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Baxter, Brian, "Environmental Ethics - Values or Obligations? A Reply to O'Neill"

Baxter, Brian. “Environmental Ethics - Values or Obligations? A Reply to O’Neill.” *Environmental Values* 8, no. 1 (1999): 107–12. doi:10.3197/096327199129341743 .

Onora O’Neill recently argued that environmental ethics could and should be reformulated in terms of a search for the obligations held by moral agents towards each other, with respect to the non-human world. The more popular alternative, which seeks to establish the intrinsic value of the non-human, is plagued with various theoretical difficulties attaching to the concept of value. It is here argued that O’Neill’s attempt to determine fundamental obligations of moral agents on the basis of a non-universalisability criterion does not succeed. It is further claimed that such an approach, in spite of the advantages which O’Neill sees it as having, is itself open to serious objection from the viewpoint of environmental ethics, especially as human beings are able in principle to release each other from mutual obligations. It is concluded that, in spite of the difficulties involved, postulations of (intrinsic) value to non-human nature do seem to be indispensable to environmental ethics. (Source: The White Horse Press)

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