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"Reconciling Realism and Constructivism in Environmental Ethics"

Evanoff, Richard J.

Evanoff, Richard J. "Reconciling Realism and Constructivism in Environmental Ethics." *Environmental Values* 14, no. 1 (2005): 61–81. doi:10.3197/0963271053306113 .

This paper outlines a constructivist approach to environmental ethics which attempts to reconcile realism in the ontological sense, i.e., the view that there is an objective material world existing outside of human consciousness, with the view that how nature is understood and acted in are epistemologically and morally constructed. It is argued that while knowledge and ethics are indeed culturally variable, social constructions of nature are nonetheless constrained by how things actually stand in the world. The "realist" version of constructivism proposed here can be linked to dialectical forms of reasoning which see knowledge and ethics as arising out of human interactions with an objectively real environment, and contrasted with strong constructivist views which see nature as "nothing more than" a social construct. While both the physical environment and human attitudes towards it are in part socially constructed, nature also retains a measure of autonomy, or "wildness," apart from human constructions.
— Text from The White Horse Press website

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