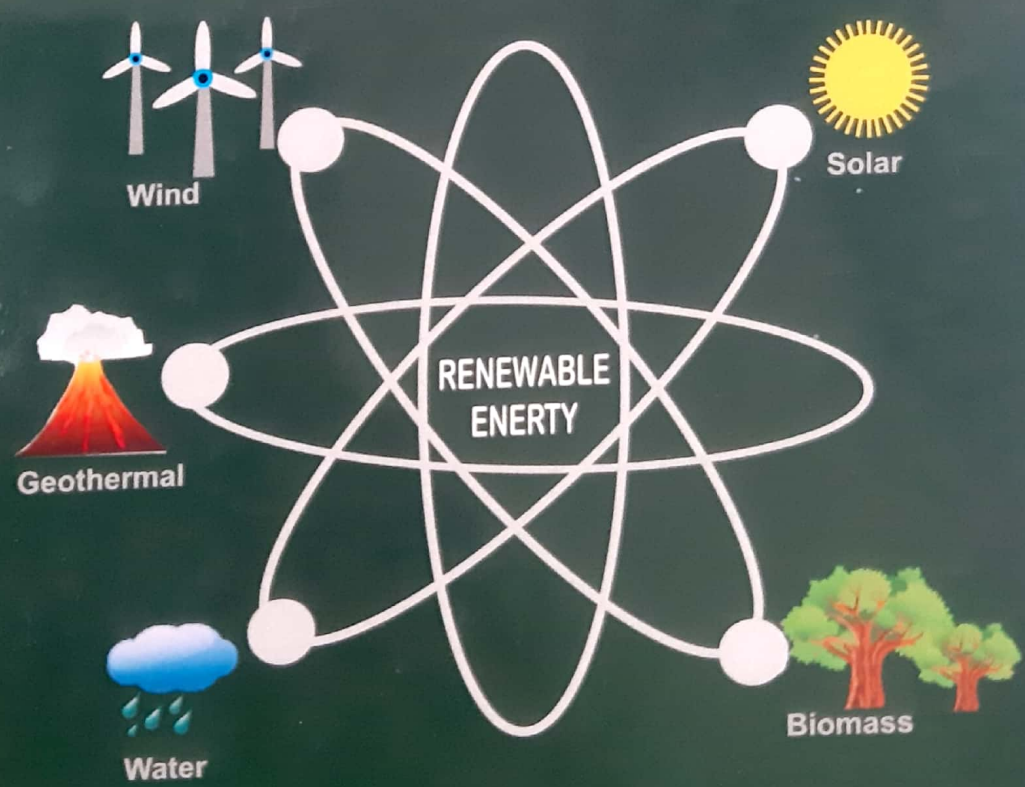




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The Importance of Environmental Ethics

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Abstract

The importance of ethics and fundamental value judgments in environmental economics is high-lighted by discussing the controversial concept of existence values. The social value depends crucially on the social objective, which is not necessarily self-evident, e.g., since some individuals tend to value nature intrinsically. It is shown that the motives behind willingness to pay figures matter for the social value, and the conventional view that people respond to CV questions solely in order to maximize their own utility or well-being is questioned. The importance of being explicit about value judgments is emphasized, and it is argued that environmental economics should consider non-conventional assumptions which take the social context into account to a larger degree.

Key words: altruism, contingent valuation, ethics, existence values, motives, simplifying assumptions, welfare theory

The environmental crisis is an outward manifestation of the crisis of mind and spirit. It all depends on how we think and act. The strains of the ecological crisis are so apparent that the task to preserve the environment is a must. Adjusting the relationship between humans and nature is one of the most fundamental issues we face and must deal with today. With the increasing deterioration of ecological

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