

Ethics: The Environment (Summer 2012, Laura Guidry-Grimes)

ANTHROPOCENTRISM

SOURCE VS. LOCUS OF VALUE

- ◎ **Source:** determines what value entities have
 - If humans are the sole source of value, then they determine whether to value (e.g.) trees for their own sake or only extrinsically
- ◎ **Locus:** value within or for itself
 - An entity can be a locus of intrinsic value *without* being a source of value if (e.g.) humans decide to value it for its own sake.



ANTHROPOCENTRISM: STRONG VS. WEAK

- ◎ **Test of adequacy:** “if its principles are sufficient to entail rules proscribing the behaviors involved in the noncontroversial set” (164)
- ◎ **In common:** humans as only locus of value
- ◎ **Strong:** Humans’ felt preferences given priority – no criticism of these preferences from environmental POV
- ◎ **Weak:** criticize value systems, felt preferences, and worldviews based on *considered preferences*

SO HOW SHOULD NATURE BE VALUED?

- ⦿ **Considered preferences:** “idealization in the sense that it can only be adopted after a person has rationally accepted an entire world view and, further, has succeeded in altering his felt preferences so that they are consonant with that world view” (164)
- ⦿ **Ideals of harmony** → basis of criticism
- ⦿ **Contact with nature** → values informed → natured valued as teacher/inspiration



PARFIT'S NON-IDENTITY PROBLEM



- ◎ “in the different [projected] outcomes [of possible decisions], different people would be born” (*Reasons and Persons*, 359)
- Time-Dependence Claim: The time of conception determines which particular person will come into existence.
- A morally repugnant policy that changes the composition of the population *cannot* make those individuals *worse off* (unless their lives are not worth living), since those *particular* people would not have existed at all without the institution of that policy.

NONINDIVIDUALISM

- ⊙ Given Parfit's Non-Identity Problem: "current policy cannot be governed by reference to harms to the interests of future individuals" (168)
- ⊙ Distinctive project of environmental ethics: establish generalized obligation to protect the stability, health, and integrity of resources
 - Resource distribution as related but individualist (thus not distinctive) project
 - Stems from value of human consciousness



NORMS OF FEELING

◎ McShane's argument

- What attitude, disposition, and emotional connection ought we to have re: nature?
- Cannot properly feel respect, awe, or love without believing that the other (nature) has value in itself
 - Do you think this is true?
 - Is it problematic if a theory marks these feelings as misguided, mistaken, or inappropriate?



OBJECTIONS? PROBLEMS?



- Is Norton's adequacy test acceptable? Should we have other standards for ethical theories?
- To avoid Parfit's paradox, must we adopt nonindividualism?
- Can anthropocentric ethicists always respond adequately to environmental concerns?
- What should be some constraints on a *rational* worldview?
- Even if we concede that anthropocentric arguments can be effective, why should we think that humans are the only locus of value?
- How important are norms of feeling?

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

- ◉ Callicott, J. Baird. “On the Intrinsic Value of Nonhuman Species” in *The Preservation of Species*. Ed. Brian G. Norton. NJ: Princeton UP, 1986.
- ◉ Lee, Keekok. “The Source and Locus of Intrinsic Value: A Reexamination” in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*. Eds. Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston III. MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. 154–162.
- ◉ Nunez, Theodore W. “Rolston, Lonergan, and the Intrinsic Value of Nature.” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 27.1 (Spring 1999): 105–128.
- ◉ Parfit, Derek. *Reasons and Persons*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1984.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?