PHIL 224
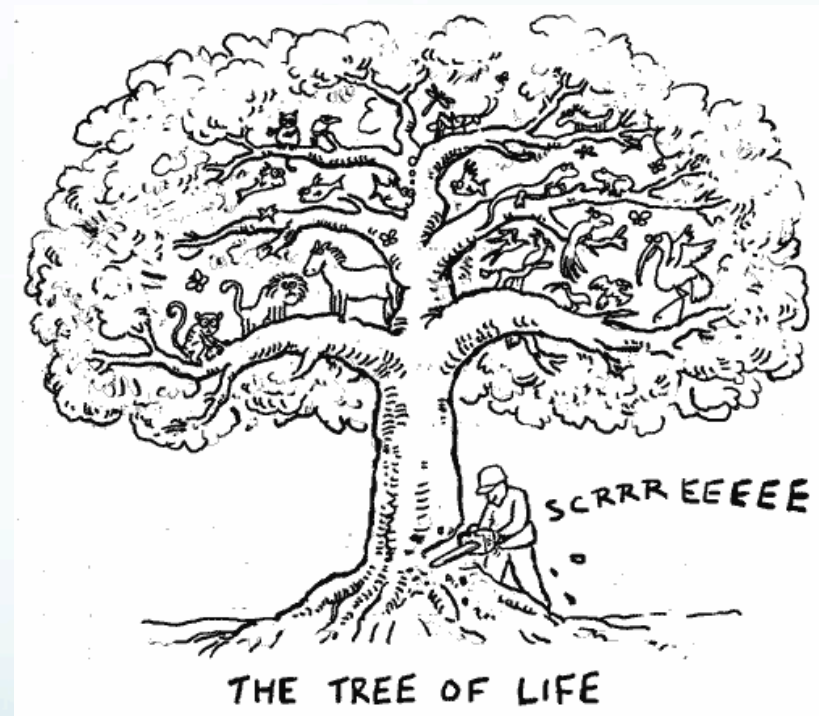## Environmental Ethics, Week 1
Paul Thagard

- Use of laptops (tablets, etc.) is discouraged, and limited to the last two rows.

SCRRR EEEEE

THE TREE OF LIFE

1

The World in 2050

- Forces:
  - demography
  - natural resources
  - globalization
  - climate change

- Question: What kind of world do we want?

Facts   vs.   Values

- How the world *is*.

- Descriptive

- Scientific methods:
  - Observation
  - Experiment
  - Theories
  - Models

- How the world *ought* to be.

- Prescriptive, normative.

- Ethics, philosophy.

What Matters?

1. Nihilism: nothing.

2. Egoism: yourself.

3. Tribalism: Your immediate family or group.

4. Anthropocentrism: all humans.

5. Theism: God.

6. Biocentrism: All living things.

7. Deep ecology: All things, e.g. the planet.

Discussion Question

- What do you see as the most pressing questions in environmental ethics?

- Are there objective answers to these questions, or does right and wrong depend just on your point of view?

- Please close laptops.

5

What is Philosophy?

- **Philosophy**: The search for answers to fundamental questions about the nature of reality, knowledge, morality, and the meaning of life.

- **Epistemology**: The philosophical study of the nature of knowledge.

- **Metaphysics**:   The philosophical study of the fundamental nature of what exists.

- **Ethics**: The philosophical study of the basis of right and wrong.

Positions about ethics (meta-ethics)

1. Objectivism: there really is right and wrong.

2. Relativism: right and wrong depend on your point of view, so what's right for one person might be wrong for another person.

3. Non-cognitivism: Ethical statements are merely expressions of emotional attitudes of approval or disapproval.

Ethical Decision Procedure

1. Identify the issue.
2. Identify the options.
3. Use Ethical Reasoning Patterns to evaluate the options.
4. Reach a conclusion on the issue.

Ethical reasoning patterns

An ethical reasoning pattern (ERP) is a standard way of justifying a conclusion about right and wrong.

Religious ERP:

- Issue: Is a particular **action** right or wrong?

- Analysis: According to my religious beliefs, the **action** is right (wrong).

- Conclusion: The action is **right** (wrong).

Consequences ERP
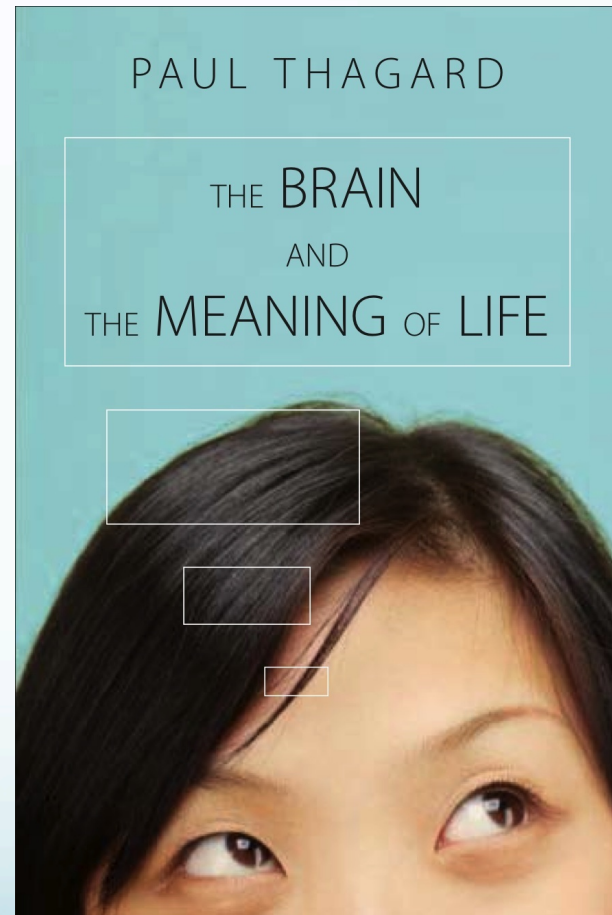
Issue: Is a particular action right or wrong?

Analysis: Overall, the action has good consequences, so it is right.
Or, overall, the action has bad consequences, so it is wrong.

Conclusion: the action is right (wrong).

What are good consequences?

1. Pleasure vs. pain.

2. Happiness

3. Flourishing

4. Human needs
   - Biological
   - Psychological
     - Relatedness
     - Autonomy
     - Competence

PAUL THAGARD

THE BRAIN
AND
THE MEANING OF LIFE

11

Rights/duties ERP

Issue: Is a particular action right or wrong?
Analysis: An action is right if you have a duty to do it and it does not violate anyone's rights.
An action is wrong if you have a duty not to do it or if it violates someone's rights.
Conclusion: The action is right (wrong).

12

Principles ERP

Issues: Is a particular action right or wrong?
Analysis: An action is right if it follows from a
valid general principle,
and does not violate any principles.
An action is wrong if it violates an ethical principle.
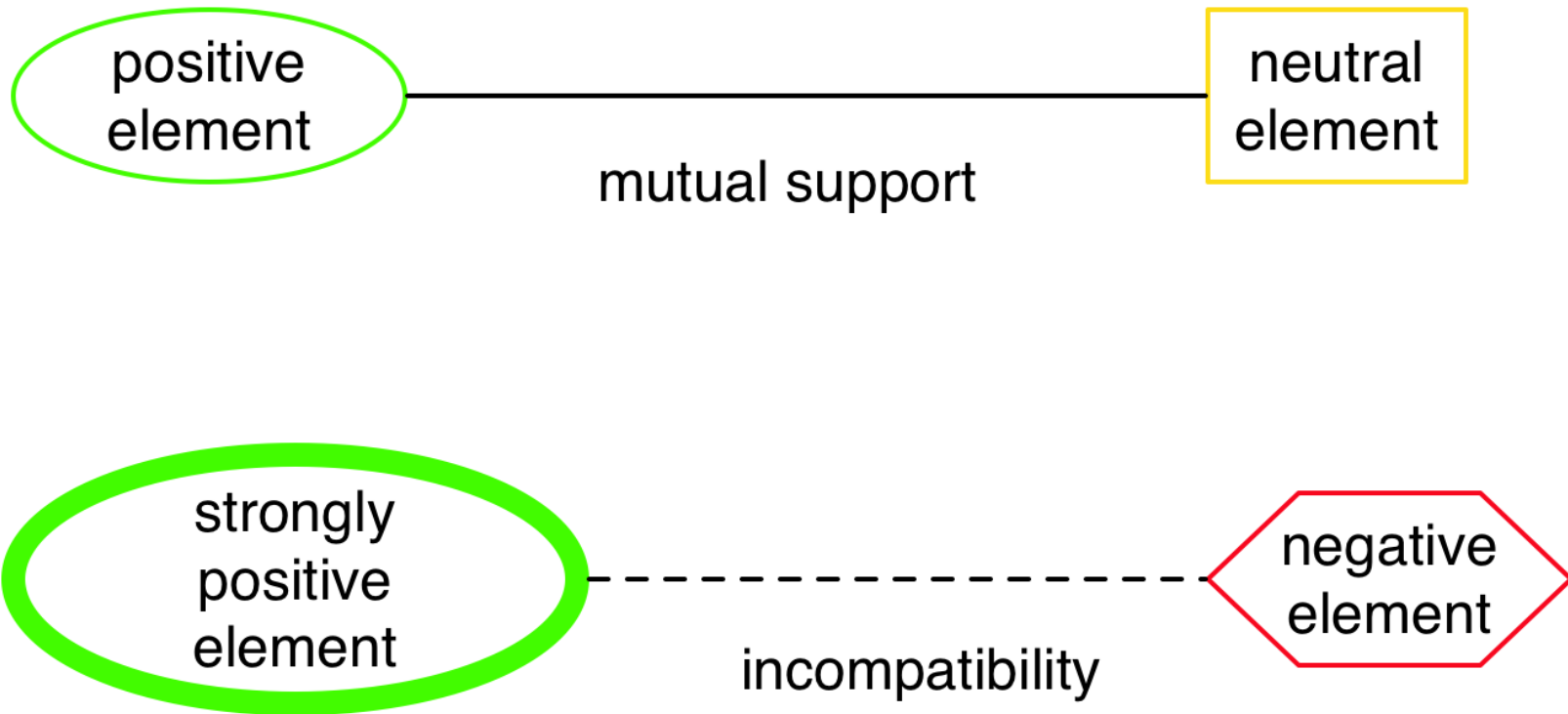Conclusion: The action is right (wrong).

Discussion

- Which approach to ethics do you find most plausible?

- What problems in environmental ethics does your favorite approach work for?
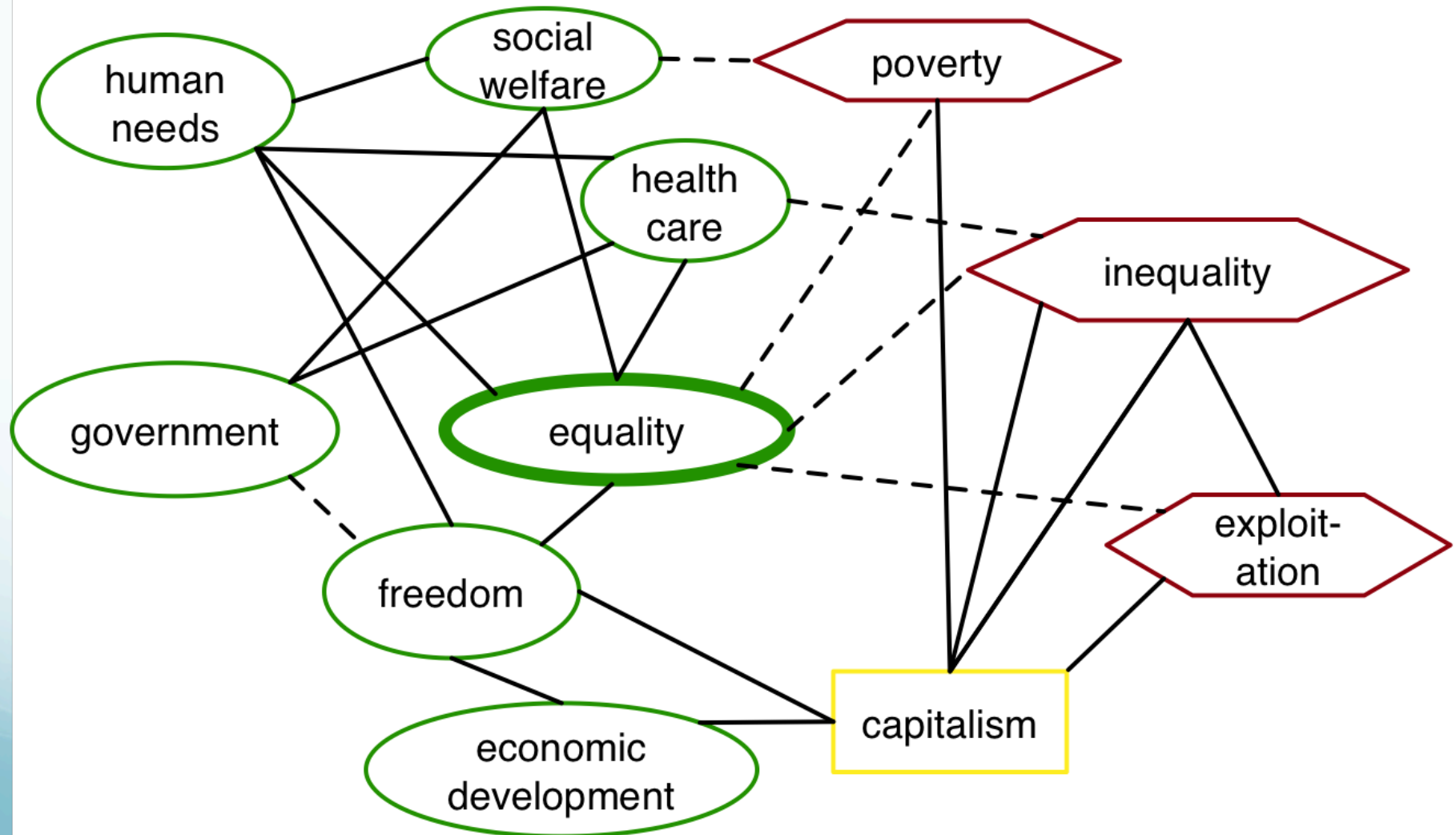
14

Ethical Principles

- Autonomy

- Equality

- Beneficence

- Non-malfeasance

Cognitive-Affective Maps

positive element — mutual support — neutral element

strongly positive element --- incompatibility --- negative element

Cognitive-Affective Map - Left

Cognitive-Affective Map - Right