

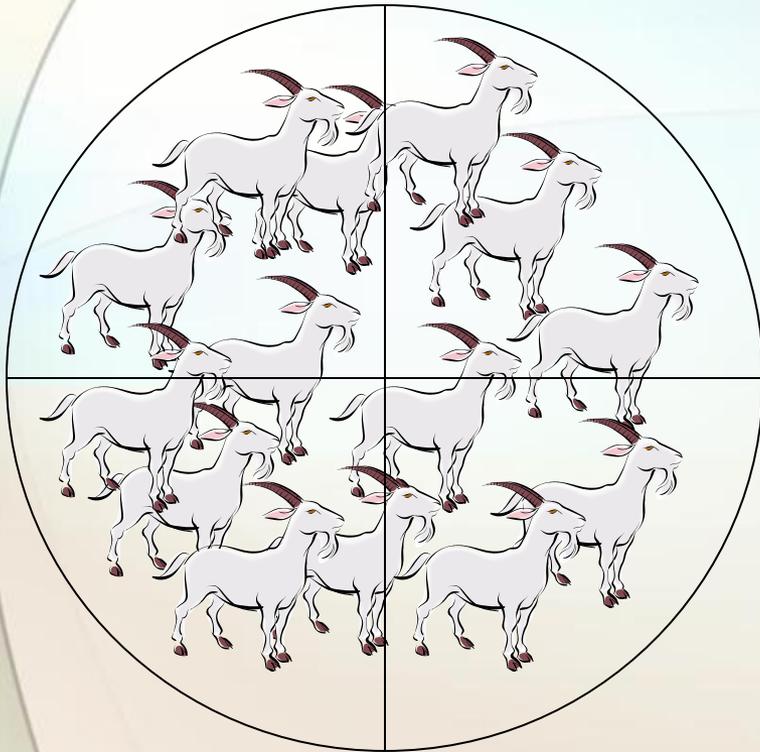
Valuing Nature: Biocentric Approaches

Environmental Ethics

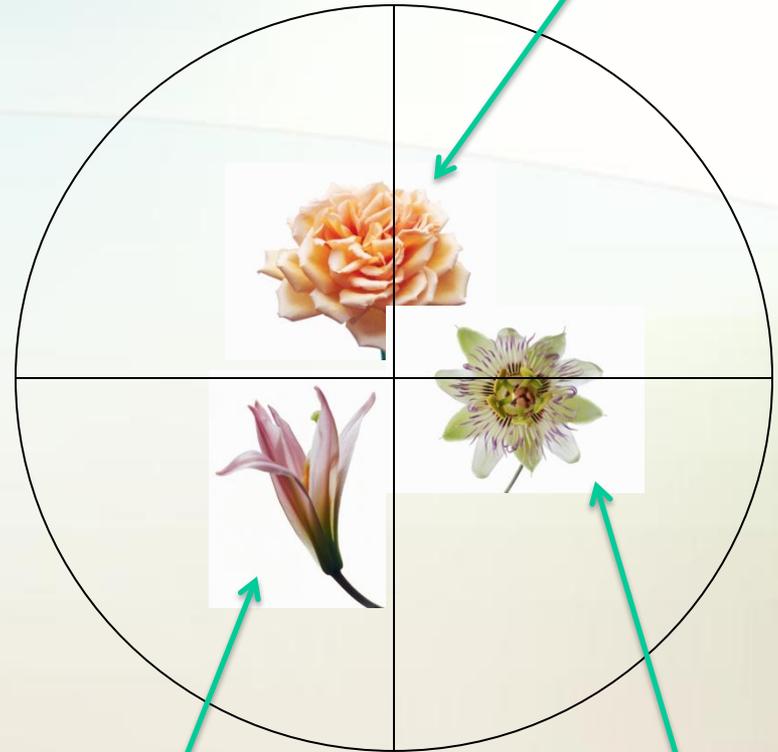
Summer 2012

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Ethical Dilemma



Common
goat



Endangered

Endangered

Endangered

Taking Conservation Seriously

- Rolston III
 - Humanist and hedonist ethics are inadequate, should adopt bio-logic and a vital ethic
 - Systemic value: “Duties arise in encounters with the system that projects and protects these member components in biotic community” (38)



Why Value Species and Ecosystems?

- Rolston III:
 - Species: “dynamic life form maintained over time”
 - Ecosystems: support life, promote and integrate species, increase interdependency, add diversification and richness



Taylor: Eliminating Human Bias

- Good of an organism: “full development of its biological powers” (75)
- Good of a community: “maintaining itself from generation to generation” (75)
- Biocentric outlook: “interdependence of all living things in an organically unified order whose balance and stability are necessary conditions for the realization of the good of its constituent biotic communities” (75)

Taylor: Building a Biocentric Outlook

- Humans on equal-footing as members of biotic community (species equality)
- Biotic community comprised of interconnected, interdependent elements
- Each individual organism as purposeful center of life
- Inherent superiority of humans as arbitrary and groundless

Why Should We Privilege Humans?

Cenozoic	Quaternary	Recent	0.01	Historical time	
		Pleistocene		Ice ages; humans appear	
	Tertiary	Pliocene	5	Ape-like ancestors of humans appear	
		Miocene	23	Continued radiation of mammals and angiosperms	
		Oligocene	35	Origins of many primate groups, including apes	
		Eocene	57	Angiosperm dominance increases; continued radiation of most modern mammalian orders	
		Paleocene	65	Major radiation of mammals, birds, and pollinating insects	
Mesozoic	Cretaceous		Flowering plants (angiosperms) appear; many groups of organisms, including dinosaurs, become extinct at end of period (Cretaceous extinctions)		
	Jurassic	144	Gymnosperms continue as dominant plants; dinosaurs abundant and diverse		
	Triassic	206	Cone-bearing plants (gymnosperms) dominate landscape; radiation of dinosaurs		
Paleozoic	Permian	245	Extinction of many marine and terrestrial organisms (Permian mass extinction); radiation of reptiles; origins of mammal-like reptiles and most modern orders of insects		
	Carboniferous	290	Extensive forests of vascular plants; first seed plants; origin of reptiles; amphibians dominant		
	Devonian	363	Diversification of bony fishes; first amphibians and insects		
	Silurian	409	Diversity of jawless fishes; first jawed fishes; diversification of early vascular plants		
	Ordovician	439	Marine algae abundant; colonization of land by plants and arthropods		
	Cambrian	510	Radiation of most modern animal phyla (Cambrian explosion)		
	Precambrian		600	Diverse soft-bodied invertebrate animals; diverse algae	
		2,200	Oldest fossils of eukaryotic cells		
		2,700	Atmospheric oxygen begins to increase		
		3,500	Oldest fossils of cells (prokaryotes)		
		3,800	Earliest traces of life		
	4,600	Approximate time of origin of Earth			



So what?

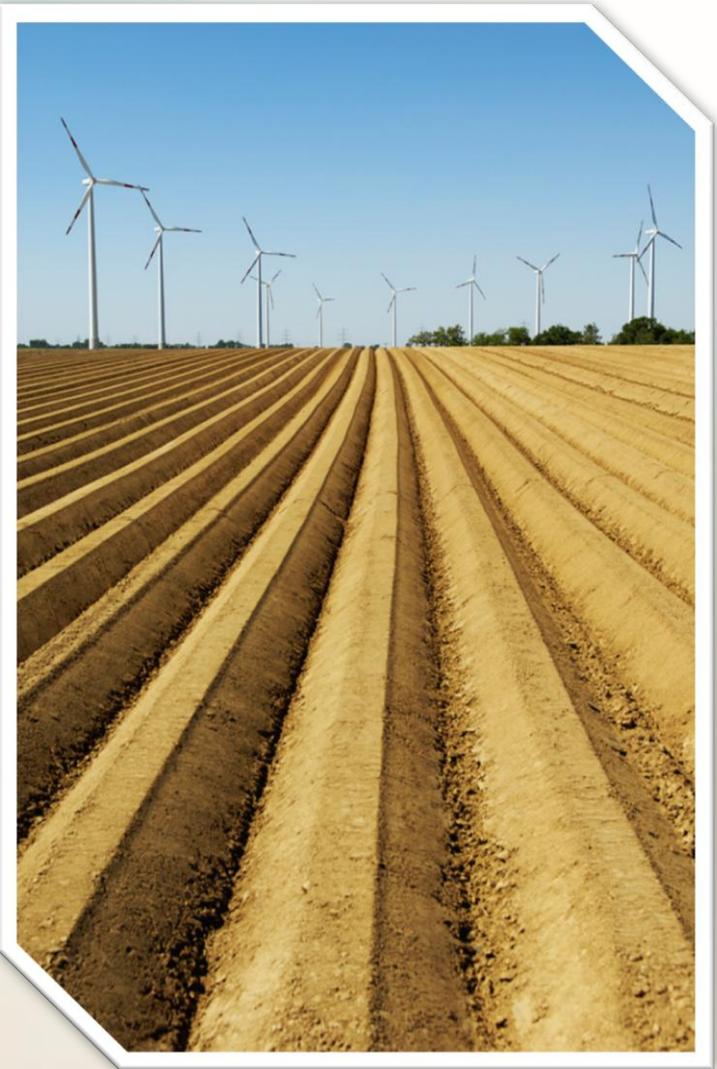
Taylor: Why Should We Privilege Humans?

- Merit?
- Inherent worth?
- Why would we assume humans win on either of these counts...unless we assume superiority from the offset (begging the question)



Leopold on Expanding Moral Concern

- Ecological ethic: “limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence” (38)
- Conservation: “state of harmony between men and land” (40)
- History of ethics
 1. Relation between individuals
 2. Between individual and society
 3. Between individual and land



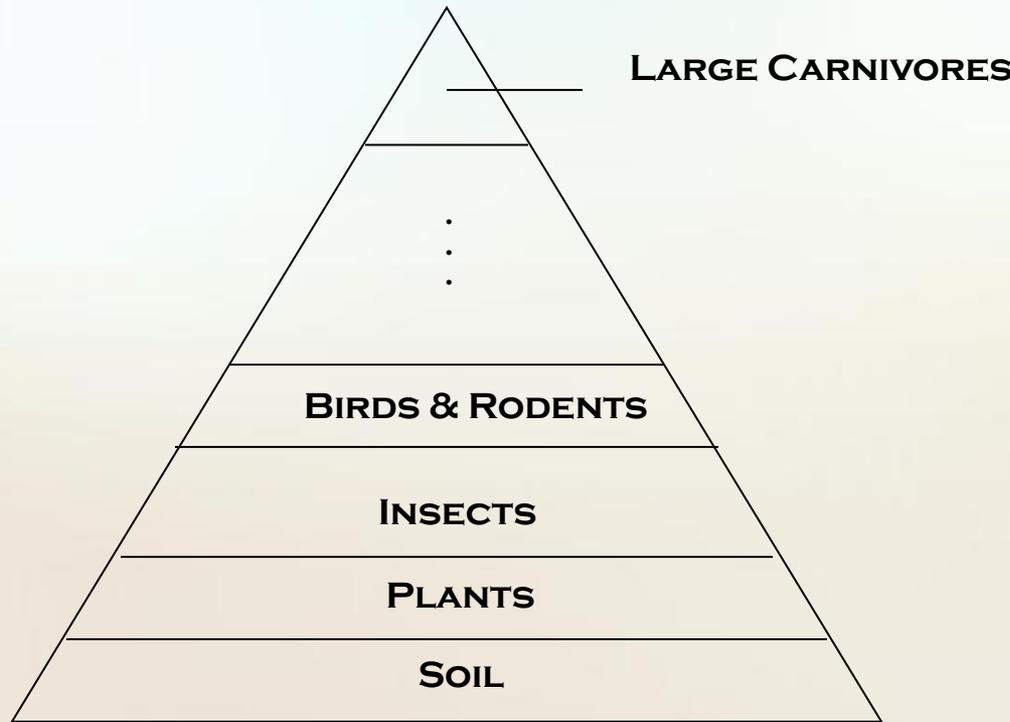
Land Pyramid: Biota (Leopold)

Naturally:

Fewer numbers near the top

Evolution adds layers

Bottom provides energy/food for top (upward flow)



Due to human intervention:

Reduced carrying capacity

Reduced complexity



Land Ethic

Divisions among conservationists:

SIDE A (TO BE REJECTED)

SIDE B (PROPOSAL)

- Economic motives
 - Commodification, economic valuing of nature
- Limited concern for integrity, stability of system
- Anthropocentric
- Science as sword
- Land as slave
- Humans as conquerors



- Biotic and economic motives → *ecological conscience*
- Natural species, environment, and reproduction integral to plans
- Science as searchlight
- Land as collective organism
- Humans as citizens



Types of Change

Evolutionary:
slow, “natural”

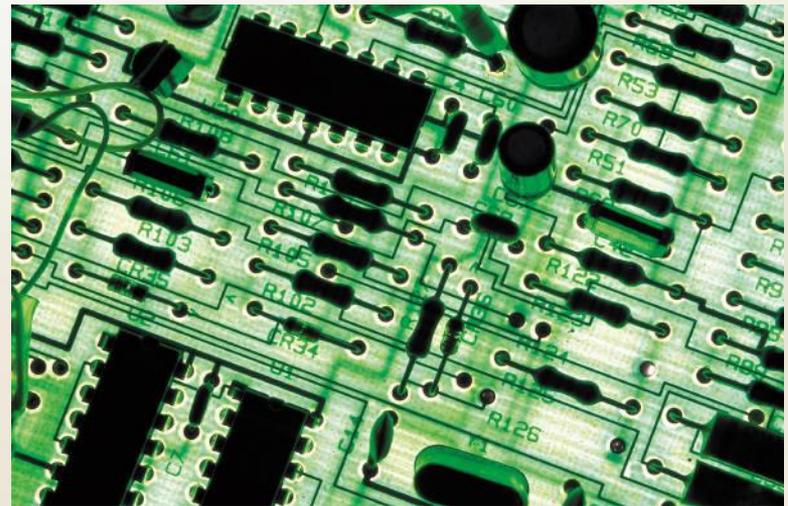


Anthropogenic:
violent, “artificial”



Leopold's Conclusion

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (46)



Objections?

- Too demanding?
 - Species equality...?
- Too permissive?
 - Allows hunting, killing sentient creatures for sake of biodiversity, ecosystem
- Fallacy of composition
 - \mathcal{A} has value V , and \mathcal{B} is part of \mathcal{A} , so therefore \mathcal{B} has value V



QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?