



## How Ecology Can Edify Ethics: The Scope of Morality

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### Abstract

Over the past several decades environmental ethics has grown markedly, normative ethics having provided essential grounding in assessing human treatment of the environment. Even a systematic approach, such as Paul Taylor's, in a sense tells the environment how it is to be treated, whether that be Earth's ecosystem or the universe itself. Can the environment, especially the ecosystem, as understood through the study of ecology, in turn offer normative and applied (environmental) ethics any edification? The study of ecology has certainly increased awareness of the fact that it is not possible for a moral agent within the ecosystem to step outside its intricate mesh of actions and events, of causes and effects. That is, absolutely everything that an agent can do can have some, often unforeseeable, outcome in the environment. An incompletely snuffed-out match tossed out a car window can cause a forest fire, which causes biome destruction, which causes  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ . In sum, the ecosystem can edify ethics in terms of the scope of ethics, which remains an unsettled, if too-often ignored, matter. By such an inclusive view of moral scope, as derived in part from ecology and as presented here, the scope of moral behavior would include—whether or not adventitiously—every action an agent may do. By this view, moral scope is, in essence, unlimited. The article offers some ramifications of this view of moral scope.

**Keywords** Ecology · The ecosystem · Environmental ethics · Habits · Moral scope · Moral value · Dewey

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## Introduction

Occasionally in ethical discussions where two parties contend whether some act *A* is moral or not, one party may contend such act is simply neither moral nor immoral. That is, the act just does not fall into the category of human acts that are generally deemed moral or immoral. This view could be said to maintain that the act falls outside the “moral scope”. Perhaps *A* is growing a beard or conceiving a child. Regrettably, if the two parties turn to the literature for assistance, they will find little that explicitly speaks to this matter of scope. They find that even consequentialism, while asserting that one should assess an act’s morality according to potential benefits of its results, rarely, if at all, specifies just which categories of actions fall within the consequentialist purview. Consequentialist perspectives may enjoin, “Assess the act’s morality according to what pleasure, or love, or friendship, it engenders,” but remain unclear just how to proceed when contemplated actions have no such momentousness as love or friendship. In fact, non-momentous acts seem excluded from the consequentialist “moral scope”. A deontological approach, by contrast, may imply that its scope extends only so far as those acts whose maxims can be universalized, the rest being merely hypothetical. Again, however, explicit taxonomy of the full extent of potential acts is in short supply in the deontological camp, even while explicit taxonomy could help resolve disputes of the sort mentioned above. The concern here, then, is not to determine which acts are moral or immoral, or right or wrong, but which ones fall legitimately within the category of acts that can be deemed moral or not in the first place.

This article intends explicitly to open this discussion of which acts indeed fall within the scope of morality. (See definition of this term below.) The article looks to three different views that, if not explicitly striving to settle this matter of moral scope, nonetheless can be reasonably construed as having an underlying or implicit outlook on such scope. Finding these views fall short, the article proposes, as an explicit alternative, that the biological subdiscipline of ecology may offer some important insight for this ethical discussion. While the proposal is naturalistic, emphatically it aims not to derive from nature a norm for what is a moral or immoral act but only which acts fall under such scope, thereby leaving normative and applied ethics to assess given acts’ morality.

## Terminology

First a few terminological clarifications and precisions used in this article are warranted to avoid ambiguity and preclude potential question-begging. To answer at once potential objections to such provision of definitions to commonly used philosophical terms, I suggest that more such practice could instead benefit many philosophical discussions. Convention has yet to settle whether ethics is a part of value theory or the latter is something independent (Schroeder and Michael 2016).<sup>1</sup> What is often important in philosophical discussions in which terms are used

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, there are many value types of value theory, as Schroeder and Michael (2016) describes.

without their having been conventionalized (which would likely be a majority of such discussions) is to ensure that the meaning of the term as the article uses it is explicitly established. What is most important here, then, in a statement “*X* means *Y*,” is the *Y*; the *X* may be arbitrary (except, perhaps, when connotation is so strong as to overwhelm any possible *Y*, when, then, an actual “*X*” instead of simply *X* may offer the best option). I then clarify this article’s use of the terms “moral value,” “morally neutral,” “moral status,” “moral worth,” “scope of morality,” and “moral disvalue”. One may readily translate these defined terms into one’s own preferred terms; what is important for the following discussion is each “*X*’s” consistent use throughout.

When an act or event can plausibly, or typically, be subject of moral judgment, it is said to have some degree of “moral value”. In other words, the act is such that it can be morally justified or unjustified.<sup>2</sup> When an act or event is not so subject, it is deemed as “morally neutral”. An entity, such as a human being, that can act as an agent or be acted upon as patient is said to have “moral status”. Thereby, an entity, say a tree, that is deemed to have positive moral status as a potential moral patient, is said to have “moral worth”. The “scope of morality” pertains to the extent to which acts and events can be deemed as of moral value or to which entities may have moral status. As a special case of moral value, when moral judgment plausibly can be made of an act or event such that the act or event should not be undertaken, that act or event is said to have “moral disvalue”.<sup>3</sup> Thus, acts or events of moral disvalue form a proper subset of those of moral value—as they are both subject to moral judgment—but acts of events of moral value are not a proper subset of those of moral disvalue. (These definitions are not attempts to explain what is morality or moral judgment, but assume those two terms as basics to build upon.) An example is the act of throwing a lit cigarette into a parched forest. It would be an act of moral value, insofar as it is subject to moral judgment. Often, by many lights, the act would further be declared to have moral disvalue. By contrast, an act of a human’s respiration would usually not have moral value or disvalue; even Hitler’s respiration would not, nor would events such as a tree’s dropping a limb during a windstorm, nor an electron’s random quantum leap to a higher atomic orbit.

## Apparent Limits and Shifts of Moral Scope

In considering real-world cases, moral theory typically turns to acts of indisputable moral value: lying, causing needless suffering, killing. Yet, more recently, certain types of acts previously considered morally neutral, such as vivisection without anesthesia, now are often considered by many observers and other agents to

<sup>2</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for this alternate wording. I should here also note that an act that is said to have “moral value” would be roughly equivalent to an act that Dewey (2002) would deem as falling within the “moral domain” (40).

<sup>3</sup> While, as previously noted, Dewey may call acts that this article designates as having moral value or disvalue (and thereby falling within in the moral scope) as being acts that fall within “the moral domain,” I retain the terms “moral value” and “moral disvalue”—instead of putting them in “the moral domain,” primarily to retain the more precise distinction between “moral value” and “moral disvalue”. Also see discussion of Dewey below.

have moral value. Not only have living systems such as trees sometimes come to be characterized as having moral worth (Taylor 2011), but also some nonliving systems such as oceans or historical buildings have been. Without taking up the dispute of what qualifies as a bona fide moral patient, I instead inquire into whether the scope of morality—the moral scope—has a limit. It seems that in our daily lives, few acts are “big” enough to merit moral valuing;<sup>4</sup> most are a matter of other practical criteria, such as etiquette or personal preference. However, some acts of these types may become susceptible to moral evaluation in the future, as vivisection without anesthesia did long ago.

A more detailed example from recent ethical debates should help illuminate why moral scope in itself is worthy of critical examination within moral theory. Shiffrin (1999), Benatar (2006), and Overall (2012), have proposed that giving life to a human being—procreating—as an act has moral value (which in this debate may mean it has moral disvalue). This issue has stirred up a sizable debate in recent years, with many books and articles on it (see Miller 2016). Yet, Anscombe (1990) writes that asking whether human reproduction has moral value makes no more sense than to ask whether digestion does. If Anscombe is right, the mounting discussion about the morality of reproduction is empty. What is of moral value is how you treat that child once born, not whether you create it. If a vast majority in the philosophical community agrees with her, the debate over whether reproduction has moral value may get nowhere and prove to be wasted.

Are we just in a transition phase, in which some people see a type of deliberative act as of moral value and others do not, but perhaps most people eventually will concur the act is of moral value? Without predicting the outcome, I only note that if, one day, reproduction indeed appears to be widely considered of moral value—however this position comes about—we would witness another instance of morality’s scope shifting.<sup>5</sup> In the past, slavery, gender discrimination, and causing needless animal suffering fell outside the moral scope. Human reproduction may eventually join them within the scope.

Next, I examine accounts for this shifting moral scope and eventually argue for a certain account. As a literature explicitly on moral scope per se and why it shifts is sparse, for arguments I turn to places that do not directly deal with this matter. What exactly are the parameters of moral scope, and how might we pinpoint these?

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<sup>4</sup> Herein, “moral valuing” refers to an action’s being assigned moral value, whether positive or negative moral value (or disvaluing), thus not morally neutral.

<sup>5</sup> In this article, “moral scope” will pertain to both acts and entities (including institutions), whether human beings or trees. Thus, an action such as a leaf falling may be said to be morally neutral, thus outside moral scope, while someone’s picking a rare plant’s leaf may fall within moral scope. Slaves in Ancient Greece were seen as, qua slave, morally neutral, whereas in most current industrial societies, slavery falls in the moral scope as being disvalued.

### Three Possible Means to Pinpoint the Scope of Morality

One possibility for determining morality's scope is social consensus theory (Rollin 1999), by which the scope shifts because what counts as moral is due to a social consensus, and this consensus shifts over time and with social history. In the past, as in ancient Greece, slavery was morally neutral. In time, people—and peoples—began to view enslavement as immoral. With the shift in social consensus, the moral scope shifted. In other words, in this case the shift in social consensus may be said to be a shift in moral scope. Similarly for civil rights in the United States in the 1960s, and animal rights soon afterward. However, while this view may be valid, it explains little. It merely equates social consensus with moral scope: So this approach merely confirms that moral shift does indeed shift.

Other possibilities for determining moral scope include what Singer (1981) calls “the expanding circle” and the related outlook of moral progress.<sup>6</sup> By the expanding circle, or a slight variant of it I call the “expanding moral canopy,” more types of moral patients enter the moral universe; that is, the moral canopy expands to cover more groups. In ancient Athenian democracy, only white property-owning males were full moral agents or patients. In time, of course, more types of people came to be considered moral agents and patients, such as nonwhite, poor, or female humans. Eventually, the moral canopy extended to protect sentient nonhuman animals as moral patients.

The concept related to the expanding moral canopy is that of steady moral progress, which Rorty (2007), Nussbaum (2007), and Moody-Adams (1999) have boosted while Posner (1998) and others have doubted: Over the centuries humans are improving morally. Both moral progress and the expanding canopy assume some kind of direction. Unlike moral consensus theory, this directionality *explains* the shifting moral scope, or how and why the moral scope changes. That direction is either forming a line ascending ever-higher, or, like a two-dimensional object such as a canopy, it is reaching ever-outward.

The problem with this explanation is the very characteristic that makes it attractive: that directionality. The directionality does explain the moral scope's shifts; however, without denying moral progress or supporting its relativist doubters, it is questionable whether that moral progress moves with distinct directionality. That is, over time a culture may experience some moral improvement—for example, in human rights—and that improvement may spread to other cultures as though these cultures were finally accepting principles they recognize as universal. But does the improvement have any discernable directionality? An improvement in Area *B* may mean worsening in Area *A*. The moral community may move one step forward, then two to the right, and one back. For example, instituting socioeconomic freedom in the 18th Century may have meant a moral leap for industrialists but a step far back for child laborers. (I come to an objection later.)

As for the expanding moral canopy: Are more types of deliberative acts and more types of agents and patients really coming under the moral canopy, so that the moral

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<sup>6</sup> There are slight differences in these outlooks which I lack space to describe but which should not affect the argument.

scope is shifting with this expansion? Enslavement and gender discrimination apparently were once not considered acts of moral value, but other types of deliberative acts have increasingly become morally neutral. What was once deemed “sodomy” and of moral disvalue is now increasingly considered morally neutral in many societies. Similarly for practicing “witchcraft”. These considerations tell us that the canopy often contracts, or holes come and go, or the phenomena are just too messy to be captured by the canopy metaphor. The canopy makes for an irregular and thereby inadequate explanation of shifting moral scope.

The objection to my doubts about moral progress and the expanding canopy as explanations of shifting moral scope could be as follows: So what if moral progress is not unidirectional but zigzags, and the moral canopy contracts and develops holes? Morality may just be a messy phenomenon, and you cannot expect a clean explanation. If moral scope tracks moral progress or the expanding canopy, then it is just as messy.

I cannot say just why indeed we should not maintain that, *if* there is moral progress or an expanding canopy, then shifting moral scope is explained by the fact it tracks the movements of this progress or expansion. The problem would be to get everyone to agree there is progress. We may, by contrast, consider an account of moral scope that does not require such progress, then perhaps more people could at least potentially concede it. The next account I offer has a stiff stipulation, but moral-“progressers,” moral-progress-deniers, and fence-sitters alike should be open to this account, insofar as it leaves open the issue of moral progress and allows for whichever normative theory one upholds, whether, say, deontology or care ethics.

## A Fourth Possibility

I call this approach the “inclusive moral scope,” which, as I will explain, is informed by ecology. Before I discuss moral scope from this perspective, I provide a historical/philosophical background for the view, from Dewey (2002). This provision involves an unorthodox but, I firmly believe, faithful (to the spirit and word of his text) interpretation of Dewey’s outlook as a precedent to this inclusive view. Yet, to grant my proposed view plausibility, the reader need not agree with my Dewey interpretation.

In *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey emphasizes how even among our most consciously deliberative actions we operate by habits. Habits do not somehow exist alone but arise within a mesh of habits. If our behaviors are primarily outcomes of habits and all of our habits are tightly intertwined, to change a behavior means changing habits within this mesh, which may entail more than simply changing the behavior targeted for change. He comes to the remarkable observation that each of those habits, in their manifestation as performances, falls within what he calls “the moral domain”:

... any act, even that one which passes ordinarily as trivial, may entail such consequences for habit and character as upon occasion to require judgment from the standpoint of the whole body of conduct. It then comes under moral scrutiny .... The serious matter is that [the] relative pragmatic, or intellectual,

distinction between the moral and non-moral, has been solidified into a fixed and absolute distinction, so that some acts are popularly regarded as forever within and others forever without the moral domain.<sup>7</sup> From *this fatal error* recognition of the relations of one habit to others preserves us. For it makes us see that character is the name given to the working interactions of habits, and that the cumulative effect of insensible modifications worked by a particular habit in the body of preferences may at any moment require attention. (2002, 40; emphasis added)

Even an apparently trivial act can come under moral judgment because of its interconnections within this mesh of habits. To overlook such a possibility could mean overlooking an act's moral seriousness. The (traditional) approach of dividing deliberative acts between the moral and the morally neutral makes false distinctions. Dewey sees this (traditional) understanding—that only a subset of our acts falls under the moral domain—is not merely in error, it is a “*fatal error*”. We can avoid this error by recognizing “the relations” among habits, thereby seeing that all our acts—what I term our deliberative acts, whether acted through habit or not—fall within the moral scope.

In my terminology, then, all our deliberative acts, even trivial acts such as stooping to pluck a nickel off the sidewalk, fall within the moral scope.

Many moral theorists may go as far as Dewey to grant that all of our habits interrelate; and perhaps it may help to consider this interconnection sometimes. But still the seemingly trivial acts are often considered to remain morally trivial if not negligible.

An ecology-derived variant on Dewey's approach to a wide moral scope—the “inclusive” moral scope—described below includes all of our deliberative acts, whether these arise out of formed habit or are entirely novel to our behavioral repertoire. However, Dewey is primarily concerned with how our acts derive from habits which are all so interrelated that changing one type of behavior may mean altering the mesh, so even the tiniest habits can affect and reflect our moral character. By contrast I look externally, at how our actions interact within the entire mesh of human acts.

I provide an empirical motivation for the inclusive scope's deriving from a science barely nascent in Dewey's days and subsequently an argument for prescribing it for normative ethics discussions that pertain to moral scope.

## How Ecology Can Illuminate Ethics in Terms of Moral Scope

The term “ecology” has been used in many disciplines, including the humanities; but I refer to the subdiscipline of biology concerned with the interactions of organisms with their environments. Ecology has taught us—researchers, other specialists, and the general public—about the astonishingly tight interactions among organisms and between them and their environment. One seemingly insignificant

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<sup>7</sup> As a reminder to the mention above, what Dewey terms “the moral domain” (2002, 40) is roughly equivalent to what I call “the moral scope”.

effect can cause a not-so-trivial effect. Spraying a small area with a pesticide can lead to seabird species the world over going extinct. From an ecological viewpoint, it is hard to call an act trivial. All acts of all apparent sizes contribute to any ecological system, and any may contribute significantly. A lit cigarette is small compared with a volcano but can wreak comparable damage.

Similar rules would hold in the “human-only” world. For one matter, materially there is no such thing as the “human-only world”. But at least among the sorts of concerns that only humans have among one another in their societies, such as whether a lie is told,<sup>8</sup> one would be hard-pressed to say why these concerns should not also fall within the intricacies of ecology. Even the smallest act resounds through the entire anthroposphere.<sup>9</sup>

For example: Consider the quotidian act of purchasing chocolate, choosing Brand *Y* over Brand *Z*—perhaps you have been faithful to *Y* since childhood. But say that Brand *Y* uses cocoa sprayed with dangerous pesticides and harvested by grueling child labor. Brand *Z*'s cocoa is grown on small-farmers' plots, under fair-trade practices. If purchasing is support for a company and its practices, and if Brand *Y*'s practices are indeed immoral, then purchasing it may well be an act of negative moral value.

This sort of case appears in discussions about boycotting, but what about an apparently *very* trivial act, such as plucking a nickel off the sidewalk or budging one's finger? Assuming that the nickel is indeed no one's property and that you are not merely a miser, the issue is whether your time and energy expended to stop and grasp the thing is worth what will be gained. You have only so much time as a living being to do your duties, such as developing your talents. In this light, the act has some, if apparently very minor, moral value. To get even more extreme, consider wiggling your finger: If you are, say, a philosopher and this act is an experiment in free will and you hope your observation may trigger insight into that ancient problem, perhaps the act can be out of duty. By contrast, if you wiggle the finger just

<sup>8</sup> The assumption here is not that humans are the only animals who can lie, but rather that, as far as most of us (perhaps excepting some ethologists who study and socialize with highly intelligent nonhumans) are concerned vis-à-vis lying, we generally care only about human-originated lies.

<sup>9</sup> Note it is true that for centuries most scientists and philosophers have been aware of the causal chain, in which all of us—including the place and state of every sub-particle—are tied into this chain stretching back to the beginning of the universe, thus meaning that every deliberative act, too, is part of, as well as beholden to, this chain. Every action, then, deliberative or not, reverberates within the whole universe. Thus, there would seem to be nothing new in this inclusive proposal of the moral scope. In response to this objection, I note that what is different in this proposal, compared with the ancient notion of causal chain, is that those acts caused by humans are not merely linked in the causal chain but may have some moral value because that reverberation within the causal chain may be of harmful and unpredictable nature. By contrast, moral discussion has largely focused upon the implicitly “large” acts that have evident reverberations—such as Kant's example of a maxim for unkept promises making nonsense of the very notion of promise. In the proposal here, *pace* scientists and philosophers, such as consequentialists, who recognize the causal chain, what is of concern is the potentiality and possible unpredictability of every even apparently most trivial act's not being *morally* trivial at all. Further, while commentators objecting to consequentialism via a *reductio ad absurdum* may appeal to the idea that consequentialism would absurdly lead us indeed to worrying about the ramifications of every most seemingly trivial act and thus make consequentialism practically untenable, their objection does not mean that they acknowledge the potential significance of every last seemingly trivial act. To the contrary, they are denying any such significance, contrarily to the ecological proposal offered here. I thank an anonymous reviewer for providing this objection.



because you cannot think of anything else to do or want to prove to the world that you can wiggle your finger for hours on end, your act may have doubtful moral value, in fact disvalue.

Many people understandably may say, “Under the moral microscope, even these tiny acts may have faint moral coloring, but who has time to weigh out these minuscule events for their infinitesimal ‘moral mass’?” One has enough challenge in assessing the obviously momentous acts of moral value. As Mill (2006) pointed out, even for acts of undeniable moral value, we can rarely assess them appropriately, hence we look to the great moral teachings of the past. This inclusive scope would lead us to a type of moral Zeno’s paradox, in which we could never reach even the first point of miniscule distance in a moral trajectory because we must get to the infinitesimal point before that. Thus, we need a moral heuristic, so some kinds of acts fall within the moral scope and these trivial ones do not.

However, this objection brings up the second side of the argument for prescribing the inclusive scope for normative ethics, with two reasons. The first is that, *pace* traditions, we may not sufficiently know just which act is trivial. The objection that treating all our seemingly most trivial daily acts as morally assessable is impractical must depend on a probability—that some acts are trivial after all their possible effects have dissipated, while only a few acts would, if not duly attended to, yield a cataclysm of moral disvalue, as in the pesticide/seabird case.

My second reason for the prescription is to remove the likely error of this probabilistic approach. The error I’m concerned with is not so much in the outcomes as averaged over time—as some outcomes harm nobody, whereas others are egregious—but rather, error in *habits of thought*. It is better training in practical reasoning and action not to brush aside our consideration of the moral value of our acts. This prescription would not mean we need weigh, to the remotest consequence, every quotidian act, such as how plucking up a nickel may affect people centuries into the future. Rather, through training ourselves, we can develop a habit of thought in which we pay heed to the potential moral value of much of our daily actions (most of these being acted out of habit). Through such training, the assessments could become rapid. *Do I need Brand Y’s chocolate over Brand Z’s?* What happens if we universalize the maxim for supporting bad companies? If I’m in a hurry for an important meeting, should I waste time stopping for the nickel? If indeed all our acts, as ecology reveals, do resonate throughout the ecosystem, then this training can help keep our minds sharp, on the lookout for where the apparently trivial may not be so trivial.

A final objection is: Perceiving all our deliberative acts as part of this exceedingly tight ecosystem puts us into an insufferable moral prison. Resistance can only result, the worse for morality. However, the assumption that such a moral “prison” would be so suffocating demands reflection. If judgments in face of decisions are formulated within a reasonable mean, without overworking assessments of potential details of projected acts but effecting decisions mostly through training habits of thought, then liberty, rather than stricture, may result: the liberty of living in heightened touch with our own acts and the world; perhaps, over time, liberty from potential damages due to oversights: The inclusive scope should increase an individual’s autonomy and sense of responsibility for one’s own acts.

Most important, the inclusive view opens up, not so much the trivial cases, but acts that more obviously have profound ramifications in life, such as the act of human reproduction.<sup>10</sup>

One final point, harking back to which approach to moral scope is more explanatory: The inclusive view may only defer the issue of *why* the moral scope shifts or may provide only a trivial explanation. While this view rests partly on an empirical argument, it is in the end offered as prescriptive. One may say, then, if one accepts the prescription, there is essentially no shift in moral scope (whether there is moral progress or not). However, this move then defers the problem of explaining shifts in moral scope to some other device, perhaps empirical. One may have to say, “The *apparent* moral scope of most agents in *X* moral-community is due to *T*”. *T* would be some sociological/anthropological explanation, such as “In this community *X*, when people started having more household pets, they started viewing animals in general to be as sentient as humans, thus due moral treatment”. I find nothing wrong with such deferred explanation per se. It should not threaten normative ethics or make morality a domain of natural sciences. Conceding that all deliberative acts are of moral value hardly displaces normative ethics but gives it wider expression in human lives.

<sup>10</sup> A further, subtle objection may maintain that, as Kant (1993) pointed out, many acts are motivated by hypothetical imperatives, and these motives do not have moral value, but the inclusive view seems to be looking to (often indecipherable) outcomes, whatever the intent, and thereby turns morality into a series of hypothetical imperatives. I answer this objection by looking to the relevant pages of Kant, albeit with some interpretation, as Kant may not be entirely clear on this matter. In the *Grounding*, Kant distinguishes categorical from hypothetical imperatives in that the latter are conditional upon a certain aim, whereas the former hold, whatever the aim. Nowhere do I find in this work a distinction in kinds of *acts* drawn along these lines, such that acts that are brought into play solely by categorical imperatives are wholly partitioned from acts brought about by hypothetical imperatives. The division is, rather, by reasons behind acts; and as an act can have a variety of reasons, a single act can be driven by both a hypothetical and categorical imperative (or a combination of hypothetical imperatives). In any case, the hypothetical imperatives themselves remain morally neutral. For example, the act in question may be baking a cake. The hypothetical imperative in this case may be the recipe: “If you want to bake cake of type *X*, follow *a*, *b*, *c*, ...”. However, the same act of baking a cake may involve a maxim relating to the situation, such as “During the holiday season, bake a cake for the homeless shelter”. The baking follows two maxims. Another hypothetical imperative may be: “If you want to kill, do *a*, *b*, *c*, ...” This imperative is morally neutral. The determinant of the act’s moral assessment lies in the maxim for a particular act, such as “When someone treads on your feet, do away with the intruder”. There is nothing about the existence of hypothetical imperatives per se that precludes all deliberative human acts from being morally assessable. Kant is commonly represented as disallowing facts about the world to influence practical reasoning, as if we should rely solely upon reasoning without information from experience in determining a moral act. In fact, he stresses instead that reasoning should not be based upon experience formally (“metaphysically”), in setting the form that reasoning should take; but that in actual application of the form (the Categorical Imperative)—that is in the “empirical” part of ethics, the agent may have recourse to what Kant calls “anthropology,” or the facts about human beings—“... all morals, which require anthropology in order to be applied to humans, must be expounded at first independently of anthropology, as pure philosophy, i.e., as metaphysics” (1993, 412). Consider then that contemporary human ecology would fall under Kant’s broad term “anthropology” and that human ecology (like ecology in general) has pointed up the intimate interconnectedness of all human actions and so within this mesh not one act falls outside potential rational consideration. Kant, then, or at least the Kantian outlook, would well concede that in application, the Categorical Imperative is appropriate for assessing the moral content (positive or negative) of any deliberative human act. Given the fact there is no absolute bifurcation between “hypothetical acts” and “categorical acts” and that, in application, the Categorical Imperative could apply to all deliberative human acts, I see no objection to the inclusive view from Kant’s *Grounding*.

Still, on the explanatory level, the inclusive view of moral scope may fare no better than that of moral progress or the expanding canopy,<sup>11</sup> so these other criteria I offer should recommend it more than its explanatory power does.<sup>12</sup> If this brief article has not convinced most readers of the need for the inclusive view, I hope that all at least concur it is time to establish more explicitly than has been done until now just which acts do and do not fall into the moral scope and why.

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<sup>11</sup> What we need is a clearer idea of what a view of moral scope should explain, which is beyond this article's scope.

<sup>12</sup> One may also say that the inclusive view can include or encompass the view of moral progress, although one need not do so, as one may simply say that all deliberate acts have moral value, but humanity does not progress morally as a group over time. However, I feel that the inclusive view of moral scope would, because of a tendency toward greater autonomy and sense of responsibility, tend toward a positive outlook on moral progress. Mere moral progress as it now stands, still excluding many kinds of acts from its purview, would appear to be lagging. Simply admit, one wants to say, as ecology encourages us to, that all of our acts interconnect importantly. For the reasons I have stated, the inclusive view has some solid advantages over the related metaethical outlooks.

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