

## Environmental ethics

### Mid-term review

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*Five views:*

- If what you say disagrees with any of the following views, that is an obvious objection you must address.
- The “common sense” view: only humans matter, morally speaking (or, alternately, a few types of non-human animals have very minimal rights – e.g. dogs the right to not be treated cruelly – but that is it)
  - This is the view held seemingly held by most people in the world, and the view that (it seems) many of you started the semester with.
- Singer: no one has rights. All, and only, good and bad experiences matter, morally speaking.
  - We saw a lot of evidence in class that suffering (or other good/bad experiences) *is* morally important.
- Regan: all and only “experiencing subjects of a life” have rights.
  - On page 6 of the Regan reading, Regan says some things about what an experiencing subject of a life is. It involves more than just the ability to experiences: he also talks about having preferences, beliefs, memories, and expectations.
  - So, if you think, for example, that all beings that can experience suffering have rights, you disagree (a bit) with Regan, because he thinks that having rights requires the ability to have beliefs, memories, and expectations, and you do not.
- Card: maybe, plants (and possibly species) have rights, or can be harmed (in a morally relevant way).
  - Note that she potentially disagrees with Singer in two ways: she seems to believe in rights, and she also thinks that what is good or bad for a being might have to do with flourishing, and not just with good and bad experiences.
  - She disagrees with Regan about who has rights, and also about whether the ability to experience is important.
  - We discussed evidence in class that A might be harmed, or have their rights violated, by  $x$  even if  $x$  has no effects on A’s experiences (e.g. cheating that is never noticed by A).
  - We saw evidence in class that species might have some intrinsic value or rights:
    - Many of you think that killing a member of an almost extinct species is morally worse than killing a member of a thriving species.
    - Many of you think that monkeywrenching might be permissible to protect almost-extinct species, even if not permissible to protect thriving species.
- Kymlicka and Donaldson talk about *legal* rights and *justice*. But, their ideas also suggest the following view: beings that can learn rules, form relationships, and care about each other may have different rights (or matter more/differently) than beings that can’t do that.
  - This view differs from all of the above views.

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- Note that Singer, Regan, and Card don't talk about justice or legal rights. But, it seems plausible that their views about moral rights would have implications for legal rights or justice. If you are writing on legal rights or justice, you should consider what Singer, Regan, and Card would most likely say about this and (if they disagree with you) respond to their objections.