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"Does the Idea of Wilderness Need a Defence?"

Keeling, Paul M

Keeling, Paul M. “Does the Idea of Wilderness Need a Defence?” *Environmental Values* 17, no. 4 (2008): 505–19. doi:10.3197/096327108X368511 .

The received wilderness idea of nature as untrammelled by human beings has been accused of assuming an untenable human/nature dualism which denies the Darwinian fact that humans are a part of nature. But the meaning of terms like “nature” and “natural” depends on the context of use and the contrast class implied in that context. When philosophers such as J. Baird Callicott and Steven Vogel insist that the only correct view is that humans are a part of nature, they ignore the perfectly ordinary context in which “nature” is used to mean “other than human.” What is at issue here are a priori grammatical rules which stand in no need of empirical justification. There is no incompatibility between the view that humans are a part of nature and the idea that nature is valuable because of its non-human origin. The essentialism about the word “nature” endemic to this debate distracts from the real issue, which is the value of nature’s wildness.
— Text from The White Horse Press website

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