

Environmental Ethics 2015/16

Dr. David J. Gunkel

Week 5

Objective

This week we are going to examine two different ways to formulate moral status or to decide whether something is or is not a legitimate moral subject. We will begin by evaluating “the properties approach” and asking about its advantages and disadvantages for providing a suitable theory of moral status ascription. We will then look at and investigate an alternative to this method that can be called “social relational ethics,” where moral status is decided not on the basis of the objective properties possessed (or not) by an entity but on the basis of the social relationships that exist between entities.

Readings

M. Coeckelbergh, *Growing Moral Relations* (pages 13 to 46)

Questions

1) What is the properties approach to deciding questions of moral status? How does this theory of moral standing operate? What are, in your opinion, the advantages and disadvantages of this approach for the project of environmental ethics? In other words, what are the opportunities and challenges of using the standard properties approach for deciding the moral status of the environment in general or specific environmental entities in particular?

2) What is the “social relational” approach to deciding questions of moral status? How does this alternative differ from that of the standard properties approach? And what advantages does this way of theorizing moral status have for environmental ethics?