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"Two Distinctions in Environmental Goodness"

Green, Karen

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In her paper, "Two distinctions in goodness," Korsgaard points out that while a contrast is often drawn between intrinsic and instrumental value there are really two distinctions to be drawn here. One is the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value, the other is that between having value as an end and having value as a means. In this paper I apply this contrast to some issues in environmental philosophy. It has become a commonplace of environmentalism that there are intrinsic values in nature. What is usually meant by this is that some values in nature are not merely instrumental to human ends. By using the notion of intrinsic value to express this philosophers have developed positions which are open to a number of meta-ethical and practical objections. The view that there are objective values in nature, which are independent of human interests, is better served by an environmental philosophy which sees most value in nature as objective, extrinsic value. The resulting environmental ethic is sketched and some apparent difficulties discussed.

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Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/5558
Print date: 15 November 2026 16:11:15