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The man's nature relationship and environmental ethics

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Abstract

Our behaviour and policies with regard to nature and the environment should be guided by a code of ethics, which is to be derived from basic principles and from a pragmatic consideration of the issues at stake. The man's nature relationship has always been ambiguous, nature being seen as both a provider and an enemy. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, man is set apart from nature and called to dominate it, although this attitude has been revised to become one of stewardship. Oriental religions, on the other hand, have a more holistic view and consider humans as an integral part of nature. Modern philosophers have views ranging from anthropocentrism to biocentrism and egocentrism. It is suggested to take a pragmatic approach by which primary human needs are met first and foremost whereas the needs of other living organisms and ecosystems are allowed to prevail over secondary human needs. A plea is made to support the Earth Charter, which embodies in its principles and prescriptions a balanced respect for nature and future human generations.



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