

# INTRODUCING ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Ethics: The Environment, Summer 2012  
Laura Guidry-Grimes



## What has value?

Non-human animals? Only animals of a certain type? Trees? Water? Rock formations? Ecosystems?



## Why do certain things have value?

Valuable in themselves? Valuable because they serve something else we value?

**intrinsic vs. extrinsic value**

**directly vs. indirectly morally considerable**



## What are some difficulties in determining value?

- How do we know if something is intrinsically valuable?
- How do we measure and compare value?
- What relation must obtain between A and Z if A is good *because of* Z?
- Are some types of values ultimately irrelevant or imagined?



## What are different types of value?

- Aesthetic
- Pragmatic
- Cultural/historical
- Universal
- Subjective
- Inherent
- Instrumental
- Theological/divine
- Communal
- Dignitary



Moral duties to whom? And why?

**Moral patients vs. moral agents**



## Anthropocentrism

What are some anthropocentric arguments?

What are some benefits and costs of this way of thinking?



## Why an environmental ethic?

Richard Sylvan (Routley)'s argument:

1. Incorporate environmental principles within prevailing ethical system?
2. Expand or modify prevailing ethical system?
3. If not (1) or (2), then need new ethical system to address environmental principles



## Human chauvinism

One should be able to do what he/she wishes, as long as

- 1) he/she does not harm others, and
- 2) he/she is not likely to harm him-/herself irreparably



## Counterexamples to Chauvinism Principle

What's the purpose of these counterexamples?

- *Last man* who kills everything (humanely)
- *Last people* who kill everything (humanely)
- *Great entrepreneur* who produces and trashes
- *Vanishing species* that is destroyed through free market commercial uses



## What do you think of Sylvan's argument?

- Does he characterize Western ethical systems correctly? Do you agree that these systems cannot accommodate environmental principles?
- Do you agree with what he thinks environmentalists have to be committed to?
- Do you agree that “[h]uman interests and preferences are far too parochial to provide a satisfactory basis for deciding what is environmentally desirable”?



Questions? Comments?