

# Environmental Ethics 2015/16

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Week 7

## Objective

This week we are going to investigate a recent innovation in moral philosophy call “Information Ethics” or IE. This concept was introduced at the turn of the century by Luciano Floridi, a professor at Oxford University. According to Floridi, IE is “an ecological ethics that replaces biocentrism with ontocentrism. IE suggests that there is something even more elemental than life, namely being—that is, the existence and flourishing of all entities and their global environment—and something more fundamental than suffering, namely entropy, [which] here refers to any kind of destruction or corruption of informational objects, that is, any form of impoverishment of being including nothingness, to phrase it more metaphysically.” IE therefore proposes an all-encompassing moral theory that would accommodate not living organisms but natural objects and non-natural or technological artifacts. The objective of this week’s investigation is to evaluate the opportunities and challenges of this new moral theory for environmentalism and environmental philosophy.

## Readings

Luciano Floridi, Information Ethics

## Questions

1) As its name indicates, Information Ethics focuses attention on “information” as both a property and unit of analysis. This is a significant alteration in the way of organizing moral philosophy. Why does Floridi focus on “information?” How does IE operationalized the term “information?” And what are the advantages and potential disadvantages of using “information” in this manner?

2) Information Ethics proposes a moral theory that Floridi argues is “ontocentric.” This formulation is designed to challenge other centrism in the history of moral thinking—anthropocentrism, animo-centrism, biocentrism, etc. What is ontocentrism? What advantages does it have for moral philosophy, especially a moral philosophy that endeavors to include consideration of the natural environment? Are you convinced of IE’s potential to establish what Floridi calls a “more universal ecological ethics?” Conversely, do you see any problems with or unintended consequences from this new form of moral “centrism?” Does IE’s ontocentrism have any problems, especially when viewed from the perspective of environmental ethics?