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"Ecocentricism and Persons"

Baxter, Brian H.

Baxter, Brian H. "Ecocentrism and Persons." *Environmental Values* 5, no. 3 (1996): 205–19. doi:10.3197/096327196776679311 .

Ecocentrism has to establish an intrinsic connection between its basic value postulate of the non-instrumental value of the nonhuman world and a conception of human flourishing, on pain of failure to motivate acceptance of its social and political prescriptions. This paper explores some ideas recently canvassed by ecocentrists such as Robyn Eckersley, designed to establish this connection—transpersonal ecology, autopoietic value theory, and ecofeminism—and finds them open to objection. An alternative approach is developed which concentrates on the connection between non-human nature and personhood, via the phenomenon of culture. Persons are conceived of as essentially culture-creators, and the fact of their embodiment in ecosystems is argued to be essential to their activities as culture creators. The variety and integrity of such systems thus turns out to be essential for the flourishing of what is essential to personhood. This means that ecocentrism has to be abandoned in its pure form, and replaced with person-centrism, but this conclusion is argued for on the basis of the extension of the concept of the self - a strategy often endorsed by ecocentrists themselves.

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