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**Topic: Integration of Environmental Ethics**

**Fundamental Questions of Environmental Ethics**

- Do human beings have moral obligations with regard to the natural world? (In this context, by the “natural world” what is meant is the totality of all things in their natural state excluding human beings.)
- What are these obligations? (Possible examples include obligations to preserve biodiversity, obligations not to pollute the environment, and obligations not to exploit other animal species.)

**The Moral Foundations of Environmental Ethics**

- According to an anthropocentric ethic, only human beings have moral worth. According to a naturalistic ethic, natural beings other than human beings – such as whooping cranes or wolves or wilderness areas or rivers – have a moral status.
- What does it mean to ascribe “moral worth” or a “moral status” to some human being?
- If only human beings have moral worth, on what basis do human beings have moral obligation with regard to the natural world? What restrictions does this theoretical underpinning impose upon such obligations?

**Sentient and Insentient Nature**

- A sentient being is one that has a conscious life, such as a whooping crane or a wolf. An insentient being is one that does not, such as a river or a mountain.
- On what basis might insentient nature be said to have moral worth? One possible answer is that all living things have moral worth. (How might this be supported? What is the deep-ecologist’s principle of bio-centric equality?)
- Another possible answer rests upon the beauty of the natural world: anything in its natural state has aesthetic value, and anything that has aesthetic value has moral worth. (How might this be supported? E.G. Moore’s “Twin World” example.)
- On what basis might sentient nature be said to have moral worth? Answer this question by exploring the work of philosopher and animal-activist Peter Singer.

**Student Participation and Learning Questions**

The material will be presented in the form of a class discussion. Students will present their own ideas, but information from outside philosophical sources will also be incorporated into the discussion. In addition to participating in the discussion, students will be tested on the material presented.