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SAMTAL MED DEN VÄRDEFULLA NATUREN

Staffan Kvassman

**Ett studium av miljöetiken
hos Knud Løgstrup, Holmes
Rolston III och Hans Jonas**



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ABSTRACT

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This thesis has three aims. One aim is to explain and analyse the environmental ethics of Rolston, Jonas and Løgstrup. A second aim is to compare and criticize their environmental ethics. A third aim is to put forward a personal proposal for an acceptable formulation of a weakly biocentric environmental ethic.

The main question in the thesis is how one can formulate an environmental ethic that strives for a tenable approach vis-a-vis nature and at the same time does not dethrone human dignity. In order to obtain a tenable environmental ethic four conditions have been propounded. The first is a *prioritizing condition*, which means that a tenable environmental ethic should be able to prioritize among nature's values and differentiate what is important and unimportant in nature. The second condition is a *consistency condition*, which means that one must recognize the scientific results within one's own area. A third condition is an *experience condition*, which means that in addition to scientific experiences one must be able to include the experiences of nature's values that a science-based perception of reality is not capable of describing. Lastly there is a *human dignity condition*, which means that nature's values may not be gained at the expense of human dignity.

In the thesis it is argued that a *weakly biocentric environmental ethic* best fulfils the four conditions. This means that, besides man, nature and other living beings can have intrinsic value, but that man alone has an absolute value. This means that the value is independent of a person's qualities and abilities. In the thesis it is argued that an environmental ethic in its perception of reality can contain scientific facts at the same time as it can contain everyday more direct experiences. With support from Løgstrup it is argued that we can find a way to understanding ingenious and senserich nature pertaining to the senses. It is argued that we have experience that nature meets us not only as an environmental problem but also as a delightful grace of creation.

It is further argued in the thesis that there are *objective values* in nature that it is possible to gain knowledge about and that this is best expressed in the form of a *deontological action ethic*. The environmental ethic that is argued for has its prerequisite in the dialogue that nature through the immediate sensory impressions and the laws that apply in nature calls us to.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, biocentrism, instrumental value, intrinsic value, value nihilism, objective value, correspondence theory, moral realism, absolute human dignity, deductive knowledge, inductive knowledge, cosmophenomenology, science, creation theology, sensation, disposition, appealing nature, interplay.

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Summary

A principal question in environmental ethics is that of the relationship between man and nature. A person who has dealt with this relationship at great philosophical depth is Århus professor Knud Eilert Løgstrup. He did not work out a comprehensive environmental ethic, but developed a perception of reality that I shall develop further in a more thoroughly worked out environmental ethic. As support in this work I shall make use of two authors who like Løgstrup advocate a weakly biocentric ethic. They are Holmes Rolston III och Hans Jonas.

This thesis has three aims. One aim is to explain and analyse the environmental ethics of Rolston, Jonas and Løgstrup. A second aim is to compare and criticize their environmental ethics. A third aim is from Løgstrup's perception of reality to put forward my own proposal for an acceptable formulation of a weakly biocentric environmental ethic.

The main question in this thesis will be how one can formulate an environmental ethic that strives for a tenable approach vis-a-vis nature and at the same time does not dethrone human dignity. In order to analyse this question four problem areas are dealt with in the thesis.

1. The first complex of problems that the thesis treats is the question of what value nature has in relation to man. An individual who is a means of help for someone or something else to have their needs fulfilled has an *instrumental value*. All living things in nature can in this way be said to use everything else in nature as a resource for the satisfaction of their own needs. Nature is a means for satisfying the needs of all living things. But not all values need to be instrumental. A *means* is an instrument for fulfilling a *goal* and the goal can be an *intrinsic value*. The intrinsic value is based on its own qualities and does not need to be further justified. I also put the value-ontological question of whether it is man who creates nature's values or whether these values have an existence of their own independent of man. If it is man himself who creates nature's values we adopt a *value-nihilistic* standpoint. If nature itself creates its own

values we adopt a *value-objectivist* standpoint. We can also put the epistemological question of whether it is possible to have knowledge in value questions. If we answer in the affirmative to this we adopt a cognitive standpoint. Among cognitive standpoints are *fundamentalism* which means that we can have knowledge of values through assuming certain notions that do not need further support. This standpoint differs from *coherentism*, which means that our values express a connected and coherent system. Lastly I wish to make distinct the so-called *correspondence theory*, which means that a statement is true if it agrees with reality. One form of cognitive theory of value is that of the *ethical naturalism* which claims that value judgements can be translated to empirical judgements. Another form of cognitive theory of values is *intuitionism* which can say that man is equipped with a moral “sixth sense” which means that we can intuitively make genuine value judgements. A third form of theory of value is that of *moral realism* which claims that it is possible via our five senses to refute value judgements.

2. The second problem the thesis takes up for discussion is which view of nature and man should govern us in the relationship between man and nature. Should we see nature as a chaos of random parts or should we see it as an ordered whole? And how should we understand human dignity? Human dignity can at the same time be both an instrumental value and an intrinsic value. We value ourselves, our children, friends, countrymen and foreigners differently. We can obtain a more objective intrinsic value if we apply the principle of an ideal observer. Such a principle can lead to human dignity constituting an *equality principle*, which means that we obtain a view of man where human dignity is not gradable. An alternative to a view of man based on science is represented by the notion that man is regarded as a whole that cannot be fully described with the help of science. This means that we can say that a human being is somewhat more than the sum of his or her body parts and somewhat more than the sum of his or her actions. We can then differentiate between a person’s actions and existence, i.e. we can differentiate between what a person is and what he or she does. Human dignity is thus not changed by the number of worthy qualities we associate with a person. Human dignity is *absolute*. A Christian perception of man can be formulated from such a holistic view of man.

3. The third problem taken up for discussion in the thesis is the attitude science takes up in relation to an environmental-ethical position. Can the environmental ethic, combine a perception of reality based on science with for example a more religiously characterized view of the world? Here the question is put as to whether it is possible to find an environmental ethic that can accommodate technically scientific experiences combined with both a more inductive acquisition of knowledge and an overall experience of more immediate and direct character.

4. The fourth problem the thesis takes up concerns which ethical theory is applicable to environmental questions. Is a tenable environmental ethic expressed best with: a teleological ethic, consistent in ethical terms, that takes its starting point in nature's own striving towards an ever greater tenability? Or should we say that nature itself dictates rules for how we should exist with her in a form of deontological ethic? A tenable environmental ethic is perhaps best expressed through some form of action-deontological ethic that says that there are other intrinsic values in nature than nature's own striving and that we should in every situation consider what can be the right action to take. Or should we say that the environmental ethic depends on how we relate to the environment, what virtues we practise in our dealings with nature in a form of Aristotelian virtue ethic?

In the work of formulating a proposal for a tenable environmental ethic I have set out four conditions that I consider can be set on a tenable environmental ethic. The first condition is a *prioritizing condition*, which means that it should be able to prioritize among nature's values and differentiate what is important and unimportant in nature. The second condition is a *consistency condition*, which says that a tenable environmental ethic must recognize the validity of scientific results within its own area.

A third condition I have termed an *experience condition*. It says that the epistemological method we use beyond counting the scientific values should also have the capability of counting the experiences we have of nature that a science-based interpretive model is not capable of describing. In order that human dignity will not be degraded I introduce a fourth condition that I would like to call a *human dignity condition*. This means that I make it a condition that human dignity is an intrinsic value independent of the value we ascribe to nature. Consequently nature's values may not be gained at the expense of human dignity.

Four environment-ethical models

In the first chapter I have used a method whose idea is to analyse different models for the relationship between man and environment. Using four different models I have worked out the framework for my own environmentally ethical model. In the four models there is a watershed between what I call an anthropocentric ethic and a biocentric ethic. I distinguish between a strong and a weak anthropocentrism and a strong and weak biocentrism and discuss which of the four models is to be preferred. To help me in the work of constructing these four ethical models I proceed from the definitions Bryan G. Norton makes in the book *Why Preserve Natural Variety*.

I start out by demarcating a *strongly anthropocentric ethic*. This maintains that

only man has intrinsic value. Other living beings and nature have an instrumental value as contribution to human wellbeing. This instrumental value is purely a demand value that can be described in economic terms. Nature has value insofar as it can satisfy our immediate and direct needs.

Subsequently I work out two intermediary models. A *weakly anthropocentric* environmental ethic maintains that only man has intrinsic value. Other living beings and nature have instrumental value to the extent that they contribute to human wellbeing. But unlike the strongly anthropocentric environmental ethic the instrumental value in this model is both a demand value and a transformative value that contribute to human wellbeing. Norton writes: "An object has transformative value, as opposed to demand value, if it provides an occasion for examining or altering a felt preference rather than simply satisfying it".¹ A *weakly biocentric* environmental ethic maintains that other living beings and nature have an intrinsic value in themselves, but that only man has an absolute intrinsic value. Nature has an influence value. The definition of man's intrinsic value according to an anthropocentric model remains valid. But in a weakly biocentric environmental ethic nature also gains an intrinsic value beside man. This means that nature possesses a value that is independent of the use man might think of gaining from it. In those situations where human and non-human values stand against each other the non-human values should also have validity.

Lastly I sketch out another extreme that is a *strongly biocentric* ethic. This maintains that all living beings including man and nature have the same value. Man does not enjoy a special position. Here man no longer possesses an absolute value. I also make a theological contribution to an environmental ethic and through my arguments reach the conclusion that a weakly biocentric environmental ethic best fulfils the conditions that I consider can be placed on a tenable environmental ethic.

Valuable Nature

In chapter 2 I study the American environmental ethicist Holmes Rolston. He represents a form of weakly biocentric ethic. I begin by seeing how Rolston applies the value concept to nature. Rolston embraces a *value-objectivist* view. For him there are objective values in nature independent of man. There are both intrinsic values and instrumental values. All living things carry an intrinsic value. On the other hand Rolston thinks that an ecosystem is a loosely connected organization that cannot be said to contain a concrete centre of life that could

¹ Norton, Bryan G.: *Why Preserve Natural Variety*; p. 10.

constitute a criterion for an intrinsic value. Therefore Rolston introduces a third value concept, beside instrumental value and intrinsic value, a value he calls *systemic value*. Here active projective nature is emphasized. Rolston uses a science-based perception of reality in order to bring out nature's values. In this way he succeeds in producing a number of values in nature, including instrumental values, intrinsic values and systemic values. Rolston is of the opinion that nature's *intrinsic value* increases the higher up we go in the phylogenetic spiral. And at the top of this spiral sits man. If on the other hand we look at nature's *instrumental value* the value increases the lower down we go in the phylogenetic spiral, according to Rolston. Non-biological nature has a high value as an instrument for the survival of species. Man, who has the highest intrinsic value, is the being who has least instrumental value. Man's intrinsic value is not unqualified as it is according to Kant. Human dignity is qualified by man's self-awareness, his ability to appraise himself. Compared with Kant, Rolston's view of man represents a weakening of man's worth and this is necessary if we are to be able to make a correct appraisal of non-human nature, thinks Rolston.

Rolston embraces a *rule-deontological* ethic. There are in nature values that generate moral rules for how we should relate to nature. Ecology shows that there exists an interplay and ethics can discover the values in such communal systems and our obligations towards them. Knowledge of how we should act vis-a-vis nature arises from the ecological process.

Rolston seems then to embrace a *correspondence-theoretical* epistemology. Living nature in its formative process has for Rolston an objective value that he calls "Systemic value". Man is obliged to act so that these values are upheld and preserved. Rolston defines this obligation as a *prima facie duty*. Man is obliged to protect and preserve the richness of biological interplay. Even if Rolston captures many of nature's values it is still legitimate to ask the question as to whether there is some other form of perception of reality that can describe further values in nature and that can defend man's position better than Rolston does.

Living nature as human responsibility

In chapter 31 study Hans Jonas who with the help of a philosophical phenomenological description of reality attempts to verify those immediate and direct values that a science-based perception of reality is not capable of describing. Like Rolston Jonas represents a weakly biocentric ethic. At the same time as he attributes to nature certain intrinsic values he attributes to man as an idea an absolute signification. But unlike Rolston who takes up a holistic attitude where nature's intrinsic value becomes clearest in nature's systematic processes, Jonas uses philosophical phenomenological method to bind nature's intrinsic value to

each concrete separate individual. The great difference between Jonas and Rolston is that the latter must find support for his reasoning in scientific knowledge in order to find his way to nature's valuableness. Jonas on the other hand is strongly critical of a science-based perception of reality and wishes with his phenomenological analysis to create an alternative understanding of nature's valuableness.

Jonas works out his own responsibility ethic connected to separate individuals. The responsibility emerges as a call when something living in its striving for life appeals to me for help in order to be able to survive. *Parent responsibility* is the archetype for this form of responsibility. According to Jonas man is the only being that can take moral responsibility. Jonas represents an object-oriented *virtue ethic*. The personal sense of responsibility plays for him a decisive role for moral action and he claims that it is concrete objects that demand our taking of responsibility. Moreover he represents a *value-objectivist* standpoint. Nature itself generates objective values that win response in amongst other things our human taking of responsibility. His principal thesis is that *Reality, or nature, is one and testifies to itself in what it allows to come forth from it*. The formal suitability to purpose that is expressed in nature's endeavour to survive is for Jonas an intrinsic value. This striving directs an appeal to us about its will to survive. We have a responsibility for the continued existence of all living things.

Jonas has problems with the consistency condition when he claims that nature's striving is a subjectivity that exists in everything. In my criticism of Jonas I am also of the opinion that his experience criterion is too narrow. As Løgstrup shows it is possible to gain from the phenomenological method a still broader base for our experiences of nature's values than the striving of all living things. Jonas's phenomenological method stops at a value description of living objects that give expression to some form of striving. Non-living nature such as seas, mountains and rivers is excluded. Furthermore there is lacking in Jonas a valuation of species and ecosystems. In chapter 4 I shall therefore see whether Løgstrup has in a more thorough and radical way used the phenomenological method to also be able to place a value on non-living nature in his cosmophenomenology.

Løgstrup's ethic in the light of appealing nature

In chapter 4 and 5 I examine Knud E. Løgstrup's model for a weakly biocentric environmental ethic. The reason for Løgstrup's contribution to an environmental ethic taking up two chapters is that he has worked out a comprehensive perception of reality that forms a basis for a well-reasoned ethic. Løgstrup differentiates between both *instrumental values* and *intrinsic values* in nature. For Løgstrup

the totality-forming power in nature has an intrinsic value. It is that power that means that everything from a living organism to ecosystems working together in an intelligent way can adapt themselves to their surroundings through the reason of self-regulation. What Løgstrup counts on is that not only individuals, but also species and ecosystems have an intrinsic value in that all three levels, individual, species and ecosystem, represent totality-forming systems. For Løgstrup it is important that everything that exists, exists also for its own sake. Furthermore Løgstrup counts on nature having an aesthetic value. Its colours and forms appeal to us and enrich us through their multifaceted beauty. This is for Løgstrup an intrinsic value.

Thus Løgstrup takes a *value-objectivist* stand point. Nature appeals to us and proclaims to us through this its intrinsic value. Løgstrup can be said to represent a form of cognitive *correspondence theory*. Appealing nature corresponds to the reality it speaks about. This we can observe through our five senses. For Løgstrup there are two paths of knowledge leading to understanding of nature. Firstly the knowledge where we actively go in and direct and control nature in order to get as much out of it as we need in order to live, secondly a more contemplative passive acquisition of knowledge. Here it is more a matter of nature making impressions on us, of nature reaching us and appealing to us. From all this I am of the opinion that it is possible to divide Løgstrup's contribution to environmental ethics into two large areas. The first area deals with how the active person through his political actions should find his way to a tenable environmental ethic. The second area deals with how we make use of the overall impression nature makes on man and how we can integrate this, the appeal of nature, in a tenable environmental ethic.

I wish next to describe Løgstrup's ethic as a *deontological action ethic*. The appealing nature formulates for itself its own rules and its claim on us to make use of it for its own sake. For Løgstrup it makes a claim on us. Furthermore our *experiences* play a big role for Løgstrup and we have common analogous experiences of how nature appeals to us. We also have common experiences of how nature is self-regulating. Løgstrup interprets self-regulation in nature as showing good sense. It means that nature does the right thing at the right place at the right time. From this we can then from the given situation judge whether a human action is sensible or not, with regard taken to self-regulation in nature. Løgstrup's ethic differs from Jonas's virtue ethic. The moral question with Jonas is how we should behave in order to become good people, while the question with Løgstrup rather becomes how we should behave in order to take care of the inherent goodness of existence and the grace of creation.

Løgstrup is of the opinion that his cosmophenomenology does not necessarily imply an alternative to a perception of reality based on scientific facts, but rather it can be seen as a complement to it. The cosmophenomenological analysis empha-

sizes all the values that we as human beings can see in an object before we go in and view the object in all its detail with a scientific method. I think that cosmophenomenology constitutes a valuable complement to a science-based perception of reality. There are reasonable grounds for claiming that in nature there are values that a science-based perception of reality does not get hold of, but which we can nonetheless have experience of.

As we have seen Løgstrup assumes that there is the possibility of drawing up a form of value scale in nature based on the degree of complexity of the separate individuals. The degree of complexity is dependent on how far the organisms have come from the Universe. Those who have come furthest are beings which through language have been able to develop a distance between themselves as understanding beings and the understood. What is lacking with Løgstrup is a taxonomy of nature's instrumental values independent of man. Løgstrup does not deal with nature's instrumental values as deeply as Rolston and this is in my opinion a clear failing on his part.

Løgstrup separates a human being's existence from her actions. There are two ideas in Løgstrup's view of man that might appear to contradict each other. On the one hand Løgstrup can lay stress on the passively receptive human being. She is openly receptive to impressions emanating from the universe. On the other hand Løgstrup can also speak of the active and acting human being. Through her ability to reason she creates a distance between herself and the Universe. These oppositions must be seen as unifying oppositions. It means that a man lives his life under these oppositions and that he becomes human only when the oppositions become unified.

With Løgstrup's cosmophenomenology it is possible to accept nature's worth without devaluing human dignity. Cosmophenomenology also gives us the possibility of accepting scientific facts at the same time as one can criticize a science-based perception of reality. Furthermore we can with the help of cosmophenomenology give expression to the human experience that everything has an intrinsic value that proclaims its intrinsic value through its very existence. Løgstrup's cosmophenomenology and perception of reality provide a firm foundation that can be further developed towards a weakly biocentric environmental ethic. I consider it possible to further develop Løgstrup's value concept with the value concepts that Rolston above all has presented. In the sixth chapter I shall therefore take the discussion further concerning a possible order of priority. Then I start off in Løgstrup's perception of reality and view of nature at the same time as I conduct a discussion on nature's values and the environmental ethic that is more detailed than what can be achieved by Løgstrup's ethical theory.

Environmental ethic as a dialogue with valuable nature

In chapter 6 I attempt to formulate my own weakly biocentric environmental ethic, taking into consideration the three writers I have studied in the preceding chapters. First of all I think that an acceptable *perception of reality* can contain scientific facts at the same time as it accommodates our everyday experiences. Løgstrup's cosmophenomenology makes in that respect an interesting contribution. At the same time science has shown that interplay takes place between nature's processes. These recently gained discoveries have given us the possibility of beginning to speak of entreties and about how everything hangs together in an ingeniously woven fabric. They give openings to both philosophy and theology. Moltmann's way of seeing the image of God from a perspective of trinity is interesting since without being hierarchical it still protects man's human dignity and at the same time links man to nature's continuing processes. Starting from the *consistence condition* I have found it reasonable that one should be able to draw a dividing line between a scientific and a more everyday method of understanding nature. One condition I have made for a tenable environmental ethic is also an *experience condition*. If, over and above the scientific experiences, we can also count our immediate experience of ingenious nature in our relationship with the environment, we have opened our field of vision. We have experience of nature not only being an environmental problem but also a source of pleasure and a creative gift. This experience is described in Løgstrup's cosmophenomenology.

I am of the opinion that in nature there exist *intrinsic values*. Everything that exists has an intrinsic value that proclaims its own worth through its very existence. This must be complemented with an ecological process value. These value qualities exist in natural phenomena themselves and they have an independent existence linked to concrete objects or phenomena. I take a *value-objectivist* standpoint. It is possible via our five senses to have knowledge of valuable nature. There arises a form of *moral realism*. I think that we can demand from a tenable environmental ethic that it presumes nature's intrinsic value, and that it consequently persuades us to enter into a dialogue with valuable nature and in the interplay with the ecosystems teaches us to discover the possibilities we have for the preservation of the ecosystems.

One condition I have set for a tenable environmental ethic is the *human dignity condition*. This means that nature's value may not be gained at the expense of human dignity. One-of more-arguments for this is that man through his self-awareness is more vulnerable than the rest of nature. But I also think that man as a physical being stands on the same level as the rest of nature. As a physical being man enters into an open communicative system with the rest of nature. Human dignity is not then some static resting occupation but is the expression for

a sense of community between man/nature. I think that a fundamental insight for all environmental-ethical work is that nature can be counted as a moral object. Furthermore I think that we can interpret nature's processes in each individual case in a way that leads to moral obligations.

My own ethical theory can therefore be described as a *deontological action ethic*. It is a weakly biocentric ethic since at the same time as it fulfils the human dignity condition it also has the ability to express respect for the intrinsic value of all things. It is also in line with the consistency condition and the experience condition. Moreover it gives the possibility, based on the interpretation of nature's processes, of working out an order of priorities of nature's values.

Starting from the *prioritizing condition* I consider that an environmental-ethical prioritizing should be based on the obligating interplay between man and nature and then, first and foremost, presume that everything in nature has an intrinsic value that gives it basic protection. In criticism against a teleological consequence ethic I wish to maintain that it is not possible to say that because everything in nature strives towards a single teleological goal—e.g. biological diversity—all our actions should be subordinated to this goal. In criticism against Rolston's rule-deontological ethic I think that there are no obvious rules that we just follow independent of the situation when we make our priorities. Nor can we subordinate the environmental ethic to a virtue-ethical attitude, such as moderation. On the other hand, starting from a deontological action ethic we can for example say that we guarantee human life in the future by living in a way showing moderation towards natural resources, which in its turn can also lead to increased biological diversity.

The environmental ethic that I wish to propose has its prerequisites in the dialogue that nature through the immediate sensory impressions and the laws that apply in nature calls us to. I have said that man can follow nature attempting as far as possible to emulate and promote nature's own processes, and to see that which is of value in it. I also think that we as people have the experience that nature reaches us in the same way as music can reach us if we go in and actively acquaint ourselves with it. A tenable environmental ethic must, from what has emerged in the thesis, besides including everything's intrinsic value, also include the ecological interplay as an ethically practicable context of meaning. From this context of meaning an appeal is directed to us to safeguard nature. These, our obligations towards nature, arise from nature's own interplay. Nature's interplay in its turn awakens our restraint, which can be completed through positive qualities of character such as responsibility, wisdom, judiciousness and humility.

I am of the opinion that the spontaneous manifestations of life have primacy before the requirement of responsibility. The requirement of responsibility arises

from the inherent goodness of existence, its creative gift. Our responsibility for nature is limited to setting right the damage we have inflicted upon her. Like Løgstrup I wish to differentiate between the object of responsibility, the taker of responsibility and the giver of responsibility. There is a trinity between the object of responsibility that awakens our responsibility, the taker of responsibility who answers to the call of the object of responsibility, and the authority who, separated from the object of responsibility, makes the taker of responsibility responsible. The degree to which responsibility is taken depends on my power to be able to ward off the threats.



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SAMTAL MED DEN
VÄRDEFULLA NATUREN

Hur ska man kunna utforma en miljöetik som både strävar efter ett hållbart förhållningssätt till naturen och samtidigt inte detroniserar människovärdet?

I det här arbetet försöker författaren utifrån Knud Lögstrups verklighetsuppfattning och efter en analys och kritisk jämförelse av Holmes Rolston III:s, Hans Jonas och Knud Lögstrups miljöetik att formulera en svagt biocentrisk miljöetik. Det argumenteras för att en hållbar miljöetik skall kunna prioritera bland naturens värden och kunna skilja ut vad som är viktigt och oviktigt i naturen. Dessutom argumenteras för att naturens värden inte får vinnas på bekostnad av människovärdet. Vidare argumenteras för att de naturvetenskapliga resultaten skall erkännas inom sitt eget område men att man också skall kunna räkna in de erfarenheter vi har av den värdefulla natur som en på naturvetenskap byggd verklighetsuppfattning inte förmår beskriva. Det argumenteras för att vi har erfarenhet av att naturen i förstone inte möter som ett miljöproblem utan som en skapelsegratia och en glädjekälla. Den miljöetik som lyfts fram har sin förutsättning i det samtal som naturen genom de omedelbara sinnesintrycken och de lagar som gäller i naturen kallar oss till.

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