The Future of Nature: A Conciliation between Philosophy and Psychology for a Renewed Approach to Environmental Preservation

Bekah Holloway
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Faculty Adviser: Tyler Volk
Faculty Sponsor: Benjamin Sachs

Abstract

My research project focuses on the relationship between people and nature; specifically on three questions: What is ‘authentic’ nature? Why do we value it? Why should we preserve it? These general questions have been debated for years by philosophers, and, more recently, by environmental psychologists. I take a multi-disciplinary approach to questions of nature and its value for people, integrating philosophical theories with psychological studies. My research draws heavily on, but is not limited to, the work of psychologists Rachel and Stephan Kaplan, and philosopher Kate Soper. The results show considerable overlap between the two disciplines; in particular, they show that philosophical theories can, at least in part, be supported by psychological evidence. I conclude that there is scientific support for the philosophical view that the value of the environment cannot be captured fully within an economic framework. Furthermore, the psychological evidence and philosophical arguments support the conclusion that we have an obligation to preserve nature for future generations.