A fresh look at 'relational' values in nature: Distinctions derived from the debate on meaningfulness in life

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ABSTRACT

Some recent policy-oriented publications have put forward a third category of environmental values, namely relational or eudaimonic values, in addition to intrinsic and instrumental values. In this debate, there is, however, much confusion about the content of such values. This paper looks at a fundamental debate in ethics about a third category of reasons besides reasons from morality and self-interest, labelled as reasons of love, care or meaningfulness. This category allows us, first, to see the relation between relational and eudaimonic values, and, second, to make clear and applicable distinctions between the relational valuing of nature and moral or instrumental valuing.

KEYWORDS

Relational value; eudaimonic value; reasons of love; meaningful; IPBES

Introduction: the need for a third category

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) aims to provide scientific support for biodiversity policies around the world, just as the IPCC is doing for climate policies. A central concern for IPBES is the valuation of nature: how and why is biodiversity important? Traditionally a distinction is made between the intrinsic and instrumental value of nature. However, there is a growing dissatisfaction with this distinction. One response has been to posit a third category of environmental values. Recent proposals for the IPBES frame have included such a third category and labelled this as 'relational values' (Díaz et al., 2015, 2018; Pascual et al., 2017). Not only IPBES is using this

notion, but it also appears in other recent policy-oriented studies[1] (Chan et al., 2016; Arias-Arévalo et al., 2017; Klain et al., 2017). Some studies use an alternative notion, namely 'eudaimonic values'[2], sometimes in combination with relational values (Jax et al., 2013; Chan et al., 2016; Klain et al., 2017; Pascual et al., 2017; van den Born et al., 2018).

The idea of relational values is as such not new and definitely not an invention of IPBES. A central debate in environmental ethics was – and perhaps still is – about nature's intrinsic value, as contrasted with an instrumental approach to nature. As an answer to this debate, several environmental philosophers have argued for a more relational approach to environmental value (Hourdequin and Wong, 2005; Muraca, 2011, 2016; Hourdequin, 2015). Such a relational approach has many old-age sources, such as classical Chinese philosophy (e.g. Confucianism, Daoism), indigenous cultures (e.g. Apache) and Greek philosophy (e.g. virtue ethics) and also within contemporary philosophy many sources for a more relational approach can be found, for instance phenomenology, care ethics and environmental philosophy (e.g. deep ecology, Leopold) (Hourdequin, 2015: 76–84).

However, while the notion of relational values has found its way from the philosophical into the policy-oriented debate, so far it has not led to an unambiguous and clear interpretation of this notion. In the policy-oriented debate, one can find a rather wide range of diverging interpretations (see below). Therefore, the aim of this paper is to look for distinctions that can help policy-oriented studies to understand the differences between the different types of values.

In the applied or policy-oriented debate, the differentiation between types of values is relevant for two reasons, which do not necessarily coincide with the philosophical concerns. First, environmental decision-making requires some form of environmental valuation. It requires

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[1] Here, a distinction is made between an applied, policy-oriented debate, mainly among natural and social scientists, and a more theoretical, philosophical debate, mainly among philosophers and in philosophy journals. Of course, there is no clear cut line between them, but it seems sensible to make such a distinction.

[2] Sometimes the adjectives 'eudemonic' or 'eudaimonistic' are used instead.

sensitivity to different modes of environmental valuation in order not to be reductionist. Second, in order to motivate people to act pro-environmentally, one needs to be aware of the diversity of valuations and motivations. For instance, if the valuation only refers to instrumental reasons, one cannot appeal to other important pro-nature motivations.

The philosophical debate, by contrast, is also concerned about a broader set of questions. Put simply, the philosophical debate examines the true nature of our relation with the natural environment (ontological question) and our appropriate relation to it (ethical and meta-ethical questions). For instance, proponents of a relational approach argue that we should be sensitive and responsive to particularities of the context, including both human relations and the nonhuman world, and that we should be aware of the dependencies on that context, both for who we are and for our survival (Hourdequin and Wong, 2005). However, the question about the appropriate attitude towards nature or about the true nature of that relation is not the same as the policy-oriented concerns mentioned above. The need for an attentive attitude, for example, does not give much guidance to choice making.

In my view, the current philosophical debate has not yet been very successful in influencing the understanding of different environmental values in policy-related debates.[3] Therefore, I want to try another road, different from the ones taken so far in the debate and perhaps closer to the mindset of natural and social scientists. I will examine relational value by first discussing the value of interpersonal relations, such as friendship, as discussed by some economists and philosophers. This will lead us quickly to another, broader and rather fundamental debate in ethics, namely on care, importance and meaningfulness in life. Is there a third category besides the two main categories of motivations and practical reason, namely, those based on moral considerations and those based on self-interest? Some philosophers argue that there is such a third category, related to what we care about and meaningfulness in

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[3] Of course, there might be many reasons for this, such as philosophy never having influence on such debate. Here I will assume that conceptual clarity can increase impact.

life. Beside some potential clear distinctions, another advantage of this road is that it is helpful to understand the links between valuation and motivation.

Before taking that road, we should in the first section engage in two primary discussions. To begin with, I will examine the current policy-oriented debate and whether its central claims make sense. Subsequently, I will consider how to understand value and valuing in this context. The second section offers a fresh look at relational value, through interpersonal relations, meaningfulness, and eudaimonic values. The goal of the third and final section is to formulate a policy-relevant proposal that distinguishes the different categories of environmental values.

The current debate: from dissatisfaction to the inclusion of relation values

Ambiguities in the current debate on environmental relational values

Let us start by looking at the dissatisfaction with the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value. The first and most straightforward concern is that this distinction does not cover the whole range of valuing attitudes towards nature (e.g. Chan et al., 2016). For instance, a landscape might be important because it is meaningful to the local communities and might be part of their identity. Or, I might feel connected to the forest I played in as a child. Such valuing attitudes do not fit well into an intrinsic or instrumental category. Second, the concepts of intrinsic and instrumental values are seen as rather abstract and might not appeal to those concerned about nature ('if these are the main reasons for environmental concern, then this clearly does not apply to me') (e.g. Klain et al., 2017). Third, the notions are not always unambiguous and this applies particularly to the concept of intrinsic value. Often different interpretations are used at the same time, which has led to much confusion (O'Neill, 1992).

The concepts of relational and eudaimonic values are intuitively attractive candidates to fill the gap left open by the distinction between instrumental and intrinsic value: there is clearly something important in the way we relate to the environment (relational) and nature can play an important role in human flourishing (eudaimonic). For the moment, I focus on relational values and return to the difference with eudaimonic values towards the end of the paper.

Although attractive, the notion of relational values is not without problems. Its main attractiveness might even be its vagueness; anyone can give their own interpretation of relational values. This seems to happen in the current policy-oriented debate. Here, we briefly run over some accounts of relational values in that debate.

To begin with, relational values play an important role within the newest IPBES framework, called Nature's Contributions to People (NCP). NCP aims to be more inclusive than the Ecosystem Services approach, namely with regard to the role culture plays in human-nature relations, to indigenous and local knowledge, and to differences between scientific disciplines (Díaz et al., 2018). The papers of Diaz *et al.* (2015) and Pascual *et al.* (2017) expound the IPBES framework and both refer to the work of Chan et al. (2012, 2016), which seems to be the main reference point in the applied debate on relational values. They provide the following, somewhat complex, definition of relational values:

> 'People also consider the appropriateness of how they relate with nature and with others, including the actions and habits conducive to a good life, both meaningful and satisfying. In philosophical terms, these are relational values (preferences, principles, and virtues associated with relationships, both interpersonal and as articulated by policies and social norms). They include "eudaimonic" values, or values associated with a good life (…). Relational values are not present in things but derivative of relationships and responsibilities to them. In this sense, an individual preference or societal choice can be questioned or reframed based on its

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consistency with core values, such as justice, care, virtue, and reciprocity' (1462-1463).

They refer several times to the idea of the appropriateness of the relationship. Many of the examples they give refer to identity and symbolic importance.

Other authors have examined the notion of relational values more empirically. Arias-Arèvalo et al. (2017) examine empirically the use of intrinsic, instrumental and relational values. In their operationalization, they use a broad range of relational values, including subsistence, health, sense of place, social cohesion, leisure, symbolic value and environmental justice (2017: 7). According to their research, the most important relational values are: the subsistence value of water, mental and physical health, and altruistic concerns for other people (2017: 9). The breadth of their interpretation suggests a negative definition, namely values that do not clearly belong to the categories of intrinsic and instrumental values. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that some of these values are sometimes understood as instrumental (e.g. aesthetic appreciation) and suggest that the difference lies in the context-specificity (2017: 9). Klain et al. (2017) conducted another empirical study into relational values in order to be more inclusive of intangible values 'such as connectedness and belonging to a community (both human and non-human), sense of place and other culturally and psychologically mediated relationships between people and ecosystems' (2017: 2). Moreover, their notion includes other values such as eudaimonic values, namely 'values associated with living a good life as well as reflection about how preferences and societal choices relate to notions of justice, reciprocity, care and virtue' (2017: 2). The statements they use to test relational values refer primarily to the feeling of being connected to nature.

Interestingly, there are almost no references to philosophical papers in this policy-oriented debate. The notable exception is the work of Muraca (2011, 2016).[4] Muraca (2011) aims to

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[4] See, for instance the papers of Arias-Arèvalo *et al.* (2017), Chan *et al.* (2016) and Klain *et al.* (2017).

provide a new axiology of environmental values. In this axiology, relational values encompass all environmental values distinguished from intrinsic value. For her, the notion of relational values seems to refer to a kind of dependency. She distinguishes two main categories of relational values: either *fundamental-relational* values, namely 'ontological conditions for entities to occur at all' (2011: 383) or *functional-relational* values, namely those on which we are dependent to exercise certain functions. The latter category has two subcategories: *instrumental values* and *eudaimonistic values*. In this classification the notion of relational values is understood in a much broader and fundamental sense than it is for most of authors in the policy-oriented debate, which is most clear in the fact that relational values encompass instrumental values.

These different accounts reveal a wide range of interpretations of relational values: dependence on nature, non-intrinsic and non-instrumental, context-specificity, a feeling of connectedness, appropriateness, identity and symbolic importance. Some authors go even broader by including elements such as health, the good life and justice. While many of these elements might point in the right direction, the notion of relational values remains overly vague: should all these elements be included and how do they relate to each other? In particular, how do we demarcate relational values from intrinsic and instrumental values?

It is this question that I want to examine. My primary aim is not the understanding of the fundamental nature of our relation with the environment, nor what the most appropriate relation to nature is, nor classifying different categories of environmental goods. In my view, the inclusiveness the policy-oriented debate is looking for, is including the relevant different ways or modes of valuing. One object can be valued in different ways. Here, values should not be understood as properties of particular entities but rather as *modes* of valuing. Saying that something has an instrumental or relational value says something about *how* we are valuing the good in question.

Such an approach to valuing fits with Anderson's account of value (1993). To begin with, people have experiences of value. Things arouse positive or negative emotional responses in us. We experience something as good or bad if we are, respectively, favourably aroused (inspired, attracted, interested, pleased, awed) or unfavourably aroused (shocked, offended, disgusted, irritated, bored, pained) by things. In addition, valuing or caring about things is more fundamental than value experiences. We can value things we never have encountered in experiences, such as more abstract realities, for instance a just distribution or stable ecosystems. There are numerous ways or modes of valuing things: use (convenient things), respect (humans), appreciation (nature), consideration (sentient beings), love, honour, admiration (virtuous beings), reverence, etc. This plurality also holds for modes of disvaluing: to shun, humiliate, mock, despise, ignore, and so on. A third layer, besides experiences of value and valuing, concerns value judgements, namely judgements about valuing. First, in an evaluation we judge whether the mode of valuing is appropriate to the good that is valued. Second, we judge how far the properties of an object meet certain standards of value that apply to that particular mode of valuing.

In my view, the three categories of environmental values – instrumental, intrinsic and relational – are best seen as the three main categories of valuing attitudes towards the environment. Here, the main aim is to understand the category of relational valuing and how to distinguish it from instrumental and intrinsic valuing.

A new perspective on relational values

The value of interpersonal relations

One plausible starting point for examining relational values is to start from a more specific and narrow conception, namely the value of human relationships. Here we will briefly discuss

four features of interpersonal relations such as friendship and love, as seen by economists (Bruni & Stanca 2008; Bruni 2013) and philosophers (Anderson, 1990; Rawls, 1999).

To begin with, relational goods cannot be created (produced) by one individual (Bruni, 2013) (*mutual creation*). They require a kind of interaction and agreement. For instance, Samuel cannot decide on his own to be a John's friend; this requires some interaction and consent. Relatedly, relational goods require mutual enjoyment (Anderson, 1990: 185). There is no real love or friendship if only one partner enjoys it.

Secondly, in such relations it matters who the other person is – her or his identity matters (*identity-dependent*). For instance, a friend cannot be substituted by a random person. This is different from pure market relations, which are impersonal: it does not matter who is selling to or buying from you, nor does the identity of the good matter (e.g. which bottle of lemonade). Acts within interpersonal relations often resemble gifts and not transactions: what a good gift is depends on the person's identity, and such acts often affirm personal ties (Anderson, 1990: 185–192).

Thirdly, the motivation matters (*motivation-dependent*): this cannot be purely instrumental or self-interested. For instance, marrying for money is not called love; the same applies to friendship. There needs to be a genuine concern for the other. Moreover, one redefines one's identity and interests as including those of the other person (Anderson, 1990: 185). If one's partner is harmed, one is oneself also harmed and one wants to take care of the other, even if this goes against self-interest.

Fourthly, there is a 'shared final end' (e.g. being good friends) and this is seen as good in itself (Rawls, 1999: 456–464). Rawls discusses the example of playing a game: 'the common desire of all the players [is] that there should be a good play of the game. This shared end can be realized only if the game is played fairly according to the rules, if the sides are more or less evenly matched, and if players all sense that they are playing well. But when this aim is

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attained, everyone takes pleasure and satisfaction in the same thing' (Rawls, 1999: 461). The fact that there is a 'shared final end' implies that the interpersonal relation can be more appropriate or not. Just as a way of playing a game can be more or less appropriate, so can love or friendship be successful under certain conditions (e.g. without committing adultery). Moreover, the good at stake is seen as good in itself. The importance of love, friendship or game playing is not so much the benefits it create, but the good as such – we do not want friendship because of the benefits (e.g. reciprocal gifts), but we want the friendship as such (see also below).

Are such interpersonal relational goods relevant for environmental values? While human-nature relations often involve two or more people – e.g. trading land or shared connectedness to a landscape – it does not necessarily concern a relation between persons. For instance, we might experience a landscape as beautiful without someone else being present. So, it is probably difficult to think about human-nature relations in terms similar to interpersonal goods – for instance, could we speak of mutual enjoyment in the case of human-nature interactions? However, if we pause to consider possible parallels, then it appears that several features of interpersonal relational values might be relevant for our third category of valuing nature. To begin with, our relation with nature is often identity-dependent. If I have spent my youth in a particular landscape, I might feel connected to that particular land and not to some other piece of land. Second, in such cases one is not purely self-interested (instrumental), but rather genuinely motivated for the conservation of that particular nature. Third, just as one values friendship, one probably believes this part of nature and one's connectedness to it is valuable in itself, independent of its benefits. Fourth, our natural surroundings are often the

result of a continuous interaction between nature and humans (mutual creation) and it is particularly this type of nature people often feel connected to.[5]

Towards a broader debate: reasons of love, care and meaningfulness

The overlap between interpersonal relational values and the relational value of some human-nature relations does not imply that the latter should look like the former – for instance that we should be friends or romantic lovers with nature. Nonetheless, the similarities in structure of interpersonal values and some environmental values might indicate they are both an expression of a bigger, but similar issue. This bigger issue is a rather fundamental debate in ethics and is as well about the possibility of a third category. Susan Wolf (2007) argues that we use a false dichotomy when talking about motivations and about normative models of practical reason. People are seen as motivated either by self-interest or by something 'higher' such as reason and morality. Along similar lines, one can conceive rationality as maximizing one's self-interest or as being an impartial perspective. Wolf, however, argues that this dualistic model leaves aside an important third category of motivations and reasons.

This third category concerns reasons that motivate us to pursue projects we think are important, about which we are passionate, such as writing philosophy, practicing the cello and gardening, in a way that is not necessarily optimal for one's own well-being but also not necessarily prescribed by morality. Harry Frankfurt discusses this category under the label of 'what we care about' (1982) and later as 'reasons of love' (2009). It concerns reasons for acting out of love, both for particular people, and for non-people, as in the phrase of loving music, flowers or philosophy. Susan Wolf talks about reasons that are connected to meaningfulness *in* life.

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[5] While not self-evident, one could also think of possible mutual enjoyment: some animals might enjoy human company and some species flourish in man-made habitats, such as heaths.

Before examining the difference with self-interest and morality, let us briefly look at the connection with meaningfulness. Wolf and Frankfurt argue that this category of reasons of love is essential to leading a good and meaningful life. Wolf defines 'meaning *in* life' as being actively engaged in projects of worth. This has both a subjective component, namely being actively engaged ('find your passion'), and an objective component, namely something whose value is independent of and has its source outside of oneself ('larger than yourself') (Wolf, 2007: 85). It is not sufficient that both conditions are met independently; meaningfulness only arises if both are connected: 'meaning in life consists in and arises from actively engaging in projects of worth. According to this conception, meaning in life arises when subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness' (Wolf, 2007: 90). It is because something is valuable in some independent way, that one engages with it, and which subsequently may lead to subjective feelings of fulfillment.

Here, we are primarily interested in the difference between morality and self-interest. To begin with, are such 'projects of worth' different from projects for self-interest? One can wonder whether there really is a fundamental difference between narrow 'hedonic' and broader so-called 'eudaimonic' concerns: are we not calling the more refined, less material types of self-interest (art, science, friendship, etc.) eudaimonic, and the less refined, more material ones (fishing, eating, sport, etc.) hedonic? According to Wolf, there is a crucial difference. A central feature of such 'reasons of love' is that the object of value is something outside of ourselves. She illustrates it with the writing of philosophy (Wolf, 2007: 75):

> Just as, in the case of acting for a loved one, it is the good of that other person that
> provides us with a reason for our act, what draws us on in the nonpersonal pursuits
> I have in mind is a perceived or imagined value that lies outside of oneself. I
> agonize over the article I am trying to write because I want to get it right — that is,
> because I want the argument to be sound, the view to be correct, the writing to be
> clear and graceful. It is not for my sake — at least not only for my sake — that I

> struggle so with my work. I do not know or care whether it is best for me — that is, whether it is best from the point of view of my self-interest — that I try to improve my work beyond a certain point, any more than I care whether it is best for me that I put so much energy into making my daughter happy.

Just as I am caring for my children and for good philosophy, I might also care for nature. In both cases, it is possible that this goes against one's self-interest. One might sacrifice too many nights to writing philosophy or donate all one's spare money to nature organizations. Whether the object of value is outside or inside ourselves is a crucial difference. Nature might be valuable because it provides pleasurable experiences (inside) or because it is something one cares about (outside). The fact that caring allows for sacrifices reveals there is a significant difference with self-interest.

However, the subsequent question is that when it concerns projects more important than self-interested ones, does it then not concern morality? Obviously, we can also sacrifice ourselves for moral reasons – for instance saving a child from drowning. Nonetheless, morality is clearly different: from a moral perspective, there is a clear gap between engaging in art and helping people in need. Standard ethical theories – such as Kantianism and utilitarianism – will always give priority to moral claims. This seems to imply that reasons of love, care and meaning are comparable with self-interest, namely both should always give priority to morality. However, Wolf and Frankfurt argue that such a moralist claim is problematic. It misunderstands the importance and difference of this third category. Here, we just want to point to three problems with such a moralist claim, without entering fully into this debate.

First, the moralist claim suggests that all non-moral motivations are a matter of self-interest. However, as we have just seen, reasons of love cannot simply be reduced to self-interest. They are about goals that are seen as objectively valuable, independently of one's own self-interest.

Second, reasons of love do not only create meaningfulness, they also give a reason to live, a motivation to keep engaged with life, which is a precondition to being moral (Williams, 1981: 10–13). '[It] is hard to see how reasons for staying within the moral order could override one's reasons for doing something without which one would lose one's interest in the world, and so presumably in the moral order of the world, altogether' (Wolf, 2007: 112).

Third, always giving priority to moral claims seems problematic because it goes against having an individual personality. Because morality has the character of an imperative, it can be dominating. Other, non-moral virtues (realization in work, cultivation of art, friendship, etc.) will be crowded out if one tries to live according to the ideal of a moral saint. Because a moral saint would lack such projects, one might end up without a personality or individual character or at least a very bland one – being indistinguishable from others, being no longer a unique individual (Williams, 1981; Wolf, 1982: 423).

Can reasons of love, care or meaningfulness provide a plausible interpretation of relational environmental values? What could be prototypical examples of relationally valuing nature? Consider the following examples: I feel connected with the neighborhood forest where I played as a child; or a farmer whose family lived for several generations at the same farm surrounded by a particular landscape; or an indigenous community that feels at home in their natural surroundings and has spiritual bonds with it. Let us now look at these examples, in particular the one of the childhood forest, through the lens of the 'reasons of love' and meaningfulness in life.

First, reasons of love are personal, partial or identity-dependent. It matters what or who the object of care or love is: one cannot just replace a friend or lover by someone else. The same applies to relational valuing of nature. If I feel connected to the childhood forest, it cannot just be substituted by another forest, for instance in another province, not even if the latter has higher ecological value. I would experience such a replacement as a significant loss. My

connectedness is to particular nature and not to a general category. This concerns the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* valuation (Hare, 2007; O'Neill, 2015), which dates back to Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*. *De dicto* ('concerning a dictum, a statement') valuation is a valuation of a category or idea, for instance: a mother, a species, a bike, etc. By contrast, *de re* ('concerning a thing') valuation is a valuation about something particular: my mother, the nature reserve behind my house, my current race bike, etc. Relational valuing is not a *de dicto* mode of valuing but a *de re* valuing. I do not love or care about all local forests, or about all people; I care about my actual friends and about my childhood forest. Partiality is a crucial difference with (impartial) moral claims; from a moral point of view I may believe I have a duty to prevent all species from going extinct.

Second, my motivation for preserving this forest is not self-interested. The object of care is outside myself and seen as good in itself. I am willing to fight for its preservation, even without any intentions to visit this forest in the future. If one cares for something, then what matters is what happens to the object of care and not so much the effect on oneself. The clearest example is a parent-child relation. The parent cares about the child and wants that the child fares well. The possible benefits for the parent, such as feelings of happiness, are indirect side effects of caring. If there were a negative effect, the parent would still care for the child. Interestingly, this probably also applies to nature: even if the childhood forest had negative effects on me, that does not imply that I would stop caring.

Of course, there are benefits of caring. The most important benefit is somewhat paradoxical. Exactly because it is not about personal benefits, but about something that has value outside myself, it can create meaningfulness in our lives. People believe the object of care has a kind of objective value, namely its value is (partly) independent of one's desire for that good and of the contribution to one's well-being; it transcends their own life. It is this transcendence of one's life that allows for meaningfulness in life. One assumes that the object can be

appreciated by others or by an imaginary impartial observer. The recognition or appreciation of others of such good contributes to the experience of meaningfulness of caring (Wolf, 2007).

Third, what happens to the object of care is important for that person. A person who cares about something is often identifying with it. With regard to nature, this is usually experienced as connectedness. I identify with the childhood forest and feel connected to it. That forest is meaningful to me because it is a material link with my childhood and concretizes a more general feeling of connectedness to nature. A loss of that nature is therefore something that cannot be compensated for. Such valuation and identification is often associated with traditional and indigenous cultures, but, as the examples show, it is a rather universal possibility. Also, secularized and modern people can feel very connected to particular nature. Because of this identification one's motivation can be particularly strong: we want to care for it, else we are not consistent with ourselves. It is a matter of integrity: 'what keep us from violating are not our duties or our obligations but ourselves' (Frankfurt, 1982: 268). It is therefore no surprise that some research puts it forward as the strongest motivations with regard to nature conservation (van den Born et al., 2018).

Fourth, there is also a proper way of relating to the valued object. Some practices are appropriate to for instance game playing, friendship or philosophy writing. This might be very sensitive to the particular context: what is appropriate or counts as successful depends on the context. Interestingly, something similar probably applies to relationally valued nature. It is probably appropriate to play in the childhood forest, but that might not apply to all natural places, for instance very ecologically sensitive places. Or, suppose a natural place has a spiritual meaning to a community; that might exclude certain practices, such as playing.

In sum, when one cares about particular nature, one possibly identifies with and is strongly motivated to act for that particular nature and not because of self-interest, even possibly at a

cost to oneself. There are more and less appropriate ways of interacting with that nature and appropriate caring for that nature can contribute to leading a meaningful life.

There is also a debate on the meaning of nature, as distinct from meaning in life. Both debates are related – a meaningful nature creates chances for meaning in lives – but also different. The main question of this paper concerns the different structures of instrumental, moral and relational valuing. Some authors argue for the preservation of nature's meaning (Holland and Rawles, 1994; O'Neill et al., 2008; James, 2012), which I believe fits within an attitude of relational valuing: it is in particular to a certain meaning of nature that we feel connected, and that makes certain attitudes more or less appropriate. Starting from care, love or meaningfulness in life has, however, an advantage over an argument from nature's meaning: namely it provides a reason or motivation why people want to engage in it. For instance, James (2012) presents an argument based on Heidegger's technological dystopia: without protecting nature's meanings everything becomes purely instrumental, functional, technological; nature is becoming just a big stock of resources, 'a giant gasoline station'. While this is obviously important, as such it does not necessarily provide a reason or motivation for individuals to care about nature's meaning.

The other candidate for the third category: what about eudaimonic values?

The idea of a meaningful life brings us back to the other notion in the debate, namely eudaimonic values, which we left aside so far. Sometimes eudaimonic values are included in the broader category of relational values, sometimes seen as equal, and sometimes seen as an independent category. Eudaimonia is a concept in Aristotle's ethics. Eudaimonia is Aristotle's concept for the highest or final good for human beings. Aristotle's 'eudaimon' is more or less a synonym for '*eu zên*' or living well. A flourishing, virtuous or excellent life is about developing character traits, called virtues, such as temperance, courage and justice (cf. virtue

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ethics). 'Living well consists in doing something, not just being in a certain state or condition. It consists in those lifelong activities that actualize the virtues' (Kraut, 2018).

Eudaimonia is often also understood more narrowly, as an alternative to standard accounts of well-being, namely those that understand well-being as aimed at pleasurable feelings (hedonism) or as the satisfaction of preferences (preference-based account of well-being). An eudaimonic account is then an objective list account of well-being: well-being is seen as both pluralistic (versus value monism) and objective (versus subjective feelings and preferences) (O'Neill, 2006). More broadly, eudaimonic refers to an account of well-being that is seen as richer, including immaterial goods such as friendship, art, spirituality, science, etc.

The wide range of definitions of eudaimonic environmental values often include the two aspects just discussed, namely Aristotelian ideas (flourishing, good life, virtues) and a pluralistic objective list account of well-being. For instance, Pascual et al. (Pascual et al., 2017: 15) provide a typical definition: 'Another type of relational values, eudaimonistic values are associated with a good life, which include considerations of principles and virtues, and value the actions and habits that are conducive to a meaningful and satisfying life.' The different definitions of eudaimonic values often contain the following elements: (i) (necessary) conditions for a good life (Muraca, 2011: 384; Chan et al., 2016: 1462–1463; Pascual et al., 2017: 15); (ii) idea of human flourishing (Muraca, 2011: 389; van den Born et al., 2018: 4); (iii) good in itself (Muraca, 2011: 388); (iv) reflection on and appropriateness of preferences (against preference-based account of well-being) (Muraca, 2011: 389; Chan et al., 2016: 1463; Klain et al., 2017: 2); (v) meaningfulness (Pascual et al., 2017: 15); (vi) and can include notions of justice, responsibility, reciprocity, care and virtue (Muraca, 2011: 389; Klain et al., 2017: 2).

While there is something to say for all these elements, there are, however, at least three problems with the definitions used. Firstly, they are often somewhat vague and broad, leaving

the reader unsure what such values are exactly about. Secondly, it is unclear how all these elements relate to the value of nature. If nature is important for human flourishing and the good life, how is this so? If nature is instrumental to the good life, why is it not an instrumental value then? Thirdly and related, how would this eudaimonic value relate to other categories of values. Not only is the relation to self-interest undefined ('contributing to the good life'), also the relation with morality is unclear, since some authors include ideas such as responsibilities and justice. It is not clear, therefore, how these definitions can help us grasp the different types of values for nature in practice.

Based on interviews with committed actors for nature, van den Born *et al.* (2018) argue that eudaimonic values are the third 'missing pillar', beside hedonic (instrumental) values and moral values. They use eudaimonic values as a synonym for relational values (van den Born et al., 2018: 4, 11). While starting from a rather broad, Aristotelean definition (2018: 4), through their research they arrive at a more applicable and specific definition of eudaimonic values: 'It is about having a meaningful life. Nature's eudemonic value makes people act for nature because they feel connected with nature and acting for it gives meaning to their life' (De Groot et al., 2016: 2,7).

This interpretation of eudaimonic value is very close to the category we have been discussing, namely the category of reasons of love and meaningfulness; the label itself reveals that it is important for leading a good or meaningful life. Also several of the elements in most of the definitions are close to our earlier discussion on relational values: meaningfulness, appropriateness, and good in itself. Understood in this way, there is no need to distinguish eudaimonic from relational values. 'Relational' perhaps refers more to the source – our feeling of connectedness with nature – and 'eudaimonic' refers more to the effect – a good and meaningful life, but both nonetheless seem to refer to the same phenomenon.

Back to practice: labels and demarcation criteria

The main point of this article is to establish that there are three main modes of valuing nature. The employed labels – intrinsic, instrumental and relational – are just one possible way of labelling. While these concepts are introduced in philosophy to clarify a problem, they might create confusion outside that context. There might be more intuitively insightful labels, possibly closer to common language. This applies in particular to the notion of intrinsic value. Especially in a policy-oriented context, it might be more interesting to work with a category of 'nature as morally important'.[6] Most people have an intuitive understanding of what 'the moral' is and this somewhat avoids the inevitable controversies about nature's possible intrinsic value. The intrinsic value of nature then means that one *ought* to preserve (certain) parts of nature because that nature is valuable as such. Another advantage is that it allows the inclusion of other moral reasons, such as preservation for future generations, which concerns a similar mode of valuing.

For the other two modes of valuing there is also a wide range of possible labels. Alternatives for instrumental valuing could be: hedonic, utilitarian, functional or self-interested value of nature. While a utilitarian or self-interested mode of valuing might be the most correct, the notion of 'instrumental value of nature' is perhaps closer to common language. Alternatives for relational valuing are: meaningful, identity-related and connectedness. Again, each has its own contras: relational is vague; meaningful is difficult to use as adjective; identity-related suggest rather strongly that nature should be experienced as an inherent part of who I am; and connectedness appears to refer primarily to a feeling. Since most authors employ relational value, this is probably a good reason to stick to it, but 'nature as meaningful' would at least be an equally valid option.

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[6] Nonetheless, 'intrinsic value' and 'moral value' are not the same. A moral mode of valuing might be broader than assigning intrinsic value (e.g. including justice considerations). At the same time, assigning intrinsic value could also be part of a relational mode of valuing (e.g. the non-instrumental value of a forest one feels connected to).

While labelling categories is partly a matter of choice, defining how to distinguish the different categories is a fundamental conceptual issue. However, by basing our categories on the debate about reasons of love, the distinctions have already been made above. First, there is the distinction between moral and relational valuing. The main difference is that morality has an impartial nature. If we believe we have a moral obligation to prevent species going extinct, this applies to all species. By contrast, relational valuing is partial or personal. The identity of the good matters. For instance, heather landscapes might be valuable for the preservation of certain species (moral), but a community can be attached to the particular heather landscape in its vicinity (relational). While partiality provides the clearest distinction with moral valuing, some of the other aspects differ in general as well, such as identity, appropriateness and context sensitivity. However, with regard to these elements the distinction between moral and relational is often more complex, for instance moral valuing can also play a role in one's identity.

The second distinction is the one between instrumental and relational valuing. As argued earlier, it is mistaken to reduce relational values or meaningfulness to a kind of subtle self-interest. The main difference is that the object of value lies outside the actor. However, it is unclear whether this provides a clear demarcation because in the case of nature the object of value always seems to lie outside oneself. Of course, the discussion concerns the reasons why this object matters, but this might be more complicated than necessary for policy-oriented applications. Therefore, it is more interesting to look at another difference, namely substitutability. In the case that something is of instrumental value, the good at stake can be substituted as long as the same goal is realized, such as well-being or economic benefits. Such substitutability cannot apply to meaningfulness since it is the identity of the good that matters and this can by definition not be substituted. For instance, it is characteristic for friendship that a friend cannot be replaced by a random other person. However, sometimes friends can

be substituted.[7] If Peter cannot make it to our trip tomorrow, I can call Tim to replace him. Of course, both friends can create comparable – and thus substitutable – benefits, such as enjoyable company. The point is that I cannot replace Peter *as a friend* by someone else - that would be a serious loss, even if a very likeable person replaces him. The same applies to nature. I could substitute a walk in my local forest by one in a nature reserve far away, but if I really feel connected to this local forest, then it cannot be replaced by some other nature, not even with a bigger and more biodiverse one. This is different from some (but not all) moral arguments about ecological value. If it is our duty to preserve certain ecological values (e.g. biodiversity), then there are cases in which it is justified to replace nature with some other nature with a higher ecological value.

What is the relevance of distinguishing different modes of valuing? What is relevant is not so much to put all experiences in the right category, but rather being aware that there exist three fundamentally different modes of valuing nature. As we stated in the beginning, the three categories are important for both environmental decision-making and promoting environmental motivations. In both cases, it is crucial to take the three modes of valuing into account. In some cases, all three modes are relevant, in some other cases only one or two modes. Understanding the content and being able to see the differences is a precondition to taking these different modes of valuing into account.

Conclusion

Because of dissatisfaction with the existing distinction between intrinsic and instrumental values, some recent policy-oriented publications, including the current IPBES framework, have put forward a third category of environmental values, namely relational or eudaimonic values. However, there is much confusion in this debate about the content of the concepts

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[7] I owe this remark to a reviewer of this journal.

'relational' and 'eudaimonic' values. These ambiguities hinder useful applications in policy debates.

For applied purposes, the debate on environmental values is best understood as being about different modes of valuing nature. This paper argued that there are three fundamentally different modes of valuing nature, namely a moral (nature as morally important), instrumental (nature as instrumentally important) and relational mode (nature as meaningful). This paper argued that this latter 'nature as meaningful' mode of valuing is the best interpretation for both 'relational' and 'eudaimonic' mode of valuing.

Understanding such relational valuing was done by looking at a fundamental debate in ethics, namely the debate about a possible third category of reasons and motivations besides reasons from morality and self-interest. The third category, labelled as reasons of love or care, or as meaningfulness, has several important features: it is partial or personal; the object of value is outside oneself and is seen as good in itself; the object of care can be part of one's identity; it can contribute to meaningfulness in life; and there is an context-dependent way of interacting appropriately.

An important goal of this paper was to provide clear distinctions between the different modes of valuing of nature. The main difference between a moral and a relational way of valuing concerns partiality. Relational value is about particular nature: the forest of my childhood; the valley the community is living in; etc. Morality is about a more impartial nature, for instance we should preserve drinking water reserves for future generations – it is not a particular water reserve that is more important than others. A good way to understand the main difference between instrumental and relational valuing is asking the question of substitutability. Again, this refers to a large extent to the issue of partiality. It is because this particular landscape is important for who we are, that it cannot be replaced by another.

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In my view, there are no clear reasons why one mode of valuing nature should be prioritized in all cases, but it seems of high importance that all three modes of valuing are taken into account when designing environmental policy and when promoting environmental motivations. It is this aim that underlies projects such as the current IPBES framework and for which this paper is providing conceptual tools.

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