

Ethics

Applied Ethics

Environmental Ethics

Script Booklet



Preface

This script booklet is all about environmental ethics. It is a series of presentation scripts that survey the important elements of this novel branch of applied ethics, introduce significant concepts and issues (like sustainability, waste management, and climate change), and investigate the ideas of well-known thinkers (like James Lovelock and Arne Næss). They also cover important debates in environmental ethics, and legal, social, and religious perspectives on the various issues arising from them. They are designed to interest, inform, and inspire further independent enquiry among students.

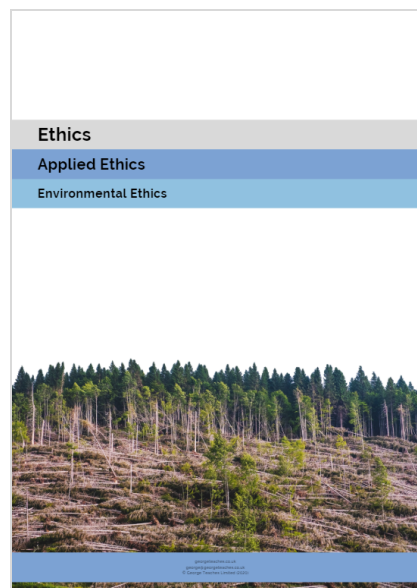
This script booklet follows the presentation available at George Teaches, and is designed for use in conjunction with it. It is accompanied by an information booklet and work booklet, which can be used to support teaching and learning. Additional materials on James Lovelock and Arne Næss can be accessed online, which comprehensively summarise their famous works on environmental ethics. Throughout this script booklet, interpuncts (•) are used to indicate forward presentation transitions, and presentation images are used to visualise areas the content covers.

I am deeply indebted to my colleagues for the production of this publication, which has been inspired by their desire for more extensive and holistic resources for teaching and learning about ethics. At all times, I have attempted to produce material that covers popular and important content, but is not confined by the straitjacket of any particular curriculum or specification. Consequently, whilst this covers all of the relevant content for environmental ethics at A Level, it goes far beyond. My earnest hope is that it is capable of helping teachers to both support students of all abilities and challenge the most able to embark upon their own self-directed enquiries. Above all, it is my sincerest wish that it proves beneficial to your teaching, and the learning that you (like me) try to inspire among all your students.



George Teaches

London, UK
25 March 2020



Contents



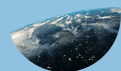
Introduction to Environmental Ethics

4



Issues in Environmental Ethics

6



James Lovelock on Environmental Ethics

8



Arne Næss on Environmental Ethics

10



Debates in Environmental Ethics

12



Legal and Social Perspectives in Environmental Ethics

14



Religious Perspectives in Environmental Ethics

16



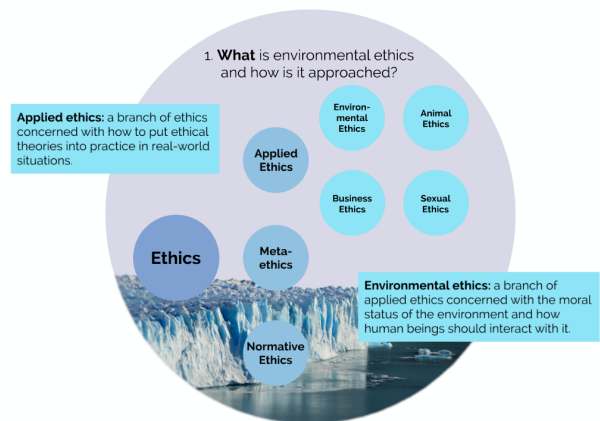
3

Introduction to Environmental Ethics

Hi! This lesson is an introduction to environmental ethics, which is a fascinating, growing and ever-evolving area in applied ethics. I find it interesting, because it deals with some of the most pressing issues of our time: if the science is to be believed, we're all in for a very bumpy ride over the next century or more. And it's growing and ever-evolving because it's so responsive to scientific discoveries and developments. Before 1990, even though many philosophers were deeply concerned about the state of the environment, environmental ethics wasn't really a thing. But ever since the year of my birth (yes, believe it or not, I'm a child of the nineties - just), interest in the area has exploded, and now a number of universities offer master's and doctoral programmes in it. Why's it grown? Well, people have woken up to what we're doing to the environment, which has led to the global debate that environmental ethics seeks to support. Anyway, over the course of this lesson we're going to consider this and much more, including: one, what environmental ethics is and how it's approached; two, how the approaches work; and three, why environmental ethics and its approaches are important.

• So, without further ado, what is environmental ethics, and how is it approached? • Well, first we're going to locate it within the field of ethics, which has three major branches: • applied ethics, • meta-ethics, • and normative ethics. • Environmental ethics is a branch of applied ethics, and is located alongside others like • animal ethics, • business ethics, • and sexual ethics, although there are many, many more. • What defines applied ethics is its concern with how to put ethical theories into practice in the real world. It's practical! By comparison, meta-ethics and normative ethics are abstract and theoretical. By way of very brief explanation, meta-ethics is concerned with investigating whether or not morality even exists, that is to say whether or not the words "right" and "wrong" actually mean anything; assuming they do, normative ethics is concerned with investigating how to decide whether an action is right or wrong (and the different ways of doing this). As we can see, both these branches are deeply theoretical. On the other hand, applied ethics deals with real-world situations: how to treat animals, how to treat customers, how to treat sexual partners, and, of course, how to treat the environment. • Which brings us nicely to our working definition of environmental ethics: a branch of applied ethics concerned with the moral status of the environment (in other words, its value and rights (if any)) and how we should interact with it. • Now, the extent to which the environment has value and rights is largely dictated by beliefs that aren't directly related to environmental ethics: • anthropocentrism, • biocentrism, • and theocentrism. More on these later, but for now all we need to know is that they lead to two important approaches to environmental ethics: • anthropocentrism and biocentrism lead to conservation, which is the secular practice of caring for the environment because it's beneficial to human beings or because it's beneficial to all living things; • and theocentrism leads to stewardship, which is the Christian practice of caring for the environment because it's a God-given gift. On the face of it, these approaches appear similar because both encourage care for the environment, but, as we'll discover, there are a lot of differences. Fundamentally, conservation isn't religious, and is inspired by the idea that caring for the environment is either • good for people • or good for all living things. Stewardship on the other hand is religious, and is inspired by the idea that caring for the environment is • what God wants.

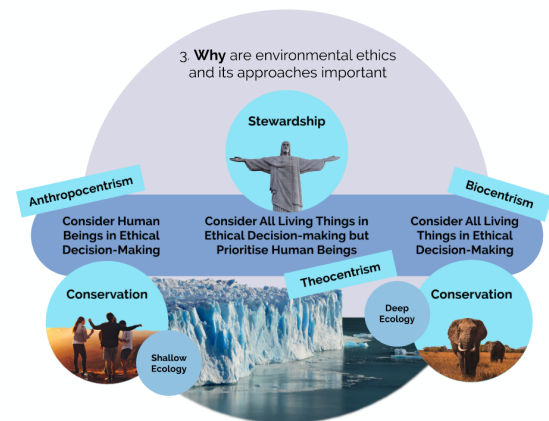
• So, how do the approaches to environmental ethics work? Well, we know what they are: • conservation and • stewardship. • Now, some people practice conservation and care for the environment because it's beneficial to human beings. • They're inspired by anthropocentrism, which is the belief that we're the most important things in the universe. They support conservation because we rely on the environment for survival, so must take care of it to preserve our species - up to a point. You see, we don't need to take care of it for its own sake, it's only value is as a tool for our survival. This view of the environment ascribes it instrumental value: this means it doesn't have any value in its own right, it's just an instrument for human use that only needs enough care for it to fulfil its function: keeping us alive! • On the other hand, some people practice conservation because it's beneficial to all living things, and these are the people we think about when we imagine modern eco-warriors. • They're inspired by biocentrism, which is



the belief that life is the most important thing in the universe. They support conservation because they argue the environment has moral status. In other words, it has intrinsic value; in fact, it would be a thing of great value even if we weren't around to appreciate or benefit from it. • Finally, some Christians practice stewardship and care for the environment because the Bible suggests it's what God wants. • They're inspired by theocentrism, which is the belief that God is the most important thing in the universe. Christians who adopt this approach, which is most of them nowadays, take care of the environment because they believe it's part of God's good creation. They argue that God didn't create the environment so we could thoughtlessly damage and destroy it; he created it so that we could use it responsibly to fulfil his plan for us. In brief, the environment is a gift, and as grateful recipients we should treat it carefully and with respect.



•• This leaves us with only one thing left to contemplate, why environmental ethics and its approaches are important, • and we're going to use this continuum to help us. On the left, we have one position that's taken in ethical decision-making regarding the environment: the interests of human beings are the only ones that should be considered. This means the interests of other living things are disregarded, and the environment is only cared for to the extent that it's useful to human beings. In the middle we have another position: the interests of all living things should be considered in ethical decision-making, but human beings should be prioritised if there's a conflict of interests. And on the right we have our final position: the interests of all living things should be considered in ethical decision-making and treated equally. In other words, all forms of life should be ascribed equal value, and decisions made accordingly. • Conservation that's inspired by • anthropocentrism falls on the left-hand side of the spectrum. • Stewardship falls squarely in the middle, • and is obviously inspired by theocentrism. • And conservation that's inspired by • biocentrism falls on the right-hand side. So, you can see that the approaches in environmental ethics are important because they dictate the positions that people take towards environmental issues. And there are some big differences in position within apparently homogeneous approaches, by which I mean unified or singular. For example, we might imagine that so-called conservationists all think and act the same way, but they don't. Some could barely be described as caring for the environment, because they only ascribe it instrumental value to human beings. Conservationists inspired by biocentrism have a term for this movement: • shallow ecology. They use it pejoratively, which means it's a dirty term; they're ultimately suggesting that some people's concern for the environment is only skin deep. On the other hand, they label their own movement • deep ecology, to show that their concern is profound and life-changing. Stewards of course sit somewhere in the middle, but not always happily: whilst they're relatively naturally aligned with the deep ecology movement, their belief in God is often an obstacle to joint action because many conservationists inspired by biocentrism are also atheists.



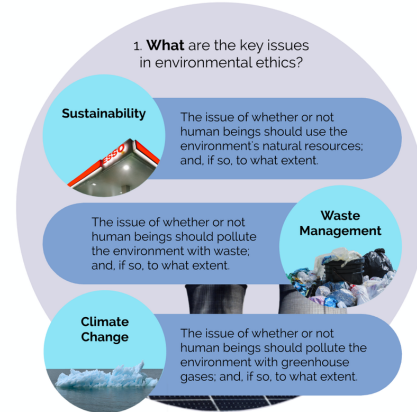
And on the right we have our final position: the interests of all living things should be considered in ethical decision-making and treated equally. In other words, all forms of life should be ascribed equal value, and decisions made accordingly. • Conservation that's inspired by • anthropocentrism falls on the left-hand side of the spectrum. • Stewardship falls squarely in the middle, • and is obviously inspired by theocentrism. • And conservation that's inspired by • biocentrism falls on the right-hand side. So, you can see that the approaches in environmental ethics are important because they dictate the positions that people take towards environmental issues. And there are some big differences in position within apparently homogeneous approaches, by which I mean unified or singular. For example, we might imagine that so-called conservationists all think and act the same way, but they don't. Some could barely be described as caring for the environment, because they only ascribe it instrumental value to human beings. Conservationists inspired by biocentrism have a term for this movement: • shallow ecology. They use it pejoratively, which means it's a dirty term; they're ultimately suggesting that some people's concern for the environment is only skin deep. On the other hand, they label their own movement • deep ecology, to show that their concern is profound and life-changing. Stewards of course sit somewhere in the middle, but not always happily: whilst they're relatively naturally aligned with the deep ecology movement, their belief in God is often an obstacle to joint action because many conservationists inspired by biocentrism are also atheists.

•• That brings us to the end of this introduction to environmental ethics; now you know what it is, how it's approached, and why it's important. As I confessed earlier, I find it a fascinating area because it deals with issues that threaten our survival and the future of life on Earth. In other words, it's pretty important. And, of course, it's exciting and new, and evolving so fast. But it's also changed the way I live my life, which hasn't been the case with all branches of applied ethics. When I was growing up, I'm ashamed to admit I wasn't particularly fussed about the state of the environment, in fact, I took it entirely for granted. But reading about environmental issues and seeing the damage and destruction of the environment first-hand has changed me. I don't want a second car; I want to live in a small, energy efficient home: my attitude to life is very different from when I was a teenager. Perhaps your views have changed and evolved too; but, whatever they are, be prepared to discuss them, because they're sure to be hotly debated over the course of your lifetime. And on that alarming note, goodbye!

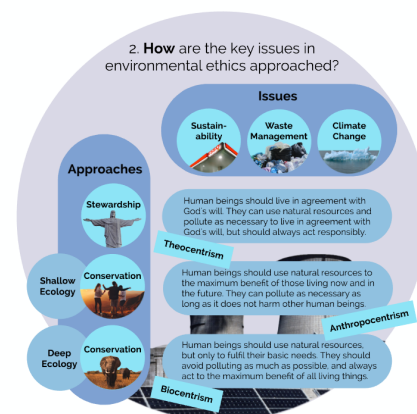
Issues in Environmental Ethics

Hi! This lesson is all about issues in environmental ethics. Broadly speaking, issues are areas of debate, and in this context they arise from the harmful effects that we have on the environment. Basically, some human activities are especially damaging and destructive to the natural world, which leads to debate about whether or not we should engage in them; and, if we should, to what extent. For reasons that will become increasingly apparent, there aren't any easy answers, and the positions that people take depend almost entirely on their individual approaches to environmental ethics and the beliefs that underpin them. Anyway, over the course of this lesson we're going to explore what these key issues are, how they're approached, and what the consequences of these approaches are (in other words, why they're important).

• So, without further ado, what are the key issues in environmental ethics? Well, truth be told there are too many for us to deal with here, but we're going to look at three big ones. • The first is sustainability, which is the issue of whether or not human beings should use the environment's natural resources; and, if so, to what extent. Mining and drilling for fossil fuels like coal and oil is very damaging, which raises questions about whether or not we should do it: are the environmental scars of open cast mines and oil spills worth it? • The second is waste management, which is the issue of whether or not human beings should pollute the environment with waste; and, if so, to what extent. Landfill contaminates hundreds of thousands of acres of land across the world, and approximately eight million tons of plastic waste is dumped into Earth's oceans every year. We produce a huge amount of rubbish that clutters up the environment and kills other living things, which raises questions about whether or not we should be forced to use recyclable materials and prohibit the production of single-use items. • The third is climate change, which is the issue of whether or not human beings should pollute the environment with greenhouse gases; and, if so, to what extent. This issue is probably the most famous, because the effects of climate change are just as terrifying for us as they are for animals. Human beings aren't generally harmed by consuming natural resources and producing waste (the natural world pays the price); but tens of thousands of people die every year from climate related causes. The World Health Organisation estimates that global warming already kills 150,000 people a year and causes another five million diseases. And there's a similarly horrific effect on the environment, including the desertification of thriving habitats and mass extinctions. This really is a very big problem.

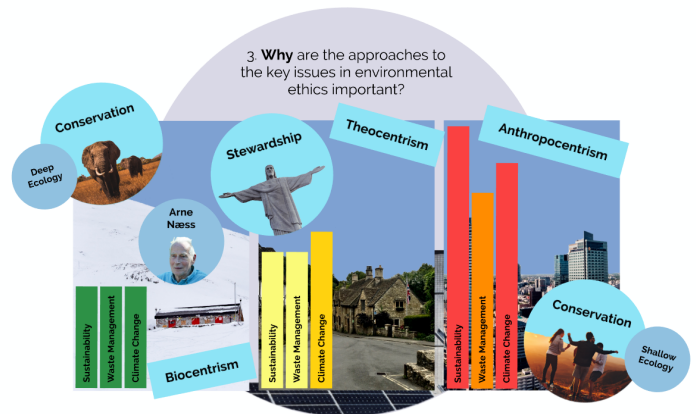


• Our next question is how the key issues in environmental ethics are approached, and we're going to use a table to help us answer it. • The issues we've just considered are along the top (sustainability, waste management, and climate change), • and the approaches from the introduction are down the side (stewardship and both types of conservation). • Now, Christians who practice stewardship (which is most of them these days) argue that human beings should live in agreement with God's will. Consequently, they can use natural resources and pollute the environment, but only to the extent necessary to fulfil God's plan. • Remember, stewardship is inspired by theocentrism, which is the belief that God is the most important thing in the universe. The environment is part of the good creation and a God-given gift; it would be disrespectful to use it irresponsibly or to wantonly damage and destroy it. Ultimately, good stewards attempt to live as sustainably as possible and reduce pollution, but without compromising their ability to do God's work or fulfil his plan. • People who practice conservation of the shallow ecology type argue that human beings should use Earth's natural resources to the maximum benefit of humanity,



and pollute as necessary as long as it doesn't harm other people. • This type of conservation is inspired by anthropocentrism, which is the belief that human beings are the most important things in the universe. Conservationists of this variety generally believe in living more sustainably and reducing pollution, but only because it will make life better for human beings (both those alive today and future generations). • Finally, people who practice conservation of the deep ecology type have a radically different view: they argue that human beings should only use natural resources to fulfil their basic needs (and I mean basic here, more or less clothing, food and water, and a very modest roof over one's head). They argue that all forms of pollution should be avoided, except of course those that are absolutely necessary to fulfilling basic needs. • This type of conservation is inspired by biocentrism, which is the belief that life is the most important thing in the universe. Conservationists of this variety generally seek to preserve the environment in its natural state to the greatest extent possible.

•• This brings us to our final question: why are the approaches to the key issues in environmental ethics important? For me, the obvious answer is that it affects how we live, and what our environment looks like. • Take this mountain hut, for example. • Plenty of conservationists of the •• deep ecology type would advocate living like this. • In fact, Arne Næss, one of the world's most famous deep ecologists, spent over a quarter of a century living in a similar situation. Why, you might ask. Well, to minimise his impact on the environment; that's the aim of this type of living.



• On the other hand, •• this image embodies how many stewards advocate living. It involves some modification of the natural world, but the human impact on the environment is relatively modest (although not as modest as the solitary mountain shack). • Finally, take this cityscape. ••• Conservationists of the shallow ecology type would advocate living like this. It involves considerable modification of the natural world, and the human impact on the environment is significant (it's clearly a good deal greater than the impact of a small hamlet or village). Of course, there are a few caveats: the construction of cities like this is only supported if it benefits people now and in the future, but other living things are entirely disregarded. Before we move on, we're just going to circle back and consider the impact that each approach has on the key issues in environmental ethics that we've looked at (namely, sustainability, waste management and climate change). • For example, conservation inspired by biocentrism leads to sustainable living, • limited waste production (which is overwhelmingly organic and compostable), • and a negligible impact on climate change (typically, only a small amount of carbon dioxide is produced in wood-burning stoves or the like). • Stewardship leads to slightly less sustainable living (because stewards build more comfortable homes and continue to travel using modern methods), • modest waste production (certainly more than individual settlements can easily dispose of or recycle themselves), • and a pronounced impact on climate change (because greenhouse gases are produced in atmosphere-altering amounts, although relatively slowly). • Finally, conservation inspired by anthropocentrism leads to very significant sustainable living problems (because resources are depleted until new or alternative one are discovered), • significant waste management problems (because large amounts of inorganic waste are produced, although modern waste is now increasingly disposed of or recycled in more environmentally friendly ways), • and very significant climate change problems (because greenhouse gases are produced in levels that precipitate increasingly frequent climate disasters). • Beyond this, there are three other reasons why environmental issues and how they're approached are important. • One, they're universal: they affect every human being and living thing. • Two, they're unlimited: they aren't timebound problems; future generations will have to deal with them. • And three, they're unrepairable: some environmental damage and destruction will be impossible to reverse.

•• That brings us to the end of our canter through the key issues in environmental ethics. Now you know what they are, how they're approached, and why the approaches to them are important. And you should do a lot of thinking about them. The older I get, the more attractive living like Arne Næss becomes. We have an undeniable and profound impact on our planet, and even if you don't care about the animals and plants we share it with, surely you can spare a thought for future generations (for your children and grandchildren). Even though conservationists inspired by anthropocentrism claim they do this, the extent of human modification to the environment suggests otherwise. And since becoming a father, I've realised I'm as responsible as anyone for the world my daughter will grow up in; something you might consider too (hopefully earlier than I did). And on that introspective note, goodbye!

James Lovelock on Environmental Ethics

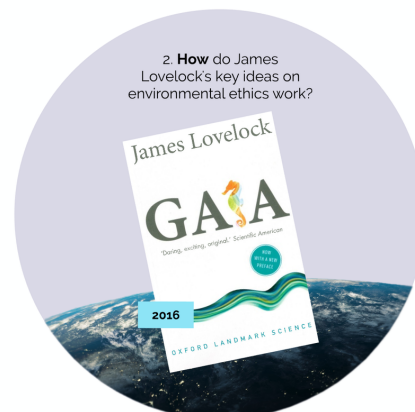
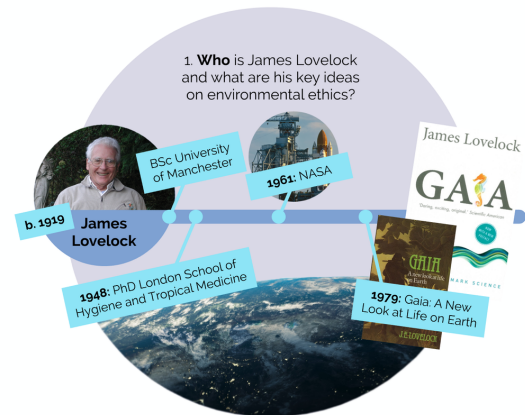
Hi! This lesson is an investigation into James Lovelock's key ideas on environmental ethics. Truth be told, he's more interested in the environment than he is in ethics; but his world-famous work, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, does contain suggestions about how we should live if we want to survive as a species, so there is an ethical dimension to his science! Before we go any further, I must confess I have a lot of time for James Lovelock, because he's an unashamed maverick: he's worked as an independent scientist for decades, pursuing things he finds interesting and publishing research that flies in the face of both conventional wisdom and the establishment. Of course, he's a very clever chap, but more than that he has an antiauthoritarian streak that all good teachers can sympathise with! Anyway, over the course of this lesson we're going to learn about who James Lovelock is and what his key ideas are, how his key ideas work, and why they're important.

• So, without further ado, who's James Lovelock, and what are his key ideas? Two questions really, and, believe it or not, we're going to take the first one first. • As we already know, he's an independent scientist. • He was born in 1919, • and holds a BSc from the University of Manchester • and a PhD from the London School of Tropical Medicine, which he graduated from in 1948. Using these qualifications, he spent the first part of his incredibly varied career working in medical research. • But then NASA came knocking in 1961, which was a watershed moment: it changed his

life forever. You may be wondering how a medical researcher ended up working for a space programme, but the answer is quite straightforward. James Lovelock's labwork involved both studying living organisms and inventing scientific instruments. In the 1960s, NASA had one eye on the Moon and the other fixed on Mars; James Lovelock was employed to design a life-detection device for a mission to the "Red Planet". Even though the mission never launched, it got James Lovelock thinking: he hypothesised that life could be detected by analysing the Martian atmosphere. And from there it wasn't a big leap to his idea that the unique molecular mix of our atmosphere is a product of life on Earth. The Gaia hypothesis was born: • in 1979 it hit the printing press for the first time, and it has been reprinted several times • and released in a new edition. • Second question: what are his key ideas? Well, we're going to look at three, although there are many more. • First, Earth's atmosphere and biosphere are interconnected and comprise one single super organism: Gaia. • Second, Gaia has cybernetic systems (a technical term that means it's self-regulating), and keeps conditions comfortable for living things. • Third and finally, Gaia is vulnerable: human beings could damage or destroy its self-regulating systems and render Earth (or parts of it) uninhabitable.

• So, how do James Lovelock's key ideas work? • Well, in order to answer that question, we're going to dive into the text of *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* in its second edition, • which was published in 2016. • First, James Lovelock introduces us to an analogy that helps to demonstrate his key idea that Earth's atmosphere and biosphere are interconnected. • He invites us to imagine a beach of smooth sand, • interrupted only by a solitary sandcastle (which, whilst lifeless, is nonetheless the product of a living thing).

• From here, he claims there are four potential states that a beach can take: • one, flat and unchanging (were the tides to stop); • two, rippled by the wind and the waves, but still lifeless; • three, rippled by the wind and waves, and exhibiting an artefact of life - a sandcastle; • and four, rippled by the wind and waves, exhibiting a sandcastle, and containing a sandcastle builder (the state in which life is actually present). • James Lovelock points out that state three can help reveal Gaia, • because life's products reveal things about the living things that produced them. • But they don't last long: just as a sandcastle



wouldn't last a day without a sandcastle builder to repair it, the lifeless products of living things on Earth wouldn't last long without constant renewal. • How does this reveal Gaia, James Lovelock asks? • Well, Ludwig Boltzmann's redefinition of entropy helps us (and don't worry, you needn't worry about what entropy is). • What's important about Ludwig Boltzmann's redefinition of entropy is it implies that highly improbable assemblies of molecules (like the sandcastle) can only be life or the product of living things. If we find an improbable assembly of molecules distributed globally (and James Lovelock claims we do, in our highly improbable and volatile atmosphere compared with other planets), then we have caught a glimpse of Gaia - a super organism that constantly renews the atmosphere. • What's the key takeaway here then? • Earth's atmosphere is a product of its biosphere, just as a sandcastle is a product of a sandcastle builder, because both the sandcastle and the atmosphere are highly improbable assemblies of molecules. Taken together, the interconnected atmosphere and biosphere comprise a single organism: Gaia. • It's this that's since been labelled "the Gaia hypothesis". • James Lovelock then introduces his second key idea, • which begins with an introduction to cybernetic or self-regulating systems. • He invites us to consider a modern oven closely, describing it as a box that can be heated to a desired temperature thanks to an internal thermostat (a type of thermometer that can automatically turn the elements of an oven on and off as required). • And he shows us that ovens work by overheating, then cooling and heating repeatedly around the desired temperature. • He writes that this margin of error, or fluctuation around the desired temperature, is a feature of all cybernetic or self-regulating systems (including those of living things). • James Lovelock goes on to suggest that Earth must contain a cybernetic system to control temperature, because despite orbiting an uncontrolled radiant heater (the Sun), Earth's temperature has fluctuated in a narrow desirable band (just like a thermostatic oven) for billions of years. • In fact, since the arrival of life, Earth has always been warm enough and cool enough for it to survive. • Something that he indicates in this graph, which shows the narrow band of Earth's climate over time (the smudged line in the middle) despite solar output that could have pushed Earth's temperature over 100 degrees or under minus 50. • The takeaway here is that Gaia is cybernetic or self-regulating, and has kept Earth inhabitable for living things. • James Lovelock's third and final idea reveals something of his ethics, because he suggests that Gaia is vulnerable to harm from us. • He argues that Gaia's most important property is keeping Earth inhabitable, • and that this should continue as long as we don't interfere with Gaia's ability to do it. • He then claims that Gaia's ability to function depends upon a few vital organs, • so what we do to Earth will probably depend on where we do it (he's particularly worried about the destruction of rainforest and shallow sea ecosystems here, which he suspects are essential). • Then he claims that cybernetic rules may exacerbate the problem: • this is a little complicated, but the gist is that cybernetic systems can take some time to adjust, so even if our behaviours change now we might not see positive results for generations. • The takeaway here is that we could render Earth or parts of Earth uninhabitable by damaging Gaia. It's important to stress that James Lovelock thinks it's almost impossible for us to render Earth lifeless, but we could certainly trigger some sort of unfathomable extinction event.

• Which brings us to why James Lovelock's key ideas are important, and I've got three suggestions. • First, they're responsibility conferring, they make us responsible for the habitability of Earth in a way that wasn't widely recognised before he published Gaia. • Second, they're revelatory; they describe previously unknown truths about the way the world works (of course, not everyone agrees they do, but they've become increasingly mainstream over the last half century). • And third, they're revolutionary; they've led to the dismissal of longstanding theories about the nature of the environment and the effect that we have on it. Obviously, there are other things that have given James Lovelock's ideas value and significance to today, but I think these are three of the big ones.



• That brings us to the end of this investigation into James Lovelock and his groundbreaking work: Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth. Now you know about the man himself, his key ideas and how they work, and why they're important. You may not agree with all or any of the Gaia hypothesis; however, as James Lovelock suggests in his book, it's a notion he thinks many societies have intuitively known for centuries. And despite the fact that early critics derided his work as hippyish pseudoscience, he does present a great deal of evidence to back it up. If you want to create a more informed opinion, you should definitely go and buy his book, or at least read one of my synopses. And on that enthusiastic note, goodbye!

Arne Næss on Environmental Ethics

Hi! This lesson is an investigation into Arne Næss's key ideas on environmental ethics. They're big and bold, and I find them surprisingly attractive despite advocating a radical change in modern lifestyles. In fact, I sometimes tell my wife I'd like to live like Arne Næss, to which her response is usually, "Do you want a divorce?" If you know anything about him already, you may sympathise with her. If not, keep watching to find out more about who he is and what his key ideas are, how his key ideas work, and why they're important.

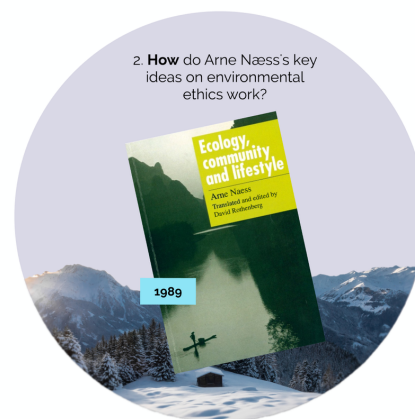
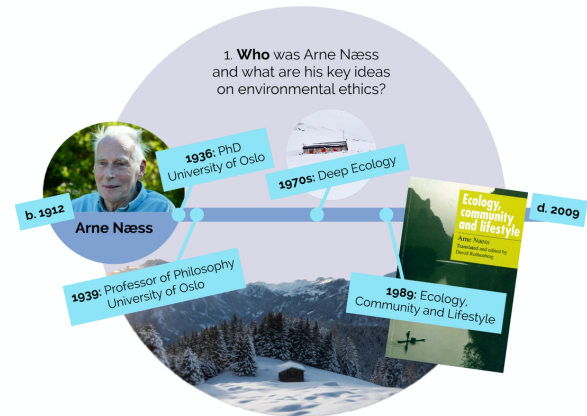
• So, without further ado, who was Arne Næss, and what are his key ideas? We're going to start with the first part of that question, and learn a little bit about the man himself before diving into his thoughts on environmental ethics. • In brief, Arne Næss was Norway's most famous philosopher.

• Born in 1912, • he received a PhD from the University of Oslo in 1936, • and was appointed as its youngest ever professor and Norway's first professor of philosophy in 1939. Arne Næss enjoyed a productive and rewarding academic career and nurtured his passion for mountain climbing during his lengthy university holidays. But at some point he became disillusioned with modern society. •

And in 1970 he resigned his professorship and retired to his mountain hut (Tvergastein), where he spent the rest of the decade developing deep ecology. • This approach to environmental ethics was fully fleshed out in his famous work, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, which was published in 1989. He spent the remainder of his life campaigning for greater acknowledgement of environmental issues, • before his death in 2009. • Which brings us to the second part of the question: what are his key ideas? As is commonly the case for prolific academics, there are too many to mention here; however, we're going to cover three of the most prominent. • First, environmental issues have an ideological cause: capitalism. • Arne Næss understood ideologies to be sets of personal values that guide action but aren't logically supported; perhaps controversially, he placed capitalism firmly in this category. • Second, environmental issues have an ecosophical solution, • by which he meant promoting personal ethical systems inspired by the environment can prevent people from harming it. • Third, all living things are intrinsically valuable, which is the key idea from which the eight shared values of deep ecology are essentially derived.

• So, how do Arne Næss's key ideas work? • Well, in order to answer that question, we're going to dive into the text of *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, • which was published in 1989. • First, Arne Næss wrote about what he called, "The gravity of the situation." • He blamed capitalism for irreparable environmental damage, • and claimed our laid-back attitude to production and consumption (at the expense of the natural world) had finally caught up with us. • He wondered whether we would change, or leave the future of life on Earth to so-called "blind forces". • In sum,

Arne Næss described the situation in the 1980s as, "An exponentially increasing, and partially or totally irreversible environmental deterioration or devastation perpetuated through firmly established ways of production and consumption and a lack of adequate policies regarding human population increase." • In other words, environmental issues have an ideological cause: capitalism (or the unending production and consumption of unnecessary things). And capitalism is not supported by fundamental values: no ultimate principles (like equality, for example), could ever logically lead to capitalist behaviour. • Arne Næss then introduced his second key idea, which is really rather important. • He wrote that ecology is the study of how things relate to one another, • which overlaps with some problems in philosophy, like the relationship between humanity and nature. • Arne Næss called this area of overlap "ecophilosophy". • and claimed that it's suitable for academic study. But importantly, he argued that



ecophilosophy is theoretical: it doesn't make any value judgements, so it can't guide action. • Arne Næss argued that practical studies that guide action require value judgements, • and claimed that this was integral to one meaning of philosophy but not to another. • The first meaning of philosophy is "a field of study, an approach to knowledge", something purely theoretical. • The second meaning of philosophy is a "personal code of values and a view of the world which guides one's own decisions", something practical. • He called it an ecosophy when applied to environmental issues. • Arne Næss placed the different meanings in this table, • and wrote that whilst we study ecophilosophy, we develop, hold or have our own ecosophies (he called his "Ecosophy T", after his mountain hut, Tvergastein). • He discussed this further here, • before explaining the etymology of ecosophy: a compound of "eco-", from ecology, and "-sophy", meaning insight or wisdom. • Importantly, he argued that all insight or wisdom should be directly relevant to action: true wisdom is derived from concrete experiences rather than abstract thinking. •• This is far from straightforward, but it contains the beginnings of a big idea: environmental issues can be solved by promoting ecosophies, which are sets of personal values that both guide action and are logically supported by fundamental values. They are positions, or points of view, that are inspired by the environment and influence the way people behave in relation to it. •• Arne Næss's third and final key idea is outlined here. He argued that ecosophies, properly developed, would inevitably lead to deep ecology; and, whilst ecosophies should be individual and personal, all should share eight core values. Before we go any further, it's worth noting that we haven't discussed how to develop an ecology, and that's largely because time doesn't permit it. However, Arne Næss claimed that one of the important ways was to spend time in nature experiencing it unmediated; camping, for example, independently, distant from any settlements, and for a decent chunk of time. • Having done this, one might begin to develop a personal set of values inspired by the environment that include the following. • One, the flourishing of human and non-human life has intrinsic value. • Two, richness and diversity of life forms has intrinsic value. • Three, humans have no right to reduce richness and diversity except to satisfy basic needs. • Four, harmful human activity is excessive. •• Five, humanity can flourish even if its population contracts, non-human life cannot until this happens. • Six, significant change will require public policy. • Seven, the ideological change required is from prioritising standard of life (or material wealth) to prioritising quality of life (or well-being). • And eight, those who hold these values have an ethical responsibility to attempt to implement them. •• The key takeaway here is that ecosophies lead to deep ecology, • which is based on the personal value that all living things have intrinsic value. The other core values are derived from this: • human beings can only damage the natural world to satisfy vital needs; • we should pursue quality of life instead of standard of living; • and we have an ethical responsibility to promote deep ecology. If you believe that all life has intrinsic value, then the subsequent values are obvious.

•• This brings us to why Arne Næss's key ideas on environmental ethics are important, and I've got three suggestions. • First, they're rational: Arne Næss claimed that ecosophies are logically supported by fundamental values (unlike the ideology of capitalism, for example). This is important, because it challenges the idea that capitalism is compatible with conservation.

• Second, they're radical. The ideas make clear that significant changes are necessary: the widespread adjustment of public opinion, the introduction of wide-ranging policies, a

considerable contraction in the human population, the satisfaction of only vital needs. The list is long. • Third, they're reactionary: Arne Næss called out so-called shallow ecologists, and made clear their approach was conservation in name only. This initiated a significant realignment of the entire environmental movement, and fanned the flames of environmental activism (some of which Arne Næss participated in himself).

•• That brings us to the end of this investigation into Arne Næss, and the work that popularised deep ecology: Ecology, Community and Lifestyle. I hope you agree that he was a fascinating individual, even if you don't find the prospect of life in a mountain hut quite as attractive as I do. The big thing to remember is this: he was a radical. He held extreme views: even if the rise of Extinction Rebellion and Greta Thunberg has made deep ecology more mainstream since the turn of the millennium, it was pretty out there during the 1970s and 1980s (particularly given what a decade of excess the latter was). Despite this, by all accounts Arne Næss was a very charismatic and upbeat person who even described himself as an optimist, but his predictions about the near future are bleak. And on the cheery note, goodbye!



Debates in Environmental Ethics

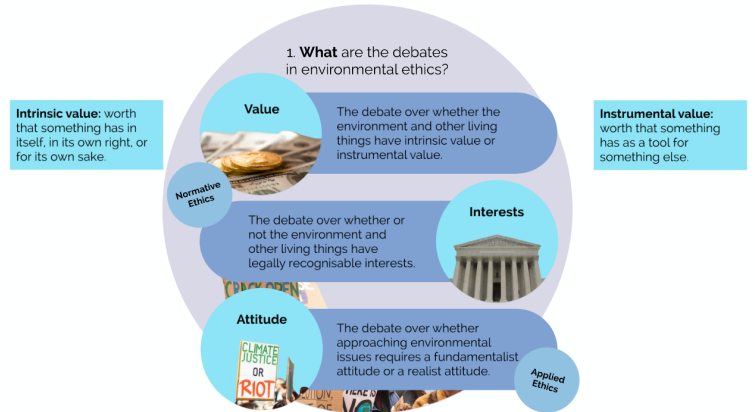
Hi! This lesson is all about debates in environmental ethics. These aren't the debates involved in environmental issues, like sustainability, waste management, and climate change. They're deeper than those, and hiding behind all of them. They're the debates we have to have before we can have those debates. Basically, they're the big areas of discussion and disagreement that we need to resolve about our underlying beliefs and values before we can consistently and rationally approach specific environmental issues. As we'll discover, these are the debates that can help us decide whether we're stewards, conservationists inspired by anthropocentrism, conservationists inspired by biocentrism, or none of the above. So they're important, and fundamental to everything we've already covered in environmental ethics. Anyway, over the course of this lesson we're going to explore what the debates in environmental ethics are, how they work, and why they're important.

• So, without further ado, what are the debates in environmental ethics? Well, there's one really big one, which is kind of the key to unlocking everything else in this branch of applied ethics.

But we're going to look at a couple of others as well. • This first really big debate is all about value; it's over whether the environment and other living things have intrinsic value or instrumental value. In other words, • over whether the environment and other living things have value in themselves, • or value only as a tool for something else (like us humans).

• This give rise to a second important debate, which is all about interests. Specifically, it's over whether or not the environment and other living things have legally recognisable ambitions, desires or wants. This debate is important, because even if we believe the environment has intrinsic value, a central principle of law is that only things with interests can be protected by the courts. Even though we accept that some animals have interests (although not that many), it's difficult to see how forests, mountains or rivers do. • The third debate is about attitude, and is over whether approaching environmental issues requires a fundamentalist or realist stance. These terms are loaded, but they fairly accurately describe an important difference between environmentalists. Fundamentalists argue that only radical change will save Earth from environmental disaster, including significant human population reduction among a raft of other measures that seem pretty extreme by most modern standards. On the other hand, so-called realists argue that advocating for such changes is counterproductive, because the majority of people will never embrace them. Realists propose more modest measures that harness technological advances to prevent environmental Armageddon. • It's worth noting here that the first two debates aren't really in applied ethics, they're in normative ethics; assuming that value and interests exist, these debates are about working out which things have them. • The third debate though is firmly about application. On the assumption that the environment has at least some value that makes it worth protecting, to what lengths should we go to preserve it?

• Our next question is how the debates in environmental ethics work, • and we're going to use a diagram to help us answer it. • The first debate we've got is about value. On the one hand, some people believe the environment and living things have instrumental value, or value only as tools for our use. • This, of course, is inspired by anthropocentrism, which is the belief that we're the most important things in the universe. And it has some pedigree: • for example, Aristotle believed the environment existed for the benefit of humanity, • and famously declared, "Nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man." On the other hand, some people believe the environment and living things have intrinsic value, or value regardless of their usefulness to human beings. • This belief is inspired by

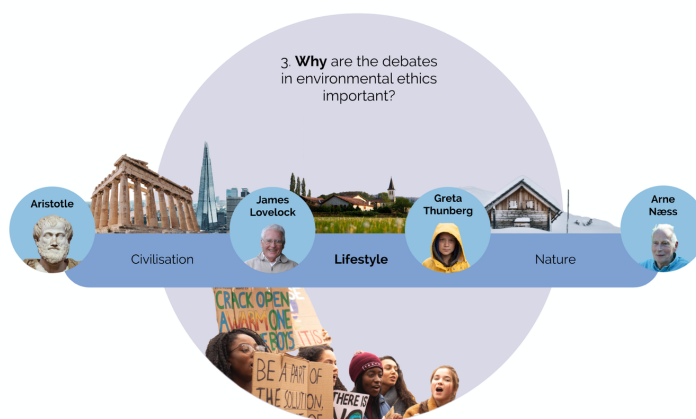


biocentrism, • and philosophers like Arne Næss were among its most famous champions. The key word in this particular debate is "belief"; both of these positions are entirely unsupported by empirical (or scientific) evidence. The belief that the environment has instrumental value has a long history, stretching back to the great Greek philosophers and the Judeo-Christian tradition (in which God gave Adam and Eve the Earth to dominate and subdue), but ultimately it's no better supported than the more modern belief in the environment's intrinsic value. And yet to get anywhere in debates in environmental ethics, it's important to decide where you stand on this central point. • The second debate is about interests, and it's a little more technical. On one side, people argue that most living things have no interests, so can't have legal rights or protections. Interests are ambitions, desires or wants, and whilst the law recognises some limited interests for a handful of animals (like the desire to avoid pain among those with nervous systems, which is why it's legal to pour boiling water on an ant nest but not a dog), it doesn't recognise any interests among forests, rivers and mountains, or other environmental features. On the other hand, people argue that the environment and all living things do have interests, so should have legal rights and protections, but this is a difficult position to maintain. In order to have your rights protected by the courts you need to be able to present your interests before them. but how can interests be presented when they can't be known? Even if we accept the argument that the environment and living things have intrinsic value, it's difficult to see how this value can be adequately protected by most legal systems. • The final debate is about attitude. • Some environmentalists, like James Lovelock, claim the environment can only be saved with a realist attitude that accepts the limits of human nature and geopolitics. For these people, radical action, like population control, may cause more harm than good. Other environmentalists have a fundamentalist attitude, • including Greta Thunberg (• who famously said, "I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is."). They claim that Earth can only be saved if the present social and political order is overturned, and call for much more significant change. • Remember, the first two debates are really discussions in normative ethics: assuming that value and interests exist, these debates are about working out which things have them. • The third debate is firmly in applied ethics though; on the assumption that the environment and living things are worth saving, it's about how we should act and to what extent.

•• This brings us to our final question: why are the debates in environmental ethics important? • For me, the obvious answer is the effect they have on our lifestyle. • Those who believe the environment and living things have instrumental value and do not have interests favour life in so-called civilisation. And whilst Aristotle wasn't an environmentalist, some famous conservationists, • like James Lovelock, seem to agree that techno-industrial culture is to be embraced, because it may be better equipped to address environmental issues than the alternatives. • On the other hand,

figures like Greta Thunberg appear to advocate living much closer to nature, perhaps in smaller and more rural communities. • Taken to the extreme, conservationists like Arne Næss argued that a radical reduction in the human population and isolated low-impact living are what's required. He famously spent a quarter of a century living in a mountain hut, and his plea for others to do likewise is certainly a strenuous request. • Beyond this, there are three other reasons why debates in environmental ethics are important. • One, they're universal: they affect every human being and living thing. • Two, they're unlimited: they aren't timebound problems; future generations will have to deal with them. • And three, they're unrepairable: some environmental damage and destruction will be impossible to reverse. In brief, the scale of the problem caused by environmental damage and destruction makes it a matter of great importance for every living thing on Earth and generations yet unborn.

•• That brings us to the end of our discussion of the debates in environmental issues. Now you know what they are, how they work, and why they're important. In many ways, we've revisited much of the material we've already covered, but we've tried to go a little bit further. Ultimately, I've endeavoured to reveal the real underpinnings of all the debates in environmental ethics; in other words, the fundamentals behind some of the more specific environmental issues. And they're debates that you should engage in, because although questions of value and interests have obvious applications in environmental ethics, they also impact upon a huge range of other areas in applied ethics. So even if you're not that interested in the impending environmental catastrophe we appear to be facing, other areas like animal ethics and medical ethics are influenced by disagreements and discussions over the same questions. And on that provocative note, goodbye!



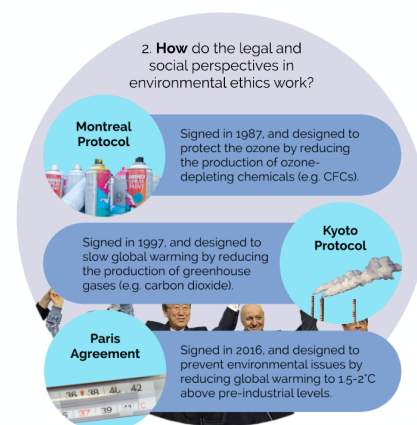
Legal and Social Perspectives in Environmental Ethics

Hi! This lesson is all about legal and social perspectives in environmental ethics, which means it's about the different viewpoints held by the international legal system and the people of the world. Of course, these perspectives aren't homogeneous, by which I mean there's a lot of variety within them. Nevertheless, there are enough similarities to engage in meaningful discussion. Generally, global leaders are increasingly concerned about the looming threat of environmental disaster. Obviously, there are plenty of exceptions to this rule (some of them very famous), but the number of signatories to important United Nations treaties reveals that the overwhelming majority of countries are concerned (even if a handful of the biggest polluters aren't). Likewise, people around the world are mobilising in response to environmental issues that affect them, and it appears that most of the world's population is worried to some degree or another. Anyway, over the course of this lesson we're going to explore exactly what the legal and social perspectives are, how they work, and why they're important.

• So, without further ado, what are the legal and social perspectives in environmental ethics? Well, we're going to split them up. • The legal perspective is the attitude towards the value of the environment adopted by the international legal system and its representatives. • Whilst the social perspective is the attitude towards the value of the environment adopted by the people of the world. Now, world governments often get a bad rap from environmental activists, because they appear to act too slowly in response to environmental issues. However, they have

managed to agree a number of important treaties that reveal significant concern for the environment. These include • the Montreal Protocol, • the Kyoto Protocol, • and the Paris Agreement. All three of these have had a profound effect on environmental issues, and the Montreal Protocol in particular has been a considerable success (so considerable, in fact, that it's largely been forgotten about). The United Nations is an organisation of people who represent other people, so it takes a necessarily anthropocentric perspective on environmental issues (which means it puts the interests of people first, above those of other living things, for example). Nevertheless, the wide-ranging aims of these treaties have had benefits for all life on Earth (that said, we did cause the problems they seek to solve in the first place). On the other hand, social perspectives appear more extreme, because they reveal an obsessive fixation on the state of the environment. Of course, the views espoused by • organisers of the People's Climate March, • Extinction Rebellion, • and the figures behind Earth Strike aren't representative of everyone. Nevertheless, the numbers of people involved in these actions and organisations is ever increasing, and reveals widespread concern about environmental issues across a number of societies, especially in the developed world.

• Our next question is how the legal and social perspectives in environmental ethics work. In other words, what's behind the consensuses that have been built by world governments and societies. The three treaties we've just looked at reveal quite a bit. • The Montreal Protocol was signed in 1987, and designed to protect the ozone layer from imminent destruction by reducing the production of ozone-depleting chemicals (like chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs). These were famously found in aerosols, like spray paint, and refrigerators, but have since been replaced with alternatives. It's hoped that by 2050 the ozone layer will be as thick as it was in 1980, and that a substantial hole in it over Antarctica will have been entirely repaired. • The Kyoto Protocol was signed in 1997, and designed to slow global warming by reducing the production of greenhouse gases. It recognised two important facts: that global warming's actually happening, and that it's likely caused by human production of carbon dioxide. It was hoped the

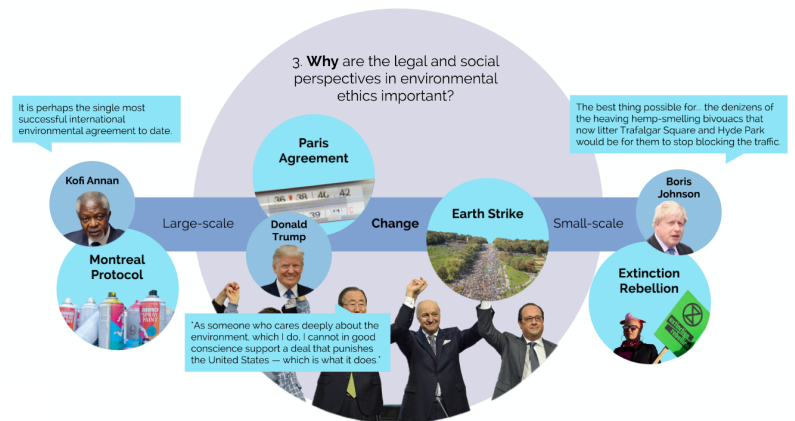


Kyoto Protocol would reduce carbon dioxide production in much the same way as the Montreal Protocol reduced CFC production. However, a number of significant polluters refused to ratify the treaty (including the United States), which effectively scuppered any chance of success. • The Paris Agreement was signed in 2016, and designed to prevent environmental issues by reducing global warming to between 1.5 and two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Despite considerable relief that an agreement was eventually met, the Paris Agreement faced similar challenges to the Kyoto Protocol in achieving its aims. We can see from these examples how the international legal system and its representatives perceive environmental ethics. Generally, the legal perspective divides environmental ethics into discrete environmental issues, and attempts to address them through consensus-building and compromise. It's also pragmatic, urgent issues receive early and enforceable intervention (like the disintegration of the ozone layer), whilst less obviously harmful or slow-burning issues (like global warming) receive a less rigorous response. • On the other hand, the social perspectives are more ideological. Recent manifestations of social perspectives include, • the People's Climate March, which was held in April 2017, and involved over 200,000 people marching on Washington, D.C.; • the activities of Extinction Rebellion, which holds nonviolent protests in the United Kingdom designed to disrupt industries associated with climate change; • and the Earth Strike of 2019, which saw six million people across the world down tools for climate action. The social perspective illustrated here is not representative of everyone; however, the number of citizens who participated, and the number of societies involved, is symptomatic of a wider concern about environmental issues: it is the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Generally, the social perspective amalgamates environmental issues into a single super-issue: human damage and destruction of the environment. And whilst not everyone perceives environmental issues as humanity's first priority, there is enough concern to place it at the top of the global protest agenda.

•• This brings us to our final question: why are the legal and social perspectives in environmental ethics important? • For me, these perspectives have the biggest impact on actual change: some achieve this on a large-scale, others on a small-scale. For example, • the Montreal Protocol effected significant change, • with former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, describing it as, "Perhaps the single most successful international environmental agreement to date." • The Paris Agreement had an effect, but not to the same degree. • United States President, Donald

Trump, withdrew from the agreement with the following words, "As someone who cares deeply about the environment, which I do. I cannot in good conscience support a deal that punishes the United States - which is what it does." This failure to achieve consensus on the scale achieved in Montreal has weakened the ability of the international community to reduce global warming, and whilst post-Paris Agreement climate projections are better than they were they're not as positive as they could be. Contrastingly, social perspectives have not delivered such significant change. • Despite causing considerable disruption, Extinction Rebellion hasn't achieved any of its stated aims, • with United Kingdom Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, declaring, "The best thing possible for... the denizens of the heaving hemp-smelling bivouacs that now litter Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park would be for them to stop blocking the traffic." • Undoubtedly, Earth Strike was more effective; but again, its ambitions have not been achieved. • Beyond this, there are three other reasons why these perspectives are important, all of which we're already familiar with. • One, the problem they relate to is universal: it affects every human being and living thing. • Two, it's unlimited: the problem isn't timebound; future generations will have to deal with it. • And three, the problem's unrepairable: some environmental damage and destruction will be impossible to reverse. In brief, the scale of environmental issues makes legal and social perspectives on them a matter of great importance.

•• That brings us to the end of our discussion of legal and social perspectives in environmental ethics. Now you know what they are, how they work, and why they're important. Ultimately, it's important to remember that the perspectives aren't homogeneous. For example, the international legal perspective is different from the United States legal perspective (which is largely in denial, if I may be so bold). And there are differences within the international legal system itself: we've touched on those between the Montreal Protocol and the Kyoto Protocol, but there are others. Importantly, it's the legal perspective that appears most likely to effect change, but that doesn't mean protesters should be disheartened: it may very well be their efforts that eventually apply the political pressure needed for more substantial legal change. And on that tentatively optimistic note, goodbye!



Religious Perspectives in Environmental Ethics

Hi! This lesson is all about religious perspectives in environmental ethics, which means it's about the different viewpoints religions hold on environmental issues. We don't have enough time to cover every world religion or all their viewpoints. Instead, we're going to focus on the so-called "Judeo-Christian" perspective, which arises from the teachings of what Jews call "the Hebrew Bible" or "Tanakh" and Christians call "the Old Testament". • This means we'll focus closely on the Christian perspective; but, because Christianity and Judaism share some scriptures, • we'll also learn about teachings that inform the Jewish perspective. As we'll discover, even though the scriptures in question provide few pointers about how to treat the environment, what little there is is open to a wide range of possible interpretations. Anyway, over the course of this lesson we're going to explore exactly what these religious perspectives are, how they work, and why they're important.

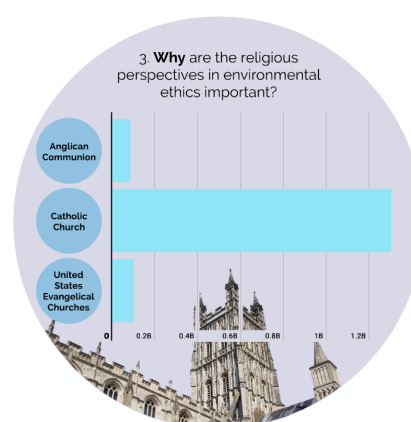
• So, without further ado, what are the religious perspectives in environmental ethics? Well, even in Christianity there are a few. • Some are grouped together under the title of stewardship, which is the Christian practice of caring for the environment because it is a God-given gift. • But others are grouped together under the title of dominion, which is the Christian practice of subduing the environment because human beings are commanded to dominate it. We didn't consider this approach earlier, because most Christians nowadays are stewards; but it's important to recognise not all of them are, and consider why. Ultimately, dominion is inspired by a particular interpretation or view of • Genesis 1:26 • and Genesis 1:28. As we can read, both verses command us to have dominion over our environment, with Genesis 1:28 also ordering us to subdue it. It's the interpretation of the word "subdue" as meaning "dominate" or "subjugate" that leads some Christians (and, indeed, some Jews, because they share this scripture) to adopt the dominion approach to environmental ethics. But, as we already know, the picture must be a little more complicated, because most Christians adopt the stewardship approach. And it is: • for example, Genesis 2:15 casts Adam as Eden's first gardener, tilling and keeping it on behalf of God; • and, in the first verse of Psalm 24, we can read that Earth belongs to God along with everything in it. • This has led the likes of Richard Bauckham (who attended my alma mater, the University of Cambridge, before eventually becoming a professor of New Testament Studies at the University of St Andrews), to build comprehensive and compelling arguments for Christian stewardship. He says that, "We, human beings, are not an independent creature, and we cannot survive in a world in which most species are annihilated. The whole creation, including us and the other species, is a co-existent communion created by God." Whilst Genesis 1:26 and 28 are challenging verses for stewards, most Christians claim that, if they're read in context (in other words, alongside the rest of their scriptures), they become revealed as outliers or anomalies.

• Our next question is how the religious perspectives in environmental ethics work; and, to answer this, we're going to consider the perspectives of some specific Christian communities. • The Anglican Communion takes the view that responding to climate change is an essential part of the Christian responsibility to safeguard God's creation, and is committed to shrinking carbon footprints and reducing plastic waste (among other things). • Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said, "Reducing the causes of climate change is essential to the life of faith. It is a way to love our neighbour and to steward the gift of creation." This community is a denomination with a stewardship approach. • Likewise, the Catholic Church takes the view that caring for the environment is the



responsibility of all human beings, and that Christians should protect Earth from damage. This wasn't always the perspective of the Catholic Church, but today it endorses climate action and supports the argument for environmentalism. • Much of this has been the work of Pope Francis, who penned *Laudato Si'* (or, Praise Be to You: On Care of Our Common Home) in 2015; this is his second encyclical, and instructs Catholics to care for the environment. • Pope Francis said, "As stewards of God's creation, we are called to make the Earth a beautiful garden for the human family." Although this statement is anthropocentric, because it suggests the purpose of stewardship is for human benefit, it shuns the language of domination and subjugation; in fact, it recalls the text of Genesis 2:15, in which Adam tills and keeps the garden of Eden for God. • Finally, the Cornwall Alliance provides a contrasting perspective, which is very much at odds with both the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church. This community, which is mostly composed of evangelical churches in the United States, rejects any responsibility to care for the environment. Members of the Cornwall Alliance claim that Earth is so intelligently designed by God that human beings are unable to seriously damage it. They deny climate change, and encourage Christians to concern themselves with development issues instead (by which they mean problems created by poverty in less economically developed countries). Critics of the Cornwall Alliance claim it is a religious front group for companies and organisations that are in the business of producing and consuming fossil fuels; however, the group itself argues its perspective is supported by the Bible, because those challenging verses (Genesis 1:26 and 28) appear to support the domination and subjugation of the environment by human beings. So, as we can see, the situation isn't straightforward, and despite environmentally-friendly interpretations of scriptures, it remains possible to hold and defend perspectives that promote human dominion on Earth.

•• This brings us to our final question: why are the religious perspectives in environmental ethics important? For me, these perspectives are important for one simple reason: most of the world's population is religious. • To illustrate this point, I'm going to make use of this graph, which provides information regarding the number of people who belong to various Christian denominations. • For example, the Anglican Communion has approximately 85 million members, just under one-third of whom belong to the Church of England. In other words, 25 million



of the United Kingdom's 67 million strong population belong to this denomination. • The Catholic Church exerts even greater influence, with records of an astonishing 1.3 billion baptised members worldwide. Brazil, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines, and the United States account for over half this total, but Catholics can also be found throughout sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. • Finally, evangelical churches in the United States count some 100 million members, which means that just under one-third of Americans belong to an evangelical congregation somewhere in the country. Approximately one-fifth of the world's population is represented on this graph, which gives us some idea of just how powerful Christianity is; and this doesn't even take into account all Christians, let alone all religions. If you haven't already guessed the significance of religious perspectives in environmental ethics, it's the fact they have the ability to shape people's behaviour across dozens of different countries. And organisations like the Cornwall Alliance have the ability to seriously derail environmental efforts in the United States: they have the ear of up to a hundred million Americans; environmentalists underestimate them at their peril. • Beyond this, of course, are the usual reasons that we're already familiar with. • One, the problem religious perspectives relate to is universal: it affects every human being and living thing. • Two, it's unlimited: the problem isn't timebound; future generations will have to deal with it. • And three, the problem's unrepairable: some environmental damage and destruction will be impossible to reverse. In brief, the scale of environmental issues makes religious perspectives on them a matter of tremendous significance.

•• That brings us to the end of our discussion of religious perspectives in environmental issues. Now you know what they are, how they work, and why they're important. Obviously, it's impossible for us to consider every single religious perspective, but we've looked at Christianity (and Judaism, if somewhat tangentially) and some of the differing viewpoints within it. Importantly, even if you're not religious, it's important to acknowledge the power of religions here. Environmental organisations, even the large ones, enjoy only a fraction of the membership. Consequently, Christianity has the ability to effect real change in the way environmental issues are addressed; in fact, religions could go a long way to solving many of them. And on that unexpected note, goodbye!

Acknowledgements: George Teaches Limited would like to thank the following for permission to use their photographs: **front cover:** Massimo Rivenci/Unsplash; **p. 2:** Riccardo Chiarini/Unsplash; **p. 3:** Riccardo Chiarini/Unsplash; and **back cover:** Massimo Rivenci/Unsplash.

