

## Introduction

### 1. Synopsis of Argument

*Ethics of nature* is an inquiry into the value of nature: Is nature's value only instrumental value for human beings (and if so, what constitutes that value) or does nature also have intrinsic value (and if so, what constitutes that value)? Can traditional anthropocentrism be defended or must we move to a new, physiocentric moral position?

The debate on the ethics of nature is fairly young. Many of its concepts and arguments stand in need of clarification and working out. This study contributes to this task by defining basic concepts such as "nature" and "anthropocentrism" (part I.) and by developing a critical taxonomy of arguments concerning the value of nature.

This taxonomy is divided into three parts. Part II. lists seven *anthropocentric* arguments: arguments which explore the value of nature for a good human life. These arguments concern: the instrumental value of nature for the satisfaction of *basic human needs* like health (II., one); the instrumental value of nature for *sensual human delight*, the fragrance of a flower or the songs of warblers (II., two); the *aesthetic intrinsic value* beautiful and sublime nature has for human beings (II., three); the instrumental value natural design has *in relieving us of "aesthetic responsibility"* (II., four); the role the native landscape, the "*Heimat*," plays in the identity of many human beings (II., five); the *pedagogic* value of treating nature with care (II., six); and the *meaning of life* and the intrinsic value or sacredness the wise, who know that the meaning of life is life itself, accord to nature (II., seven).

Part III. investigates an *holistic* argument, which is neither purely anthropocentric nor purely physiocentric. This argument claims that to accord intrinsic value to nature is to further the good life for human beings, as they are part of nature.

Part IV. presents five *physiocentric* arguments: arguments which give reasons for respecting the "good" of nature for its own sake. The first argument concerns the intrinsic value of *sentient* nature, especially animals; the second concerns respect for *teleological* nature; and the third respect for all *life* in nature. While IV., one to three are *extensionalist* moral arguments, arguments which extend elements of the human moral point of view to nature, IV., four and five are *absolute or transcendent* arguments, in that they try to find some basis for an intrinsic value of nature outside the human moral point of view. IV., four claims that there is a *higher order of values in nature* which we should follow. IV., five is a theological variant of IV., four, the higher order IV., five talks about is *God's order*.

The critical analysis of these arguments leads to the following results: all anthropocentric arguments are good arguments. Taken together, they constitute a strong anthropocentric case for the conservation and cultivation of nature. The holistic argument of III. and the physiocentric arguments of IV., with the exception of IV., one and two when they are restricted to certain animals, are bad arguments. Whereas sentient and teleological animal nature has moral intrinsic value, and anthropocentrism must be overcome with respect to it, the rest of nature lacks moral or absolute intrinsic value. Its value consists of its instrumental value, aesthetic intrinsic value, *Heimat* value, and (nontranscendent) sacredness for human beings. There is nothing we owe to non-animal nature itself.