Welcome and Introduction
Dr. Heidi Wayment, Director, Compassion Project and Chair, Psychology Department

5:15:
Dr. Matthew Goodwin, NAU Philosophy Department
- What are some reasons for preserving places, such as buildings, monuments, battlefields, parks, and lands?
- What is wilderness?
- What are some good reasons to preserve or not preserve wilderness?
- How does the aesthetic value of wilderness compare with other reasons for preserving or not preserving it?

6:20: Recap of discussion

1. **The Natural Resources Argument**: anthropocentric and utilitarian. Natural resources should be preserved for use, whether future or immediate.

2. **The Hunting Argument**: home ranges of megafauna are preserved so that they can be hunted. U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt often advocated for preservation on these grounds.

3. **The Pharmacopoeia Argument**: wilderness areas support wide variety of species that currently or may in the future be used for medicinal purposes.

4. **The Service Argument**: wilderness areas provide invaluable services to humans. Wetlands protect important river headways; unbroken forests and oceans remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and replenish oxygen.

5. **The Life Support Argument**: our species depends upon the healthy functioning of various ecosystems, and we as individuals are a part of the system.

6. **The Physical Therapy Argument**: wilderness area activities are essential ways to enhance and remedy our physical health.

7. **The Arena Argument**: aside from the health benefits, wilderness areas provide desirable locales for athletic and recreational pursuits.

8. **The Mental Therapy Argument**: wilderness experiences can be psychologically therapeutic and can treat psychological disturbances. John Muir refers to city people as “tired, nerve-shaken, overcivilized,” “half-insane,” “choked with care like clocks full of dust,” and bursting with “rust and disease,” “sins and cobweb cares.”

9. **The Art Gallery Argument**: we should preserve wilderness areas because they are sites of the beautiful and the sublime. Wild places are like gigantic art galleries. John Muir said “None of Nature’s landscapes are ugly so long as they are wild.” The destruction of wilderness would be worse than destruction of a da Vinci painting or a Michelangelo sculpture—artworks can be recreated, but a species cannot. Natural beauty cannot be replicated in urban forms and are both necessary and sufficient conditions for a true sense of beauty.

10. **The Inspiration Argument**: wilderness is important because it provides inspiration for the artistically and intellectually inclined, thereby shaping culture.

11. **The Cathedral Argument**: wilderness is a site for spiritual, mystical, or religious encounters; places to experience mystery, moral regeneration, spiritual revival, meaning, unity, wonder, awe, inspiration, or a sense of harmony with the rest of creation—all essentially religious experiences. We should no more destroy wilderness than raze Mecca or turn the Sistine Chapel into a grain silo. The closer one is to nature, the closer one is to God. This could afford protection by the U.S. Constitution.

12. **The Laboratory Argument**: Some scientific studies require many types and varieties of geographical locales which remain in their pristine state. Such scientific study is important for the sake of knowledge itself and instrumentally for society understanding itself and its role in the world.

13. **The Standard of Land Health Argument**: wilderness is a measure of land health and a model of a normal ecologically balanced landscape. It is a measure “of what the land was, what it is, and what it ought to be” (Aldo Leopold). It is a control sample of healthy land and a normative measure of what we ought to strive toward.
14. **The Storage Silo Argument**: many terrestrial and aquatic wilderness areas are worth saving because they contain vast amounts of biodiversity; especially genetic information or species diversity. These hold the world’s accumulated evolutionary and ecological wisdom.

15. **The Classroom Argument**: in wilderness one learns taxonomies, habitats, navigation, survival, and a feeling for a particular geographical region and its features.

16. **The Ontogeny Argument**: Wilderness the source of our evolution; it is the context in which we became what we are. We might maintain it out of respect for our place of origin, and it may be vital for our continued evolution.

17. **The Cultural Diversity Argument**: Specific cultures are derived from and dependent upon a certain ontogenetic context and the wide variety of cultural variation reflects the wide variety of natural ecosystems.

18. **The National Character Argument**: Many in the U.S. see designated wilderness areas as monuments; symbolically enshrining national values. They are also the historical homes of aboriginal American peoples.

19. **The Self-Realization Argument**: to truly understand the world, our place in it, and our duties to it, we must dismiss the inaccurate bifurcation between self and nature. Also known as Deep Ecology.

20. **The Disease Sequestration Argument**: since most all species host viruses, there are at least as many viruses as there are living species. As humans travel into more remote regions they expose themselves to these viruses that are deadly to humans because they have not adapted to them.

21. **The Salvation of Freedom Argument**: we may need wilderness someday as a refuge from authoritarian government and political oppression. Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and the High Sierras may be required to function as bases for guerilla warfare against tyranny (Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*).

22. **The Mythopoetic Argument**: wilderness serves as the optimum location for the viewing of the history of myth and are crucial for the building of the myth of the future.

23. **The Necessity Argument**: an idea or concept of wilderness is logically and metaphysically necessary (not historically dependent) for the existence and complete understanding of the concepts of culture and civilization.

24. **The Defense of Democracy Argument**: Wilderness preservation shows respect for the needs and interests of a minority (the minority of people who visit these places), and this is a testament to the democratic process. Those who say this is elitist are applying a philosophy of mass-production to what is intended to counteract mass-production and mechanized recreation.

25. **The Social Bonding Argument**: among the most pervasive reasons people choose to spend time in designated wilderness areas are the benefits that come from social interaction and bonding in such a setting.

26. **The Animal Welfare Argument**: wild animals depend upon their respective home environments for their existence. Since they should be considered as members of the community of beings deserving moral consideration we should not destroy their homes.

27. **The Gaia Hypothesis Argument**: the earth, as a self-correcting system is tantamount to a living organism and wild ecosystems are like organs necessary for its proper functioning and viability.

28. **The Future Generations Argument**: among other debts owed, current humans ought to pass the world on to future generations as we inherited it, with as many designated wilderness areas as possible.

29. **The Unknowns and Indirect Benefits Argument**: we ought to err on the side of caution; most of the benefits of these areas are indirect or unknown. They are “like a magic well: the more that is drawn from them in knowledge and benefits, the more there will be to draw” (E. O. Wilson).

30. **The Intrinsic Value Argument**: wilderness is valuable just because it exists, just because it is, whether we experience them or not.
Hot Topics Café Community Committee

The “hot topics” in the Hot Topics Cafés are selected by community members represent diverse constituencies and viewpoints. We thank our committee for their participation.

Flagstaff & Winslow

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Owner, La Posada; Founder, Winslow Arts Trust; Former Mayor, City of Winslow; Board Member for: Arizona Town Hall, Arizona Citizens for the Arts

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Next Flagstaff Hot Topics Café:

Could we have an atheist in the Whitehouse?

Date: Thursday, October 24, 2013
Location: NAU’s Native American Cultural Center