



## Chapter 26 Environmental Worldviews, Ethics, and Sustainability



### “It’s A Small World After All”

#### Outline

##### Environmental Worldviews and Values

- A. Beliefs and values of environmental worldviews
  - 1. Environmental worldviews are how people think the world works, where they fit, and ethics.
  - 2. Environmental worldviews can be human-centered or earth centered, or some combination of both.

##### Human-Centered and Life-Centered Environmental Worldviews

- A. Human-centered views think humans to be the most important species and stewards of the earth.
  - 1. People with a planetary management worldview think humans are the dominant species.
    - a. Humans should manage the earth.
    - b. All other life forms have some sort of instrumental value.
    - c. Problems can be solved with more economic growth and development, and better management and technology.
    - d. The planet should have a free-market global economy.
  - 2. People with the stewardship worldview think humans have an ethical responsibility to care for the earth.
    - a. Humans should make the world better
    - b. Humans should pay back our debt to the earth by leaving it better than before.
- B. Life-centered and Eco-centered Worldviews.
  - 1. People with a life-centered worldview believe humans have an ethical responsibility to avoid causing the premature extinction of species.
    - a. Each species has unique genetic information.
    - b. Each species has potential economic good.
    - c. Populations of species are capable of adapting to changing environmental conditions.
- C. People with the environmental wisdom worldview think that humans are not in charge and should study the history of the earth to determine how it has maintained itself.
- D. People with the deep ecology worldview think that humans should think about our obligations to all life forms and not reduce the interdependence and diversity of life.
- E. People with the ecofeminist environmental worldview believe that women should be equal to men in the human quest to develop more sustainable societies.
- F. Global and national polls reveal a shift toward the stewardship, environmental wisdom, and deep ecology worldviews.
- G. Environmental degradation can be slowed by using images of catastrophe and economic and ecologic collapse.

##### Living More Sustainably

- A. Environmentally literate citizens are needed to build a more environmentally sustainable society.
  - 1. Requires an understanding of how the earth works, our interactions with the earth, and the methods we use to deal with environmental problems.
  - 2. Requires an understanding of ecological identity.
- B. Nature must be experienced directly to complete environmental education.
- C. Some affluent people are voluntarily adopting lifestyles and consume less
- D. Effective environmental citizens avoid mental traps that lead to denial and inaction and instead enjoy life and keep empowered feelings.
- E. The are important things we can do to reduce our environmental impact.
  - 1. Agriculture
  - 2. Transportation
  - 3. Home Energy Use
  - 4. Water
  - 5. Resource Consumption

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#### Summary

1. The planetary management worldview is the human centered environmental worldview that guides most industrial societies. Variations include the no-problems school, the free-market school, the responsible planetary management school, the spaceship school, and the stewardship school.
2. Life-centered and earth-centered worldviews include environmental wisdom worldview, species centered, biosphere centered, and ecosystem centered.
3. Ethical guidelines that might be used to help us worked with the earth include: respecting the earth.
4. We can live sustainably through pollution prevention, waste prevention, species protection, and environmental restoration.

#### More Depth: Conceptual Term Paper Topics

1. Beliefs of human-centered worldviews: technological optimism; substitution for scarce resources; no limits; superiority of the human species.
2. Alternatives to planetary management worldviews: biocentrism; ecocentrism; deep ecology; ecofeminism; social ecology.

#### More Breadth: Interdisciplinary Activities and Projects

1. Find and share with the class songs, folklore, literary passages, and art works that reflect U.S. land-use values and ethics as they have evolved from the frontier era to the present. Be sure to include Native American works. What can be discerned about the relationship of humans to nature in different cultures through their expressions of art?
2. For the benefit of your class, arrange a panel discussion among spokespersons for the religious community in your locale. Ask the panel to address the subject of religion as a driving force for sustainable-earth behavior and to respond to critics who argue that Judeo-Christian beliefs are at the root of the environmental crisis.
3. Invite a professor of philosophy to discuss ecofeminism and deep ecology with the class.

#### Objectives

1. List four basic beliefs common to the human-centered, planetary management worldviews. List and contrast four different schools of thought within the planetary management worldview. Compare the common beliefs attached to the Planetary Management, Stewardship, and Environmental Wisdom worldviews.
2. Compare the *inherent* value of a species, as described by life-centered worldviews, to the more *utilitarian* value of species, as described by human-centered worldviews.
3. Distinguish among the basic beliefs of deep ecology and ecofeminism. Are the two worldviews compatible?
4. What evidence is given to indicate a shift in worldviews is underway toward stewardship, environmental wisdom and deep ecology worldviews?
5. What are they key goals of environmental education or environmental literacy?
6. How can a focus on more simple living and direct nature experiences contribute to a more sustainable future?

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7. List six common traps to be avoided in moving toward a more sustainable future.
8. Evaluate the important things we can do to reduce our environmental impact. Are there any you disagree with or any you would add to the list? How does The Earth Charter contribute to a change in worldviews? What are the components to a sustainability revolution?

Key Terms (**Terms are listed in the same font style as they appear in the text.**)

<p><i>androcentrism</i> (p. 620)  <i>biodiversity protection revolution</i> (p. 626)  <b>biosphere 2</b> (p. 615)  <i>blind technological optimism</i> (p. 623)  <i>deep ecology worldview</i> (p. 619)  <i>demographic revolution</i> (p. 626)  <i>Earth Charter</i> (p. 625)  <i>earth-centered</i> (p. 619)  <i>ecofeminism</i> (p. 620)  <i>economic and political revolution</i> (p. 626)  <i>efficiency revolution</i> (p. 626)  <i>energy revolution</i> (p. 626)  <b>environmental ethics</b> (p. 616)  <i>environmental literacy</i> (p. 621)  <i>environmental revolution</i> (p. 625)  <b>environmental worldviews</b> (p. 616)  <i>environmentally ethical consumption</i> (p. 623)  <b>environmental-wisdom worldview</b> (p. 619)  <i>extrapolation to infinity</i> (p. 624)  <i>voluntary simplicity</i> (p. 623)  <i>win-win solutions</i> (p. 620)</p>	<p><i>fatalism</i> (p. 624)  <i>free-market school</i> (p. 617)  <i>gloom-and-doom pessimism</i> (p. 623)  <i>human-centered</i> (p. 616)  <i>inherent (intrinsic) value</i> (p. 618)  <i>instrumental value</i> (p. 617)  <i>life-centered</i> (p. 616)  <i>life-centered people</i> (p. 620)  <i>no-problem school</i> (p. 617)  <i>paralysis by analysis</i> (p. 624)  <b>planetary management worldview</b> (p. 617)  <i>pollution prevention revolution</i> (p. 626)  <i>principle of enoughness</i> (p. 623)  <i>quality of life</i> (p. 619)  <i>sense of place</i> (p. 622)  <i>spaceship-earth school</i> (p. 617)  <i>stewards</i> (p. 617)  <b>stewardship worldview</b> (p. 617)  <i>sufficiency revolution</i> (p. 626)  <i>win-lose solutions</i> p. 620</p>
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