

# Ethics, environmentalism, economics and decision making

## Part A

Jan 13 & 16, 2020

# This week...

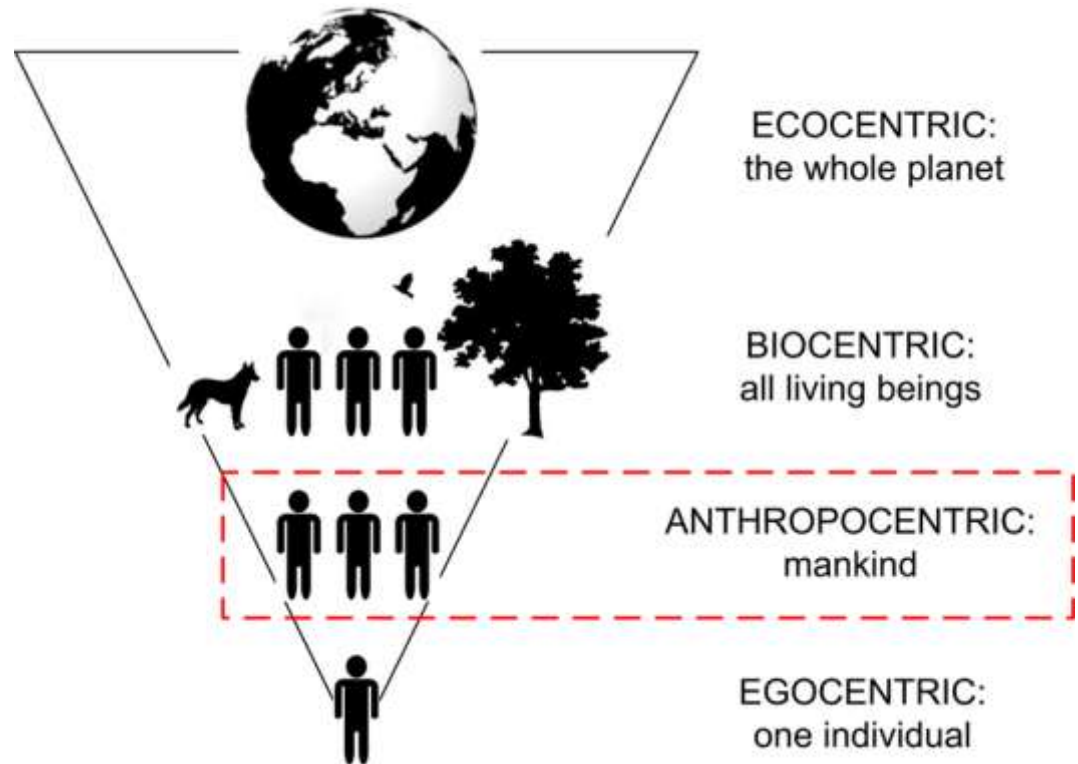
- Environmental ethics and 'how we think about the environment'
- Understanding environmental decision making

# Environmental ethics

- Application of ethical standards to relationships between human and non-human entities
- Questions we can consider:
  - Do we have an obligation to future generations?
  - Can we justify exposing some communities to a disproportionate share of pollution?
  - Can we justify driving a species to extinction to create jobs?

# Environmental Ethics

- The scope of what we believe deserves ethical consideration
- Beliefs vary across societies and over time:
  - humans – animals – whole natural communities
- Ethical perspectives:
  - Anthropocentrism
  - Biocentrism
  - Ecocentrism



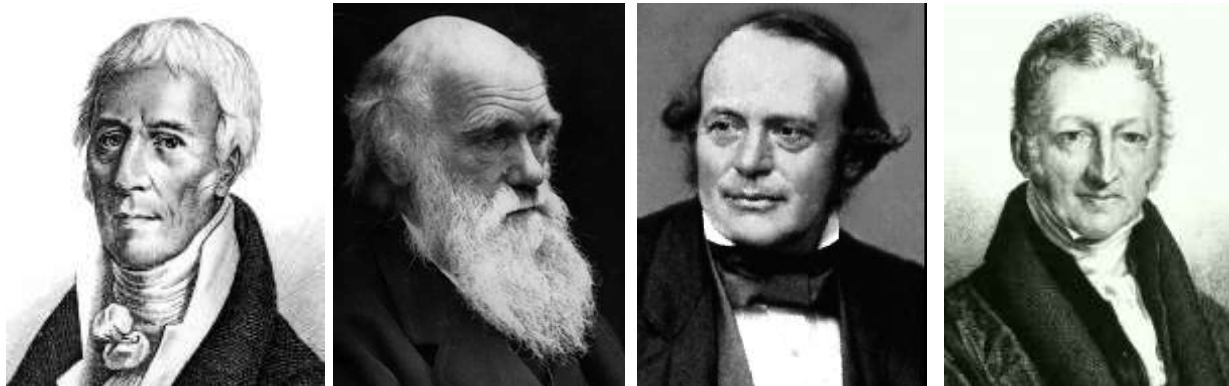
# Evolution of European environmental thought: humans separate from nature (anthropentric)

- The Enlightenment - 16<sup>th</sup> century
- Europe – science began to emerge as a discipline distinct from religious theory
  - E.g. Galileo (astronomy), Descartes (methodology), Newton (calculus, physics)...



# Evolution of environmental thought: humans as part of nature

- Science breaks from creationism in 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - Darwin, Agassiz...Humans evolved from non-human ancestors
  - Malthus: human population numbers governed by food supply



# Environmental determinism vs. possibilism

- Environmental determinism: racial stereotypes and cultures are a direct result of environmental conditions
  - Any problems with this theory?
- Possibilism - environment sets certain constraints/limitations, but culture otherwise determined by social conditions

# Preservation ethic

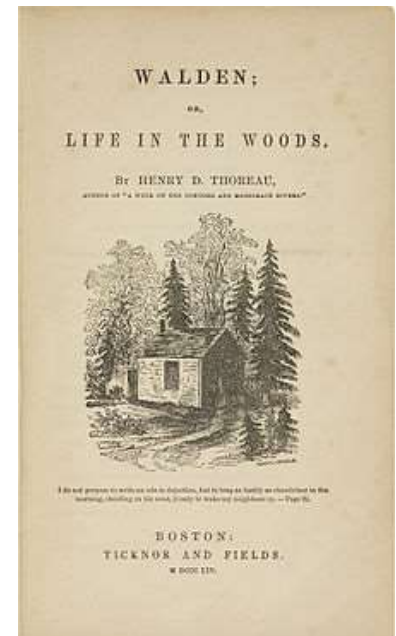
- 1800s: rapid European settlement of North American interior
- Significant impacts:
  - large-scale deforestation
  - extermination of bison,
  - removal of indigenous peoples from land
- Transcendentalism – nature a direct manifestation of the divine
- Belief that areas must be set aside; no development occurs
- Origins of Wilderness Society, Sierra Club

# Preservation Ethic: Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)



- Part of transcendentalist movement
  - Nature is a direct manifestation of the divine
  - Soul is one with god and nature
- Preservation ethic: *Preserve nature for its own sake*
- Quote from Walden:

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when it came to die, discover that I had not lived”.



# Preservation Ethic: John Muir (1883-1914)

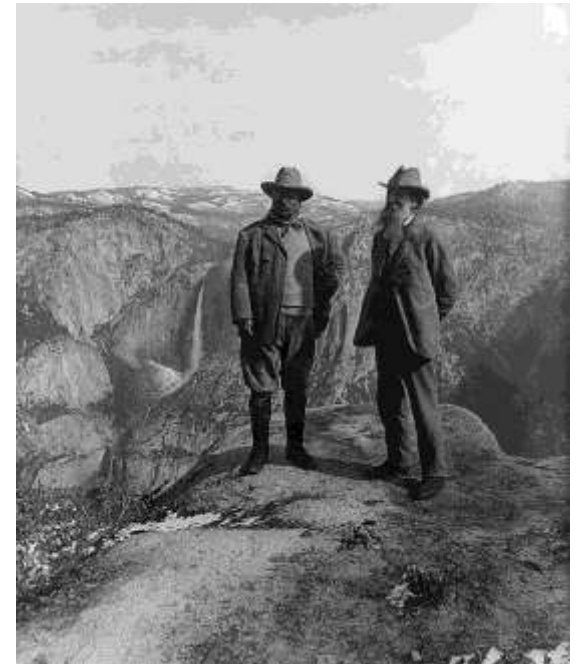
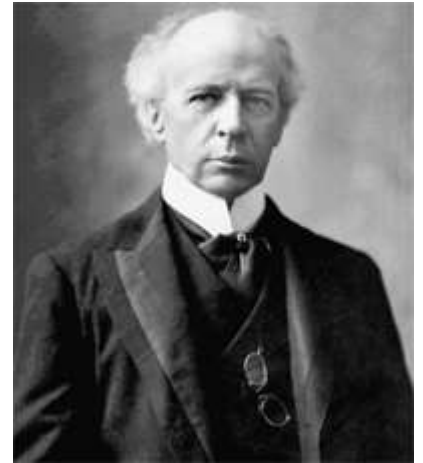
- “God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But He cannot save them from fools.” – John Muir



John Muir (1838-1914)

# Conservation ethic

- Definition: *Human's should put natural resources to use but we have a responsibility to manage them wisely*
- Late 1800s - European settlement of NA complete
- Growing recognition that nature must be protected for human use
- Parks movement emerges, political support grows
- Wilfred Laurier (Clifford Sifton) & Roosevelt make conservation a policy issue
- Origins of Audubon Society, Duck's Unlimited, Safari Club...



# Conservation ethic

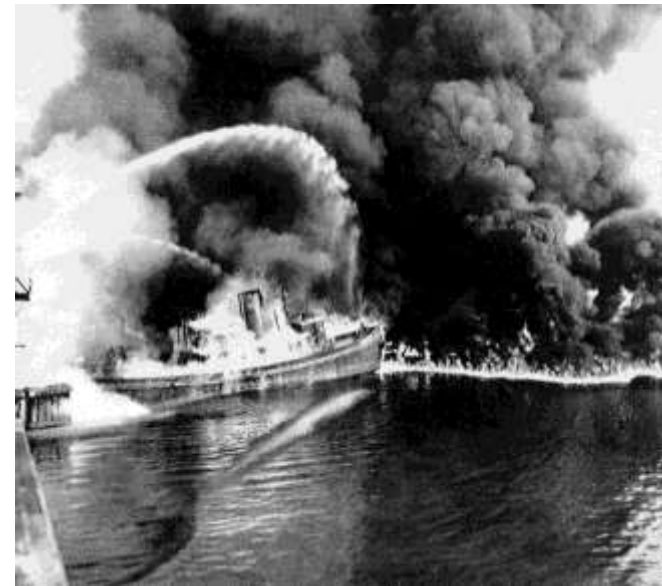
- Archie Delaney, born in UK in 1888, came to Canada 1906
- Worked as trapper in Temagami, married an Anishinaabe woman
- Under name “Grey Owl”, wrote popular books about wilderness life, need for conservation
- Reputation suffered when white society learned he was not ‘Indian’



<https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/grey-owl>

# Reform Ethic

- Post WWII - exponential increase in scientific measurement of environmental features
- New understanding + growing problems = new concerns, action
- Oriented toward public action, influencing policy & decision-making, confronting industry
- Influential organizations: Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, WWF, ...



# Reform Ethic:

“The ‘control of nature’ is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and the convenience of man” – Rachel Carson

- Rachel Carson 1907-1964
- Marine biologist, writer
- Fought against widespread aerial spraying of DDT to control fire ants
- *Silent Spring* (1962) - linked widespread declines in bird populations to pesticide use
- Experienced vigorous personal attacks by petrochemical industry



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpbc-6lvMQI> (10 min)

# Reform ethic

- Grew and evolved with the civil rights, feminist and peace movements of the 60's-70's
- Seen commonly in pop culture of the era (film, music, art)
- Some 'environmental' protest songs you might know from this era
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94bdMSCdw20> (Joni Mitchell)
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e3m\\_T-NMOs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e3m_T-NMOs) (Neil Young)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXxcMw5PTDg> (Cat Stevens)
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjZES3\\_SSYA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjZES3_SSYA) (Beach Boys)



# Examples of recent environmental actions/movements/entities around the globe:

Range from local to global, small to large, planned to spontaneous

- Climate action – formal and informal
- Anti-pipeline actions (BC, US)
- Anti-logging actions (Brazil, Indonesia, Canada)
- Voluntary simplicity
- Anti-whaling efforts
- Earth day movement
- Green Parties
- Green Belt movement\*



# Greenbelt Movement

- Grassroots women's movement in East Africa
- Planted 40 million trees to:
  - Reduce soil erosion
  - Restores and protect biodiversity
  - A means of asserting the rights of women and their families to lead healthier, more productive lives



**Wangari Maathai**

# Environmental activism - significant risks to activists

- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/series/the-defenders>



# Most dangerous places for defenders

Since the start of 2015, 145 land and environmental defenders have died in Brazil: the highest number on Earth. Many of the killings were of people trying to combat illegal logging in the Amazon. The Philippines comes second on the list, with 102 deaths in all. Honduras remains the most dangerous country to be a defender, with more killings per capita than anywhere else.

All years 2017 2016 2015

Deaths

40

10





The age of extinction

## 'Like a bomb going off': why Brazil's largest reserve is facing destruction

Gold prospectors are ravaging the Yanomami indigenous reserve. So why does President Bolsonaro want to make them legal?

by [Dom Phillips](#), Yanomami indigenous reserve, Brazil

The age of extinction is supported by



About this content

Mon 13 Jan 2020 06:00 GMT



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**D**eep in the Yanomami indigenous reserve on the northern reaches of the Brazilian Amazon, the ruins of an illegal goldminers' camp emerge after an hour in a small plane and two in a boat. No roads reach here.

Wooden frames alongside the Uraricoera River that once supported shops, bars, restaurants, a pharmacy, an evangelical church and even brothels are all that is left of the small town. The army burned and trashed it as part of an operation aimed at stamping out wildcat mining on the reserve.

The army may have taken away the town, but they left the *garimpeiros*, as the miners are called, who this morning are hunched around a freezer, waiting for the soldiers camped downriver to leave so they can get back to work. Up to 20,000 *garimpeiros* are **estimated** by Brazilian NGO Instituto Socioambiental to have invaded this reserve, where mining and unauthorised outsiders are currently prohibited. But the *garimpeiros* may not remain unauthorised for long: the Brazilian president, [Jair Bolsonaro](#), has **promised to legalise their work** with a bill in Congress.

Next class (Jan 16):

- Understanding environmental decision making
- Discuss Assignment 1