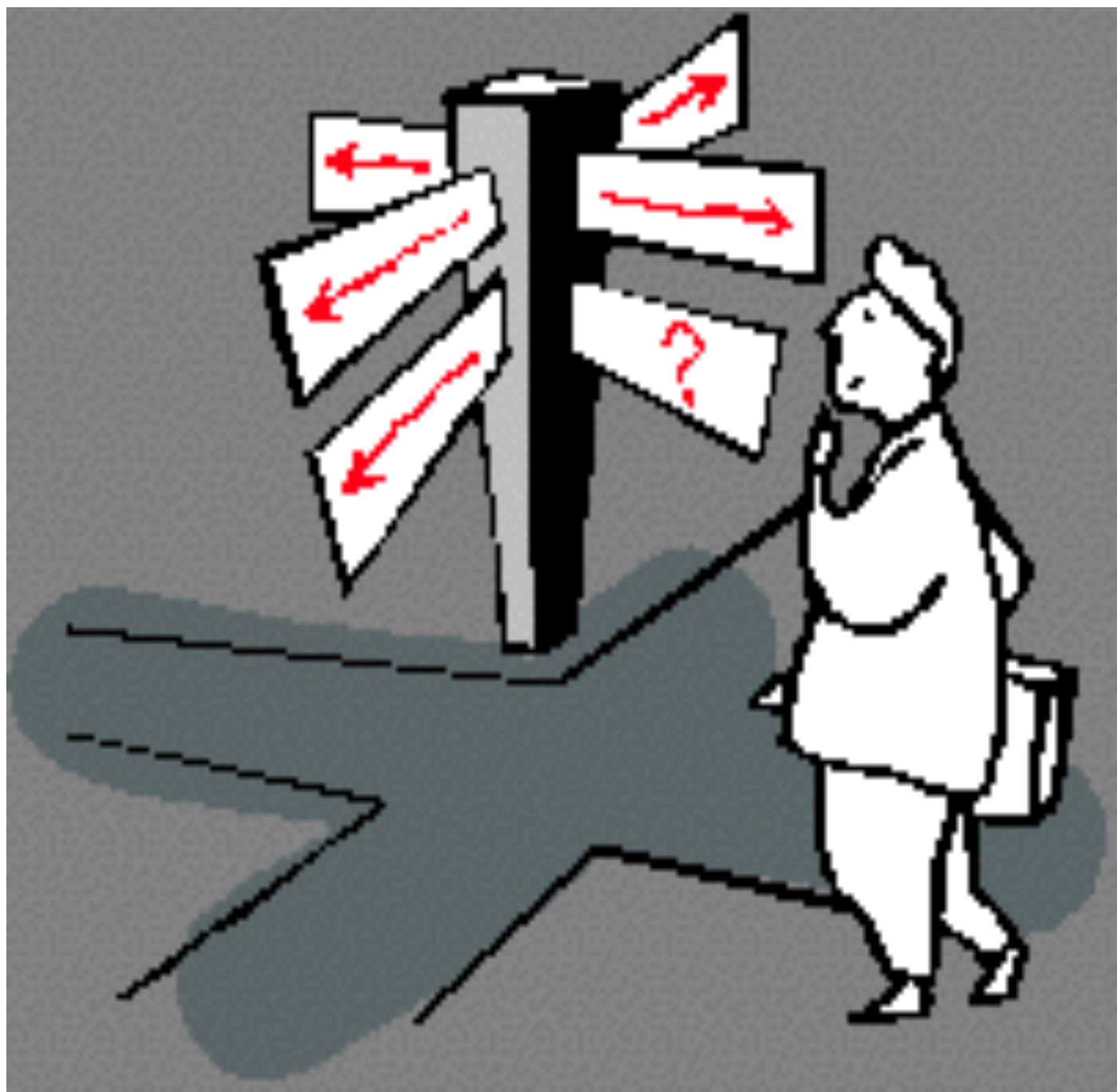


# Environmental Ethics And Religion

HS 200



# Overview

- Define Environmental Ethics & Sustainability
- What is Ethics?
- Relation between religion and environment
- Scripture references & environment
- Current events
- How you can make a difference

- Environmental Ethics:
- Anthropocentrism vs. Nonanthropocentrism
- Animal vs. Environmental Ethics
- Nonanthropocentrism
- A Pragmatist Alternative

# What is Environmental Ethics?

- **Environmental ethics**- the discipline that studies the moral relationship of human beings and also the value and moral status of the environment and its nonhuman contents
- It considers the ethical **relationship** between humans and the environment

# Why are Environmental Ethics Important?

- Humans are slowly depleting all of our natural resources that other generations need for their future
- Our world was created for us to live and thrive on and we are slowly killing it
- Sustainability for the environment is crucial so that we do not destruct the world that God created

## ➤ **What is Ethics?**

- The scope of ethics is much broader than the realm of law. Ethics extends to all our duties and obligations, virtues and vices, as we interact with each other – whether or not we should lie or steal, whether we should be charitable toward those less fortunate than ourselves, whether we should be forgiving, and how to resolve conflicts of interest when we have conflicting obligations to different persons.
- The general study of goodness.
- The general study of right action.
- Metaethics
- Applied ethics

## ➤ **The general study of goodness.**

- Minimally, two questions:
- (1) What are the components of a good life?
- (2) What sort of things are good in themselves?
- Raises the issue of intrinsic value vs. instrumental value:
- Intrinsic value: The worth objects have in their own right, independent of their value to any other end.
- Instrumental value: The worth objects have in fulfilling other ends.



## ➤ **The general study of right action.**

- The principles of right and wrong that govern our choices and pursuits. And Can be understood collectively to constitute a moral code which define the responsibilities of people who live together.
- Deontological Ethics (Kant's categorical imperative)
- Consequentialist Ethics (Mill's utilitarianism)
- Virtue Ethics (Aristotle)
- **Attempts in all three schools to tie moral obligation to something like a claim to intrinsic value.**

## ➤ Deontological Ethics

- What is deontology?
- The word ‘deontology’ derives from Greek words ‘*Deno*’ means ‘duty’ and ‘*Logos*’ means ‘study’.
- **Deontological ethics** or **deontology** is an approach to ethics that determines goodness or rightness from examining acts, rather than the consequences of the that act
- Deontologists look at rules and duties.

# Deontological Ethics

- [Immanuel Kant](#) was an 18<sup>th</sup> century German scholar, university professor, scientist, and philosopher.
- Kant proposed a view of morality that was based on duty.
- Kant is regarded as the author of deontological ethics.



(1724-1804)

# Deontological Ethics

## DUTY

A **duty** is something one is required to do. It is an **obligation**, a **responsibility**.

We may have a variety of duties to others:

- employers and employees
- parents and children
- citizens and government officials
- Human and Non-human contents

- *Right* to clean water/air. Don't violate related laws.
- *Environmental justice*. Don't make the poor bear an undue burden of our society's pollution: distribute pollution sites in affluent as well as poor neighborhoods.
- *Beneficence*. Pursue an environment in which all species, including humans, can flourish.

# Consequentialist Ethics

- *Hedonism*: value (good) is pleasure/happiness
  - ☐ *Egoism*: my happiness is the greatest good
  - ☐ *Utilitarianism*: the good is the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people (or perhaps sentient beings)

# Variations of Utilitarianism

❑ *Act utilitarianism*: we are obligated to do the specific act that produces the greatest amount of happiness (regardless of rules or justice)

Objections:

- consequence calculation is difficult
- the end justifies the means

❑ *Rule utilitarianism*: we should follow moral rules that, when acted upon, *generally* produce the greatest amount of happiness

Objections:

- what about when rules conflict?
- in some cases, why not exceptions?

Reply: then why have any theory at all?

## ➤ Consequentialist Ethics

- Consequentialism, as its name suggests, is the view that normative properties depend only on consequences.
- Which holds that whether an act is morally right depends only on the consequences of that act or of something related to that act



## ➤ Virtue Ethics

- Virtue theory is an approach to [ethics](#) which emphasizes the character of the moral agent, rather than rules or consequences, as the key element of ethical thinking.
- Being virtue is not a habit or tendency
- It is a inherence character

# What is a virtue?

- Aristotle: a virtue is a state of character by which you ‘stand well’ in relation to your desires, emotions and choices:
  - ‘to feel [desires and emotions] at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way’
- Virtues are traits that are necessary for ‘living well’.
- Virtues and virtuous actions lie between ‘intermediate’ between two vices of ‘too much’ and ‘too little’
  - E.g. being good-tempered
- But this is not the same as ‘moderation’ on all occasions
  - E.g. not moderate anger, but anger appropriate to the situation
- Not arithmetical – corresponding vices aren’t always ‘too much’ or ‘too little’
  - E.g. honesty v. tactlessness v. deception

## ➤ Metaethics

- Metaethics is the attempt to understand the metaphysical, epistemological, semantic, and psychological, presuppositions and commitments of moral thought, talk, and practice.
  - It counts within its domain a broad range of questions and puzzles.
- The metaethical questions are follows:

- Is morality more a matter of taste than truth?
- Are moral standards culturally relative? Are there moral facts?
- If there are moral facts, what is their origin?
- How is it that they set an appropriate standard for our behavior?
- How might moral facts be related to other facts (about psychology, happiness, human conventions...)?
- And how do we learn about the moral facts, if there are any?

## ➤ **Moral Actions**

- A moral action is either called good or bad.
- Voluntary actions, Chosen, Freedom.

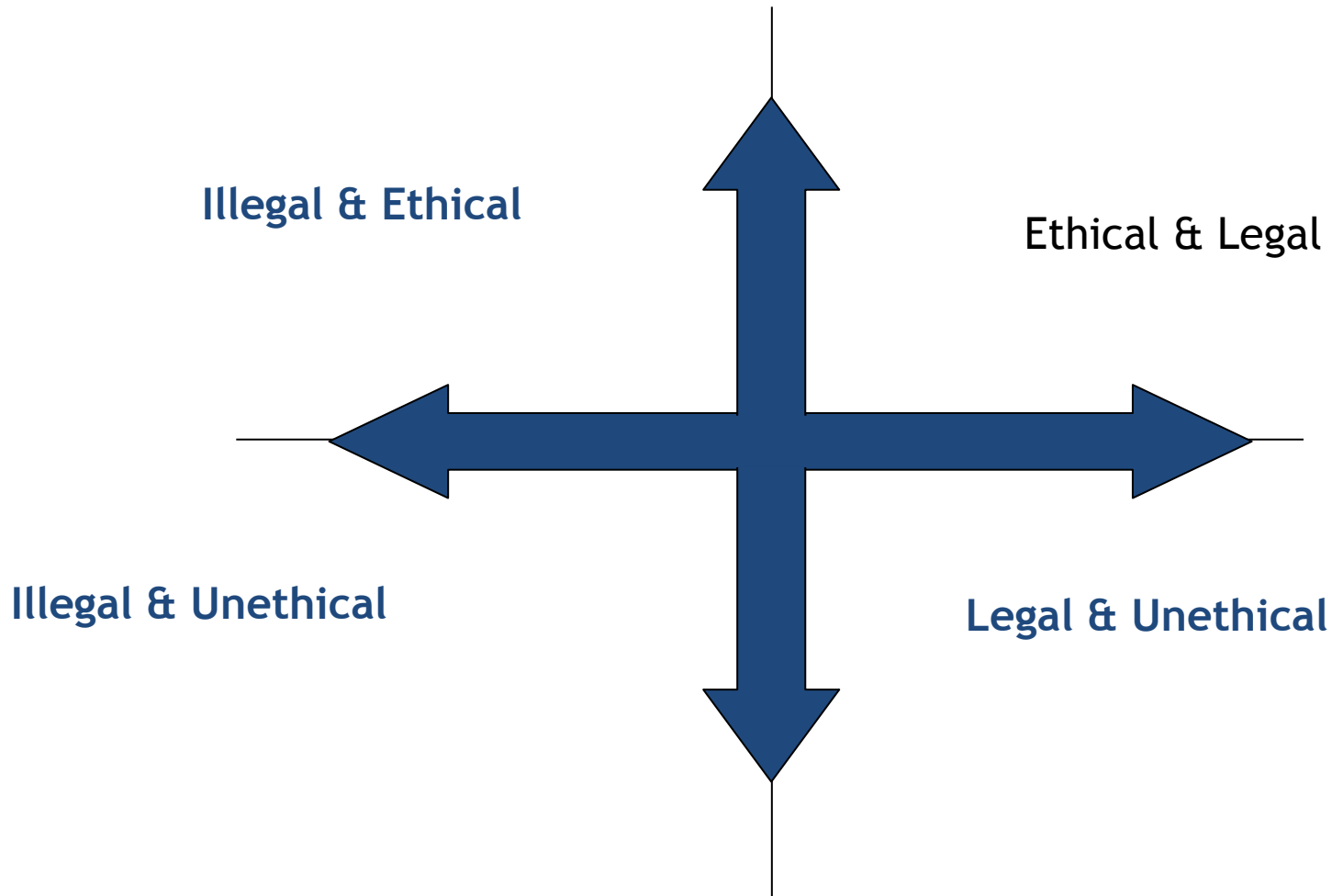
## ➤ **Non-Moral Actions**

- A non-moral action is neither called good nor bad.
- For Example, hurricane, flood, drought etc. are not included in moral actions

## ➤ **Amoral actions**

- Children's actions and mad man's actions

# How are ethics and law related?



## Developing a Well-Reasoned Response to a Moral Dilemma

- Moral dilemmas are situations in which two or more moral obligations, duties, rights, goods, or ideals come into conflict with one another.
- How does one decide whether a response is well-reasoned? What criteria apply? Can we reliably judge?

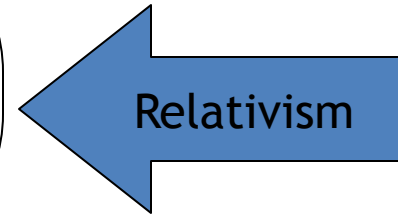
# Ethical Theories

1. Subjective relativism
2. Cultural relativism
3. Divine command theory
4. Kantianism
5. Act utilitarianism
6. Rule utilitarianism
7. Social contract theory



# Relativism versus Objectivism: *Where “The Good” Exists*

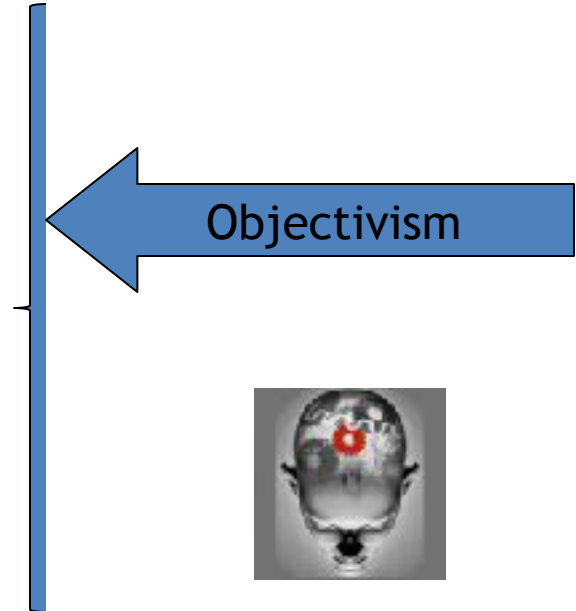
1. Subjective relativism
2. Cultural relativism



“*The good*” is inside the mind

# Relativism versus Objectivism: Where “*The Good*” Exists

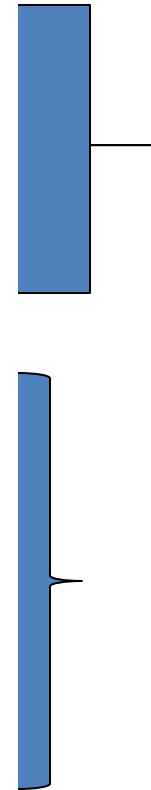
- 3. Divine command theory
- 4. Kantianism
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- 7. Social contract theory



“*The Good*” is outside

# The Workable Ethical Theories: *Rational Theories*

1. Subjective relativism
2. Cultural relativism
3. Divine command theory
4. Kantianism
5. Act utilitarianism
6. Rule utilitarianism
7. Social contract theory





# Applied Ethics

- Applied ethics extends these arguments about principle to particular areas of concern.
- Applied to medicine = “medical ethics” (or “bioethics”)
- Applied to commerce = “business ethics”
- Applied to the press = “journalism ethics”
- Applied to engineering = “engineering ethics”
- Applied to environment = “environmental ethics,” and so on.

# Subjective relativism

- Relativism
  - No universal norms of right and wrong
  - One person can say “X is right,” another can say “X is wrong,” and both can be right
- Subjective relativism
  - Each person decides right and wrong for himself or herself
  - “What’s right for you may not be right for me”

# Cultural relativism

- What is “right” and “wrong” depends upon a society’s actual moral guidelines
- These guidelines vary from place to place and from time to time
- A particular action may be right in one society at one time and wrong in other society or at another time

# Cultural relativism

## Case for

- Different social contexts demand different moral guidelines
- It is arrogant for one society to judge another
- Morality is reflected in actual behavior

# Cultural relativism

## Case against

- Because two societies **do** have different moral views doesn't mean they **ought to** have different views
- Doesn't explain how moral guidelines are determined
- Doesn't explain how guidelines evolve
- Provides no way out for cultures in conflict
- Because many practices are acceptable does not mean any cultural practice is acceptable (many/any fallacy)
- Societies do, in fact, share certain core values
- Only indirectly based on reason
- Not a workable ethical theory



### 3. Divine command theory *(the virtue approach)*

- **Ethics** = the study of good and bad, right and wrong
- **Ethical standards** = criteria that help differentiate right from wrong
- **Environmental ethics** = the study of ethical questions regarding human interactions with the environment

# What is Sustainability?

- **Sustainability**- meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It addresses issues of social equity and economic development as well as ecological indicators.
- connects to our children and our children's children
- Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and other want to pass on their religion to their future generations

# The Environment and Religion

- Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhism and Hinduism religions all support the environment
- Scriptural References
- **The New Testament, Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an, and Upanishads** support by respecting animals, eating and planting fruit and respecting all forms of nature
- Themes of reward and punishment

# Judaism and the Environment Ethics

- The Jewish belief toward the environment is similar to the themes found in the Tanuk.
- God is all powerful and we must recognize him and serve him in the ways that he commands.
  - God instruct the Jews about their limitations on natural resources



# Christianity and the Environment

- Rom 8:19-23
- This passage shows how the creation was for the children of God and the world was created for us.
- Christians believe we should respect all aspects of the environment and that those who do so will be rewarded.
- Relation to **sustainability**

- Nature is only a gift from God and must be used with due care - the concept of stewardship.

*the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is"*

- If not, Nature will take over man's superiority over it

# Environmental Ethics based on Hinduism

- Vedic hymns and poems (Vedas)
- The vedas were passed down from ancient times in written form and by words of mouth.
- Hindus believe that the Vedas are the inspired word of God, delivered at the dawn of the universe to Brahma, the first created being.



➤ **Inner peace:** Hinduism stresses that true happiness comes from within not from outer possessions. This means that the search for material possessions should not be allowed to dominate life. Life's main purpose is to discover the spiritual nature and the peace and fulfilment it brings. The efforts to exploit the things of this world is considered Hindu teachers to be a distraction from this central purpose of life.

- Simple living
- Life is sacred

- Living only for the satisfaction of the senses, such a person lives in vain
- Hinduism worship Animals as well as plants

# Buddhism & Environmental Ethics



- **All beings are connected:** Buddhism teaches that the idea of separateness is an illusion. The health of the whole is inseparably linked to the health of the parts, and the health of the parts is inseparably linked to the health of the whole.
- **Respect for life:** One's existence is no more important than anyone else's. If one treats nature as a friend and teacher, one can be in harmony with other creatures and appreciate the interconnectedness of all that lives.

- **Simplicity and moderation:** Craving and greed only bring unhappiness, since demands for material possessions can never be satisfied, and people will always demand more, so threatening the environment. This is why the real solution to the environmental crisis begins with the individual.



# Islam and the Environment Ethics

- **“Who did transgress beyond bounds in the land and made therein much mischief. So your Lord poured on them different kinds of severe torment. Surely your Lord is Ever-Watchful.” (89:11-14)**

**-This is a punishment in the Qur'an for those who did not appreciate the fertile land, pure water and beautiful gardens.**

- The world is created by God and is in constant praise of God.
- The unity of creation as a reflection of the Unity of God
- [God] directs the affairs from the heaven to the earth.  
Then it ascends unto Him on a day the measure of which is a thousand years of your reckoning
- **The earth:** Do they not look at the earth – how many noble things of all kinds we have produced therein?
- **The ecosystem:** There is not a animal that lives on the earth and nor a being that flies on its wing, but forms part of communities like you
- Human being continuous responsibility to the environment.
- Do not cut down trees and do not kill animals except for food

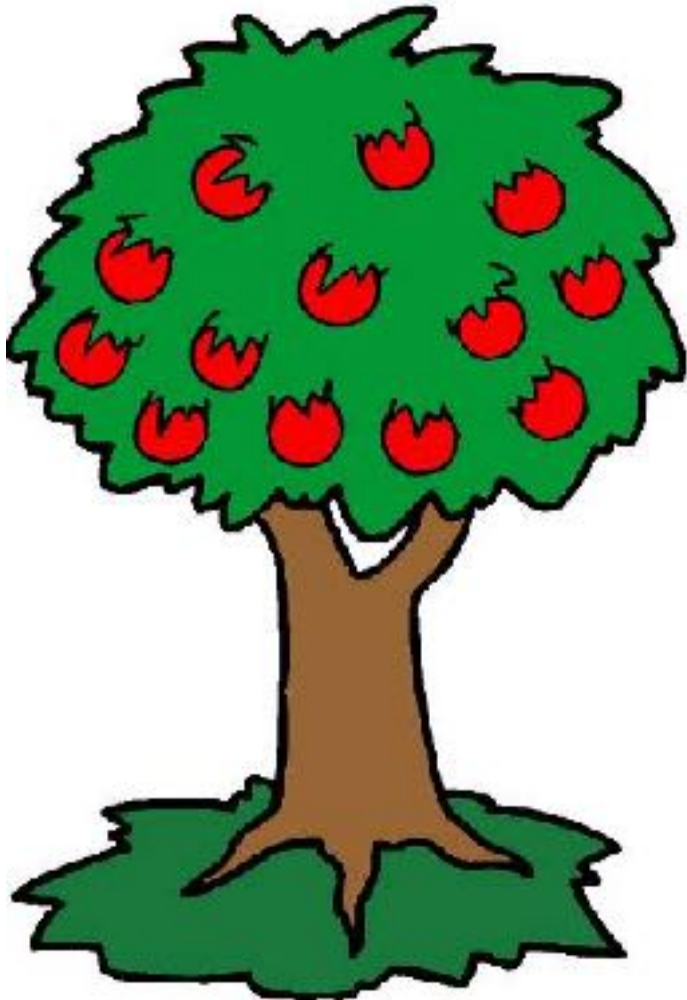


# Animals and Religion



- Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and all religion regard animals in their scriptures and they are consistently a part of the text.
- Reoccurring animals include lambs, fish, ox, horses, cattle, sheep and many others
- Many of our animals are endangered and we do not want to destroy the earth and kill them off

# Fruit and its relation to the Hebrew Bible



## Deut 21

Told not to cut down trees that have fruit in them. Men are instructed that they can eat the fruit but may not harm them

Fruit is considered a blessing from God and we should not destroy things that bless us with fruit from the Lord

# Fruit and the Bible

- “You are free to eat from any of the trees in the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed and will die”(Gen 2:16-17)
- God has given us everything we need
- Sets fourth specific limitations
- Must fight temptation to disregard God

# Fruit and the Bible

-Dual meaning of fruit

**Fruit** is also often associated with bearing children and multiplying your descendants is important in order to carry on the religion.



1) The fruit from the environment should be cherished and continually planted for others

2) Humans must be fruitful and have children but we must have a healthy place to live, which then connects us back to sustainability

# Fruit and the New Testament

- “When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard” (Mark 12:2)
- “Every good tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matt 2:19)
  - Tree is only good if it can bear good fruit
  - Importance of fruit
  - Environmentalist disagree with burning

# Fruit and Islam

- **"Eat of their fruit when they bring fruit, but pay the due thereof on the day of its harvest. But be not extravagant." (6:141)**
  - accepting gifts from others
  - Don't be excessive in production and consumption
  - Allah does not like spoiling
  - Must not overproduce and waste food; seen as an ingratitude to Allah

- **Some Challenges**
- Religious perspective may be more appealing to certain section of society
- Religious scriptures/texts do not explicitly address environmental issues per se; thus environmental philosophy based on these sources are mostly derived from one's perceptions of what the relevant passages are and how they should be interpreted
- Some argued that the Judeo-Christian religion held in Western society has negative attitudes toward nature The most influential critique was an article written by Lynn White entitled the "*The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*".

# Questions

- Do you think that God intended us to be masters over the environment and all that it entails?
- Have you noticed anything in the scriptures that are very different from another in regards to the environment? Or do the religions of the book share the same beliefs?
- What do you think should be done to solve current environmental issues?



# How Can Help?

Many people rely on others to take action when it comes to the environment. Instead you can:

- Walk or carpool
- Reusable instead of paper
- Always recycle
- Don't waste food
- Eat organically

Green Technology  
Green Management



TEACH OTHERS TO BE  
ENVIRONMENTALLY  
FRIENDLY AND MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE!!!!