significant harm and injustice.

Perhaps a defender of a Solow-type view could say, in reply, that the minimalist view can account for these harms and injustices. That is, if the replacement of one species of fish with another goes hand in hand with the demise of traditional fishing practices, and if the demise of these practices makes the people in question worse off, then the substitution has resulted in a diminution of welfare. The problem is this reply is compatible with, and does not challenge, the view that the loss in question is one for which there could be adequate compensation. But this assumption about compensation is implausible. A way of life is not merely a way of meeting one’s needs, or maintaining an abstract set of options for oneself and one’s descendants. It involves a lived relation to particular environments and objects (such as fish). The relevant environments and objects are often suffused with meaning and cultural significance. To think that the people in question are—or in principle could be—adequately compensated so long as a substitute is found for fish, fishing and the specific environments (or environmental amenities) at issue, is to miss the specific type of harm and injustice caused, with its attendant losses. However, if the relevant individuals and communities actually regarded the compensation as acceptable, then this rejoinder would be considerably weakened.²⁵ Though even in that case, we might still inquire whether people are accepting the compensation because they really have no alternative. There is, in any case, a whole set of considerations here—about the nature of harm, about injustice, about power—that the defender of a permissive view of substitutability obscures, or is apt to obscure.

These considerations pose a general problem for any endorsement of a permissive view of substitutability. Let me note three further points that emphasize the importance of the preceding discussion for our thinking about sustainability. First, harm and injustice, such as that caused by industrial aquaculture, is often a driver of environmental degradation. Second, I assume we need models or paradigms of ways of life that are sustainable. Indeed, one might think that an important aspect of our obligation to future generations is to provide them with models of how to live sustainably. When industrial aquaculture displaces traditional aquaculture (to stay with this case, though the point is a general one), this often destroys sustainable ways of life. This is bad, first and foremost, for those whose way of life is undermined.²⁶ But it is also bad in the sense that we lose a paradigm from which people might learn how to live in particular places, meeting their needs and creating culture, while not destroying biodiversity, soil fertility and so on. More is at stake here than one might initially think.

A third point merits special emphasis. There is a common feature of philosophical debates about distributive injustice, particularly at the global level. Authors employ categories such as “the global rich” and “the global poor,” and debates focus on what those who are comparatively well off owe those less well off, or at least those considered “poor” or “least well off.” These debates typically assume an account of well-being that emphasizes certain absolute, rather than relative, dimensions in order to designate who is poor or badly off. Lacking well-being is thus partly understood in terms of being unable to consume adequate calories or protein, being unable to access clean air and water and so on.

As stated, there is nothing particularly objectionable here. The problem arises when those designated poor are considered so according to certain measures, such as having the power to purchase modern consumer goods, industrial agricultural technologies, and the like, while these same people are decidedly *not* poor in other important respects. For example, many peasant and subsistence communities around the globe are capable of self-provisioning from their local environments. They have enough to eat, are relatively healthy, have access to clean water, and so on. This is important because it means that, at least in these cases, people designated as poor are not necessarily poor in a sense that justifies a poverty-removal project. Poverty-removal projects are problematic if they assume a questionable notion of human welfare, such as being able to participate in modern consumer society, or being able to purchase the goods and services of industrial agriculture. Defenders of such projects too often fail to recognize the projects’ negative effects on the lives of those whom they putatively aim to help—not to mention the considerable negative effects of such projects with respect to environmental quality.²⁷ Here it is useful to distinguish between poverty as subsistence and poverty as (absolute) deprivation.²⁸ Only the latter may justify a poverty-removal project.

The point is not to romanticize subsistence living (though its merits are likely underappreciated), but to recognize that subsistence living is often much better than the situation people find themselves in when they are forced off their lands and are no longer able to self-provision from nature. Importantly, subsistence ways of life solve a social challenge (people being able to meet their needs in culturally appropriate ways), while also preserving what are often ecologically and socially sustainable ways of life.²⁹ Obviously, we have good reasons to support the preservation of subsistence communities insofar as they represent so-called win-win cases.

A related point merits mention here. The relationships and practices that exist in, or that might be created by, a particular community in order to meet individual and communal needs can be both supportive and expressive of values and commitments that are themselves valuable, that is, beyond

the specific good of having the relevant needs satisfied. For example, self-provisioning from nature, or satisfying individual and communal needs in ways that allow for collective self-determination and (cultural) self-expression, can provide a corrective to legacies of colonialism or ongoing social and political marginalization. These legacies, with all of their accompanying harms and wrongs, risk being further entrenched by views that conceptualize human needs, and their satisfaction, in abstraction from social, environmental and political contexts. Further, the idea that state institutions or various non-governmental organizations could provide the relevant need satisfaction—a common assumption among theorists who focus on distributive justice with regard to food—misses the normative significance of people being able to meet their needs *themselves*, and in ways that express communal and cultural values.³⁰ The human flourishing account can readily appreciate this point, in contrast to the minimalist view that tends to focus almost exclusively on distributive concerns.

To illustrate, consider two of O'Neill et al.'s objective goods: being adequately nourished (an aspect of physical health³¹) and being socially affiliated. The normative appeal of O'Neill et al.'s kind of view does not lie merely in the fact that it highlights these goods *as goods*. That is something the minimalist view can also appreciate (insofar as these goods are understood as, or as related to, basic needs). Rather, its appeal concerns the way these goods are viewed with reference to supportive contexts, relationships and practices. Being adequately nourished may be intimately tied to being socially affiliated in certain ways. Importantly, both goods are made possible and supported by particular environments and social practices. It follows that one cannot access the good in question without also accessing the relevant environments and participating in the appropriate social practices.³²

While this point has general significance, it seems particularly salient for thinking about collective self-determination in the case of peasant and indigenous communities around the world. Although collective self-determination is not a good explicitly emphasized by O'Neill et al., I think the human flourishing account has theoretical resources for appreciating this good. If, as Kyle Whyte suggests, “collective self-determination refers to a group’s ability to provide the cultural, social, economic and political relations needed for its members to pursue good lives,”³³ then the human flourishing account appears already committed to this idea.

The preceding discussion brings into focus a second aspect of the human flourishing view, one that further suggests its possible advantage over more minimalist accounts. I’m referring here to our obligation, argued for by O'Neill et al., to maintain particular environments as a matter of sustainability. The crucial issue, of course, is clarifying the content of this idea.

The authors discuss two different senses of the relevant particularity, though I'll only consider one here.³⁴ This sense refers to those environments that are (partly) constitutive of communities, their values and their collective self-determination.³⁵ The reasoning here is that ensuring access to specific goods, such as being adequately nourished and socially affiliated in ways conducive to flourishing, requires that we maintain the cultural and physical conditions for certain kinds of community and social practice. Examples relevant to food justice are numerous, but I'll borrow one from Kyle Whyte that is revealing. For the indigenous Anishinaabek in the Great Lakes region, *manoomin* (wild rice) has a special, hub-like status. Such foods bring together, and suggest the deep connections between, many different aspects of a community or culture's way of life—aspects that are biological, ecological, cultural, economic, spiritual and so on. "Access to the nutritional value of *manoomin*," writes Whyte, "requires family, economic, social and political relations; these relations are, in turn, made possible through *manoomin*. Other foods, such as the commodity cheese and spam distributed to some Anishinaabek through U.S. food assistance programs, or microwave meals, cannot replace *manoomin* as comparable contributors to the establishment and maintenance of these relationships."³⁶ If well-intentioned food assistance programs tried to provide culturally appropriate food, for example, by making available packaged "wild rice," this would provide relevant nutritional value. But this would obviously fail to provide a substitute for *manoomin*, given the embeddedness of the latter in a set of significant food-related practices (seasonal group activities of gathering, processing, etc.) and particular environments (the shallow, clear, slow-moving waterways suitable for the rice to grow). The human flourishing account provides a normative basis for understanding the significance and nonsubstitutability of certain goods or aspects of the world, such as *manoomin* and the cultural and ecological contexts that support its flourishing.

In concluding this section, I'll note one difficulty for the human flourishing view and highlight two possible virtues of the account. First, the difficulty. If one includes within the objective account of human well-being such goods as autonomy, as O'Neill et al. do, then it seems that respect for autonomy will likely generate serious conflicts over exactly what the constituents of well-being are. After all, respecting others' autonomy would surely include respecting others' freedom to make up their own minds about what their own good consists in. The account thus appears threatened with foundering on the ground of reasonable disagreement concerning what human flourishing consists in.³⁷ More needs to be said to address this issue.

Despite this difficulty, the human flourishing account has at least two possible virtues. First, it presents a number of considerations that would block, or at least greatly complicate discussions of, acceptable substitutions with respect to the natural (or partly natural) world. For example, if

appreciating certain environments (such as culturally significant landscapes) or other species (such as *manoomin*) is relevant to human well-being in ways that matter to particular communities, then this would provide at least a strong *prima facie* reason against harming these environments or species, or replacing them with something else. In contrast, the minimalist view seems unable to appreciate how particular goods (e.g., culturally significant environments or species) might be (partly) constitutive of human flourishing, such that harming these goods, or substituting them with other goods, may involve a significant loss in welfare. The relevance of this claim for debates about food justice has already been emphasized: I assume there are specific foods, and food-related practices (e.g., fishing, gathering, etc.), that promote individual and collective well-being in ways that would be seriously weakened or undermined were these foods made unavailable, or the food-related practices made impossible to perform.

A second possible virtue of the human flourishing account is that it is a form of anthropocentrism, albeit a rich and complex one. Perhaps this feature of the view increases its chances of engaging public interest, motivating action and influencing public policy. Pragmatic considerations aside, it is noteworthy that the human flourishing view does not simply regard human well-being as decisive with regard to ethical decision making, at least not in any simple way. This might provide some solace to those who believe, as I'm inclined to, that nonhuman nature makes a claim on us independently of human interests. If the human flourishing account is concerned to articulate, among other things, attitudes that we have reason to cultivate in ourselves so as to flourish, then it can presumably incorporate the idea that we ought to overcome within ourselves the attitude that the natural world is simply there *for us*. It is not enough that our use of the natural world is fair, our distributions just and that all people are empowered to participate in decision making about how the world is used. More is at stake in living a worthwhile life than that. It is of interest that one can reach this conclusion without departing from anthropocentric commitments.

III. THE DEMANDING VIEW

To appreciate the distinctiveness of the third view of sustainability, what I'm calling "the demanding view," I need to introduce two concepts from the scientific and environmental ethics literature. The first is that of ecological health, a technical and explicitly normative concept. I understand ecological health to refer primarily to two properties of natural (or partly natural) systems: (1) the counteractive capacity to withstand stress or change (often glossed in terms of "resilience") and (2) the capacity of natural systems to

function well over the long term, thus providing a range of ecosystem services (e.g., nutrient cycling, soil production, waste assimilation, etc.).³⁸ The second concept is biological or ecological integrity (or “integrity” for short). Integrity refers to a property of landscapes that are relatively unmodified by human activity and that have their native biota largely intact.³⁹ By “native biota,” I mean the native plant and animal life in a given place, and whatever ecological relationships these instantiate.

A central commitment of advocates of the demanding view is that we ought, in our collective action, to aim at preserving or restoring both ecological health and integrity. It is, arguably, concern for integrity specifically that makes the demanding view *demanding*, given that (for reasons I’ll explain shortly) concern for ecological health is already implied by the minimalist and human flourishing views. Of course, how demanding the third view is will depend on how much integrity we ought to be preserving or restoring (more on this later).

There is a possible connection between ecological health and integrity that is worth noting. Landscapes with their integrity intact are commonly thought to be instrumentally important to areas that exhibit, or might come to exhibit, ecological health.⁴⁰ The basic idea is that integrity areas are a storehouse of resources that ecologically healthy areas might need in order to be replenished and kept vital over time. If ecological health is viewed as valuable because it supports human well-being—something defenders of both the minimalist and the human flourishing accounts (should) agree on—then integrity could also be viewed as instrumentally valuable to human well-being. A food-related example of this line of argument is the importance of wild biodiversity (exemplified by many, if not all, integrity areas) for agricultural biodiversity, which in turn is important for maintaining soil fertility, crop resilience and much else. Further, if certain culturally significant foods, such as *manoomin*, depend on a high degree of wild (or relatively wild) biodiversity, as well as relevantly intact natural ecosystems, then concern for integrity, at least in some areas and to some extent, would be appropriate for a defender of the human flourishing account.

One difficulty for this instrumental defense of integrity is that it might be empirically questionable whether sites with integrity are *in all cases* instrumentally important to maintaining ecological health, where the latter is understood as instrumentally important to human well-being. There seems to be nothing inherent in the idea of integrity to suggest that a state in which integrity obtains would *necessarily* conduce, whether directly or indirectly, to human well-being.⁴¹ A second problem with this line of defense is that it reduces the ideal of integrity to something practically necessary, and thereby pushes to the background noninstrumental (as well as nonanthropocentric) reasons for caring about integrity.

In light of these concerns, a defender of the third view has reason to articulate a noninstrumental defense of integrity. The attraction of such a defense is twofold. First, it allows one to integrate an array of considerations that seem independently important and that might not be appreciated as being deeply connected. Clarifying the concept and value of integrity helps to make these connections clear. Second, the noninstrumental defense brings into focus certain nonanthropocentric reasons, and in that respect goes beyond both the minimalist and the human flourishing views. In what follows, I briefly comment on the noninstrumental reasons that seem crucial to explaining the value of integrity. Reflection on these reasons helps to reveal more fully the content of the demanding view. I conclude with some challenges that this type of view presents for thinking about food justice specifically.

One group of noninstrumental considerations is broadly aesthetic. Landscapes that exemplify a high degree of integrity would likely exhibit a number of properties that merit and sustain an aesthetic response, such as intricacy, multifaceted complexity and uniqueness. Further, there is a way of connecting the defense of integrity to the possible significance of nature's *otherness*, understood to mean nature that is largely the product of processes that do not embody human designs, purposes, or aspirations.⁴² A world with a nontrivial amount of integrity is one that evinces considerable nonhuman otherness. If such otherness is normatively interesting, then that would be a reason to care about integrity.

A second set of considerations relates to the value of flourishing. Integrity consists partly in the presence of various species of plants and animals living in suitable ecological contexts. Maintaining the existence of these forms of life in the wild—without regard to their possible usefulness to us—is a central focus of defenders of integrity. In this respect, integrity gives expression to the idea of a variety of other forms of life flourishing in their own way. The fact that these forms of life have a good that is not necessarily our good, and that may even be at odds with our good, is something the defender of integrity recognizes and views positively.

This last point might be particularly persuasive when we consider the case of sentient beings. For all sentient animals, there is something it is like to *be* the animal in question. This means that sentient animals can care (in some meaningful sense) about what happens to them, regardless of whether or not anyone else does. A number of philosophers argue that this fact generates a reason for ethically sensitive beings like us to be concerned with the lives and goods of sentient animals. This reasoning applies to both wild and domesticated animals, but the case of wild animals is most relevant to the defense of integrity.

I'll note one final consideration here. Integrity gives expression to the thought that we are part of a living totality that has immense value.

This totality includes all of the elements that have been discussed: great complexity and uniqueness both at the level of forms of life, and of ecological wholes; the idea of forms of life that have a good that is not necessarily our good; and the thought that some of the forms of life in question are experiencing subjects, which raises the stakes of concern. These considerations suggest that respect for nature's integrity should be an important part of the goals that comprise sustainability. It follows that the preservation or restoration of significant portions of the world to a state of integrity should be at least a long-term goal for collective action. Importantly, the defense of integrity gives clear expression to the idea that nature makes a claim on us beyond the call of human needs and interests. What this means in practice is that we should constrain the pursuit of our good (however understood) out of respect for nature's integrity.

A number of challenges remain for the defense of the demanding view. I'll limit myself to addressing one issue: the relative importance of ecological health (or "health" for short) and integrity. At issue is the weight of the reasons we have to aim at promoting or respecting health and integrity as goals for collective action. Here is one way to think about this issue. Maintaining (and, as necessary, restoring) the health of those parts of the world that we have to inhabit and use to meet our needs should never be traded off against any other goal, economic or otherwise. The goal of maintaining health (at a nontrivial scale) should thus provide a fundamental constraint on how we inhabit and use the world. Maybe in some imaginable emergency situations, say of urgent socioeconomic hardship, ecological health can be sacrificed in some places, to some degree, and over the relatively short term.⁴³ Preserving ecological health is, or at least ought to be, a matter of prudential collective concern in the present. It is also a basis for securing intra- and intergenerational distributive justice (assuming that maintaining the capability of human beings to meet their needs from nature is a crucial aim of any plausible view of what distributive justice requires).

With regard to integrity, one could construe respect for this as an absolutist constraint on how we use nature, or as an important but defeasible constraint. (And, of course, one could opt for something even weaker.) Clearly, an absolutist constraint would be very demanding, and in the minds of many, implausible on that count. Understood as a defeasible constraint, respect for integrity is far less demanding, but still holds on to the core commitments of the demanding view. I won't try to settle this issue here. But I will note that a significant barrier to our taking respect for integrity seriously, whether as an absolutist or defeasible constraint, is that the acknowledgment of such a constraint in practice would likely entail substantial economic losses, or foregone development opportunities, for certain people and perhaps entire nations or groups of nations. This possibility raises difficult questions of justice. Indeed,

the question of justice here is magnified in those cases where the people or nations that incur a loss, or are expected to forego a development opportunity, are currently impoverished and in need of meaningful development. Things are complicated by the fact that a high degree of integrity is currently found in many parts of the world that, not coincidentally, are also socioeconomically impoverished. Further, even if one thought respect for integrity in general was a very worthwhile aim, there might be reasons to prioritize maintaining areas of integrity that exemplify a high degree of biodiversity (or other especially valuable properties). This makes the matter at hand even more urgent. For, as many writers have noted, developing countries contain a disproportionately large share of the world's biodiversity.⁴⁴

These are very difficult issues that need careful discussion. A full defense of the value of integrity, and hence of the demanding view, would require addressing issues of the sort indicated. I assume, further, that there will very likely be issues of justice relating to each of the domains noted at the beginning of this chapter. This adds more challenge and complexity to the defense of the demanding view.

IV. CONCLUSION

One of the attractions of the demanding view is that it does not regard human well-being as decisive when we are trying to sort out what sustainability might mean. It thus presents perhaps the most radical challenge to the framing of food justice. For we could conceivably achieve sustainability according to the first two views, and food justice in relation to these views, while nonetheless failing to preserve or restore integrity. If the first two views are found wanting in this respect—say, because they are compatible with a much diminished natural world—this would be a reason to take the third view seriously.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Robert McKim and Mike Doan for conversation about the ideas and issues discussed in this chapter. I also wish to thank Jill Dieterle, who offered helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of this essay.

2. For a nice statement of this sentiment, see Brian Barry, "Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice," in *Fairness and Futurity: Essays on Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice*, ed. Andrew Dobson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 101, 93.

3. Here I agree with Barry, "Sustainability," 93.

4. See Barry, “Sustainability,” 101.

5. This view is sometimes called “welfare pluralism.” See, for example, Michael Jacobs, “Sustainable Development, Capital Substitution and Economic Humility: A Response to Beckerman,” *Environmental Values* 4 (1995): 64.

6. Among economists, I would include (e.g.) Robert Solow, Herman Daly, and Salah El Serafy. Among philosophers, prominent examples include John Rawls (and Rawlsians more generally) and David Miller. I think the perspective of Brian Barry could also be categorized as a defense of a minimalist view. However, both Rawls and Barry say things that could support reading them as sympathetic to something along the lines of the human flourishing account that I discuss in the next section. For relevant discussion, see Robert Solow, “Sustainability: An Economist’s Perspective,” in *Economics of the Environment: Selected Readings* (3rd ed.), ed. Robert Dorfman and Nancy Dorfman (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1993); Herman Daly, “On Wilfred Beckerman’s Critique of Sustainable Development,” *Environmental Values* 4 (1995), and “Sustainable Economic Development: Definitions, Principles, Policies,” in *The Essential Agrarian Reader: The Future of Culture, Community, and the Land*, ed. Norman Wirzba (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003); Salah El Serafy, “In Defence of Weak Sustainability: A Response to Beckerman,” *Environmental Values* 5 (1996); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (rev. ed.) (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), and *Justice As Fairness: A Restatement*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); David Miller, “Social Justice and Environmental Goods,” in *Fairness and Futurity*, ed. Dobson; and Barry, “Sustainability.” My characterization of the minimalist view is indebted to the discussion in Alan Holland, “Sustainability: Should We Start From Here?” in *Fairness and Futurity*, ed. Dobson; Bryan G. Norton, “Intergenerational Equity and Sustainability,” in *Searching for Sustainability: Interdisciplinary Essays in the Philosophy of Conservation Biology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 425–32 (in particular), and “What Do We Owe the Future? How Should We Decide?” in *Searching for Sustainability*, 494–500; also Bryan G. Norton and Michael A. Toman, “Sustainability: Ecological and Economic Perspectives,” in *Searching for Sustainability*, 227–36.

7. See, for example, Solow, “Sustainability,” 181. This statement carries with it two assumptions. First, I attribute to the minimalist view a premise of fundamental equality between all human beings, as I can see no non-question-begging argument for denying such a premise. (Here I agree with Barry, “Sustainability,” 96–97.) Second, I assume that location in space and time should not affect a person having legitimate welfare claims. This accords with the views of a number of philosophers who write from otherwise different normative perspectives. See, for example, Barry, “Sustainability”; James P. Sterba, “Global Justice for Humans or For All Living Beings and What Difference It Makes,” *The Journal of Ethics* 9 (2005); and Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (3rd ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

8. The maintenance of critical natural capital distinguishes so-called strong sustainability views. For defenses of the latter, see Daly, “On Wilfred Beckerman’s Critique” and “Sustainable Economic Development”; and Jacobs, “Sustainable

Development.” Since the notion of natural capital strikes me as needlessly vague, I suggest conceptualizing the relevant environmental good here in terms of ecological health (which I discuss more fully at the beginning of section III).

9. This is generally true of the economists who discuss sustainability. See, for example, Solow, “Sustainability,” 181–82.

10. For relevant critique of the desire or preference satisfaction view, see Barry, “Sustainability,” 101–3; John O’Neill, Alan Holland, and Andrew Light, *Environmental Values* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 21–23, 54–57, 189–95; and Richard Kraut, *What Is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 92–120.

11. See James P. Sterba, *How to Make People Just: A Practical Reconciliation of Alternative Conceptions of Justice* (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1988), 45–46. Consider also the list of Rawlsian primary goods, or a Nussbaum-style list of central capabilities, both of which suggest how the relevant needs/capabilities might be specified.

12. Solow, “Sustainability,” 181.

13. For further discussion of substitutability, see Alan Holland, “Substitutability: Or, Why Strong Sustainability is Weak and Absurdly Strong Sustainability is Not Absurd,” in *Valuing Nature? Ethics, Economics and the Environment*, ed. John Foster (New York: Routledge, 1997), 121–26 (in particular); Norton and Toman, “Sustainability,” 227–33; and Norton, “Intergenerational Equity,” 425–32.

14. See O’Neill et al., *Environmental Values*, ch. 11 (in particular). This work offers one of the most thoughtful and interesting defenses of a human-flourishing view in the literature. For another notable defense, see Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

15. The objective state view is essentially the same as what Parfit calls an “objective list” view. See Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 493, 499–502.

16. O’Neill et al., *Environmental Values*, 25, 194.

17. This conception of flourishing and harm is indebted to David Wiggins, *Needs, Values, Truth: Essays in the Philosophy of Value* (3rd ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Essay I.

18. For further discussion of this type of view, and its relevance for environmental ethics, see J. Michael Scoville, “Historical Environmental Values,” *Environmental Ethics* 35 (2013).

19. O’Neill et al., *Environmental Values*, 39, 66, 176, 196–99.

20. *Ibid.*, 196.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*, 195.

23. For discussion, focused primarily on the case of industrial shrimp production in southern India, see Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000), ch. 3.

24. Would this problem be solved if the industrial pattern produced benefits to the economy at large, thereby enabling the local government to redistribute wealth so as

to compensate those, such as the traditional fishing communities, who are harmed by the industrial pattern? This would be better than nothing. But even in this case, there would seem to be particular harms that simply would not, and could not, be compensated for. O'Neill et al.'s flourishing view helps illuminate the relevant harms here.

25. Assuming compensation is actually paid; it often isn't in cases of this sort.

26. A complexity here is that in some cases life might become easier for the people in question, and they might welcome this.

27. For discussion of both types of negative effect, see Daly, "Sustainable Economic Development" and Vandana Shiva, "Globalization and the War against Farmers and the Land," in *The Essential Agrarian Reader*, ed. Wirzba, 121–39.

28. See Vandana Shiva, "The Impoverishment of the Environment: Women and Children Last," in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology* (4th ed.), ed. Michael Zimmerman et al. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc., 2005), 180.

29. For relevant discussion of subsistence and agrarian communities in India and Latin America, see Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 1997).

30. My discussion here is indebted to Kyle P. Whyte, "Food Justice and Collective Food Relations," forthcoming in *The Ethics of Food: An Introductory Textbook*, ed. Anne Barnhill et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

31. On the good of health, see O'Neill et al., *Environmental Values*, 192–94.

32. The relationship between these two goods is complex: for example, many people might (and often do) forego a fully nourishing diet (assuming they are not, on that count, seriously *malnourished*) in order to maintain social affiliation in ways they deem valuable.

33. Whyte, "Food Justice," 5.

34. The sense I won't discuss refers to those environments that are, as O'Neill et al. put it, necessary for "maintaining the capacity to appreciate the natural world and to care for other species" (*Environmental Values*, 195). This capacity is understood to be an objective good partly constitutive of human flourishing.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Whyte, "Food Justice," 8–9.

37. The authors seem to recognize, but don't respond to, the problem here. They write: "Because autonomy, the capacity to govern one's own life and make one's own choices, is a human good, it may matter that those objective goods be endorsed by a person. One cannot improve an individual's life by supplying resources that are valuable to the individual by some objective criterion, but not in light of the conception of the good life recognised and accepted by that individual: a person's life cannot go better in virtue of features that are not endorsed by the individual as valuable" (O'Neill et al., *Environmental Values*, 25).

38. Leopold defined what he called "land health" as "the capacity of the land for self-renewal" (see Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* [New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1949], 221). This characterization maps onto the first property I note above. Leopold says other things that suggest the second property as well (see, e.g., the discussion in the section entitled "The Land Pyramid," 214–20). For helpful discussion concerning the conceptualization

of ecological health, see J. Baird Callicott, “The Value of Ecosystem Health,” in *Beyond the Land Ethic: More Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); and David J. Rapport, “Ecosystem Health: More than a Metaphor?” *Environmental Values* 4 (1995), and “Sustainability Science: An Ecohealth Perspective,” *Sustainability Science* 2 (2007). I am indebted to Callicott and Rapport, in particular, in my characterization of ecological health in the text above.

39. See James R. Karr, “Ecological Integrity and Ecological Health Are Not the Same,” in *Engineering Within Ecological Constraints*, ed. Peter C. Schulze (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1996), and “Health, Integrity, and Biological Assessment: The Importance of Measuring Whole Things,” in *Ecological Integrity: Integrating Environment, Conservation, and Health*, ed. David Pimental et al. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2000); also Paul L. Angermeier and James R. Karr, “Biological Integrity versus Biological Diversity as Policy Directives,” *BioScience* 44 (1994). A variety of conservation thinkers and philosophers have endorsed Karr’s view, or something like it.

40. See Karr, “Ecological Integrity,” 212; also Alan Holland, “Ecological Integrity and the Darwinian Paradigm,” in *Ecological Integrity*, ed. Pimental et al., 51.

41. Regarding “wilderness” (as the base-datum for Leopold’s conception of land health), the ecologist David Rapport remarks: “There may be no reason to accept in all cases that *a priori* wilderness is healthy in the broad sense of being supportive of human health and economic activity” (Rapport, “Ecosystem Health,” 297).

42. For discussion of nature’s otherness, see Bernard Williams, “Must a Concern for the Environment be Centred on Human Beings?” in *Making Sense of Humanity and Other Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 237–40; and Robert Elliot, *Faking Nature: The Ethics of Environmental Restoration* (London: Routledge, 1997), 59–62.

43. There are complexities here relating to the question of scale. For example, health ought not to be compromised at a large or nontrivial spatial scale, while it might be justifiably compromised at a more local spatial scale. This issue obviously requires more discussion.

44. See, e.g., Michael Wells, “Biodiversity Conservation, Affluence and Poverty: Mismatched Costs and Benefits and Efforts to Remedy Them,” *Ambio* 21 (1992): 237; and Mark Dowie, *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), xxvii.