

Theses

The deepening of our current ecological crisis, the drastic loss of biodiversity, the rapid change of living conditions of different species and individuals deserve more attention to created non-human beings than ever before. Their visible destruction and constant narrowing of living space can undoubtedly be traced back to human activity, so we must examine why and how we should think and act differently in order to preserve the natural environment in its present richness, diversity and beauty for our descendants.

Theology, including theological ethics, has proven to be very sensitive to new challenges during the decades of shaping environmentally conscious thinking, everyday church practice concerning creation care is still more influenced by secular environmentalist impulses than contemporary theological theories. Ecclesiastical thinking of ignoring nature stems from cultural rather than biblical traditions and still dominates perceptions of present problems and the attempt to explore ethical interdependencies of the given situation.

Christian ethics has rarely dealt with non-human beings up to now, but as it comes increasingly clear that our own well-being and future depend on the well-being of non-human creatures, we cannot afford to disregard them. Another difficulty in finding a new focus of ethical attention is that the sensitive attitudes toward nature have in many cases been regarded as heresy by the authoritative church approach throughout history. However, observation of nature and the responsible attitude towards the non-human environment were still present in theological thinking in a peripheral manner.

An in-depth study of new insights from different disciplines is essential for the development of specific areas of environmental ethics: ethical opinion-forming can only be based on an interdisciplinary approach.

Plant ethics cannot be a mere extension of animal ethics, as this procedure would only help maintain the absolute primacy of hierarchical descriptive models. Recently explored characteristics of plant life and plant being do not further strengthen theoretical structures that place mankind on the top of the created world, but offer new interpretive models that can help to unfold a multi-perspective, polyphonic interpretation of life that takes seriously the issues of alterity.