



**Philosophy and  
the Environmental Crisis**

## 2 Questions:

1. How does philosophy relate to natural environment?
2. What role can philosophy play in the solution of the environmental crisis?



# Preliminary Analysis

## Given:

- *Philosophy*: an abstract discipline that clarifies and evaluates the foundational concepts and theories that serve as our frameworks or perspectives in interpreting the world and in defining our relationship with it.
- *Environmental Crisis*: a very concrete problem that threatens the existence of the various species inhabiting this world.

## Therefore:

- Philosophy can clarify the foundational concepts and theories that we use to interpret the environmental crisis in order to determine how we are going to properly deal with it.



## **Explanations:**

- It is true that philosophy deals with abstract concepts but these abstract concepts substantially influence how we handle our concrete concerns in life.
- It is likewise true that the environmental crisis is caused by some concrete causes but these concrete causes are in turn can be caused by some abstract causes.



## **2 Objectives of the Lecture:**

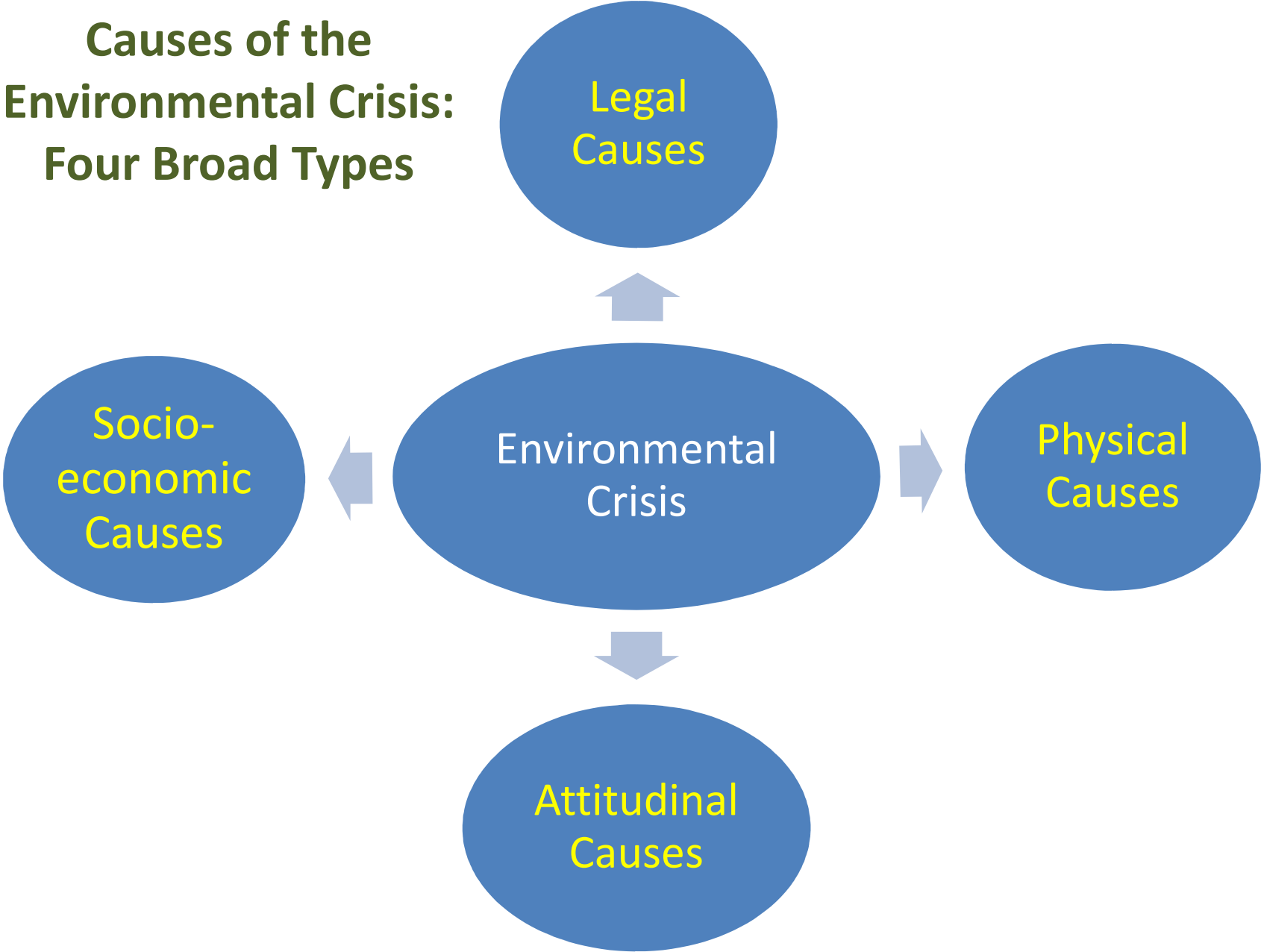
1. To argue that philosophy plays a role in the solution of the environmental crisis.
2. To clarify in what way such role is substantial or important.

## **Structure of the Discussion:**

1. Identify the broad types of causes responsible for the environmental crisis
2. Examine how these causes are related to one another.
3. Identify which among these types of causes that philosophy can address
4. Briefly discuss some ethical perspectives on the natural environment



**Causes of the  
Environmental Crisis:  
Four Broad Types**



# Physical Causes



**Natural:** earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires, volcanic eruptions, dry seasons, pests

**Human-induced:** pollution, global warming, depletion of natural resources, emission of toxic substances, dumping of non-biodegradable waste materials



## Legal Causes

Absence of laws that effectively prohibit environment-unfriendly practices

Absence of legal mechanisms effectively punish those that violate existing environmental laws



# Socio-economic Causes

Poverty

Over-population



# Attitudinal Causes

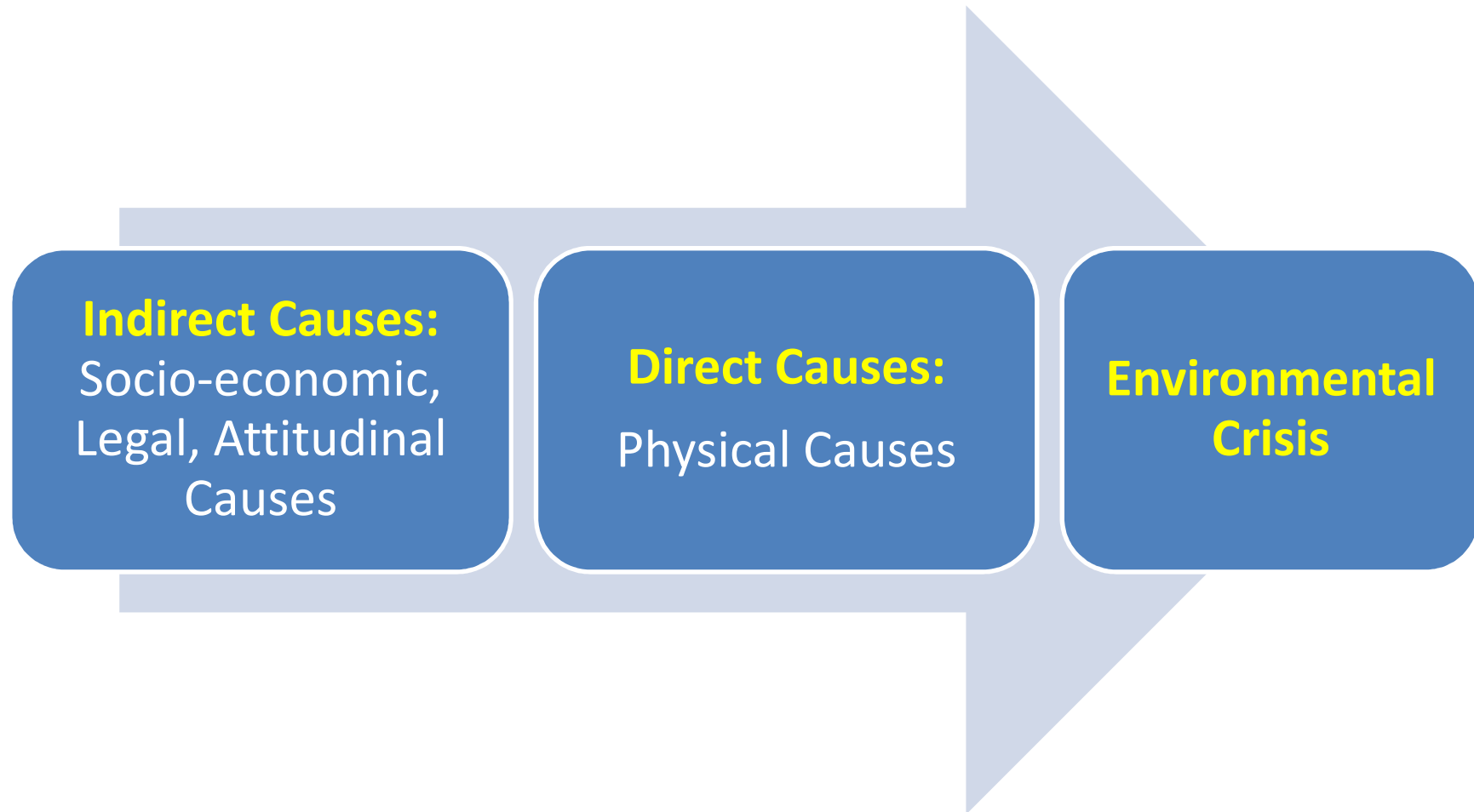


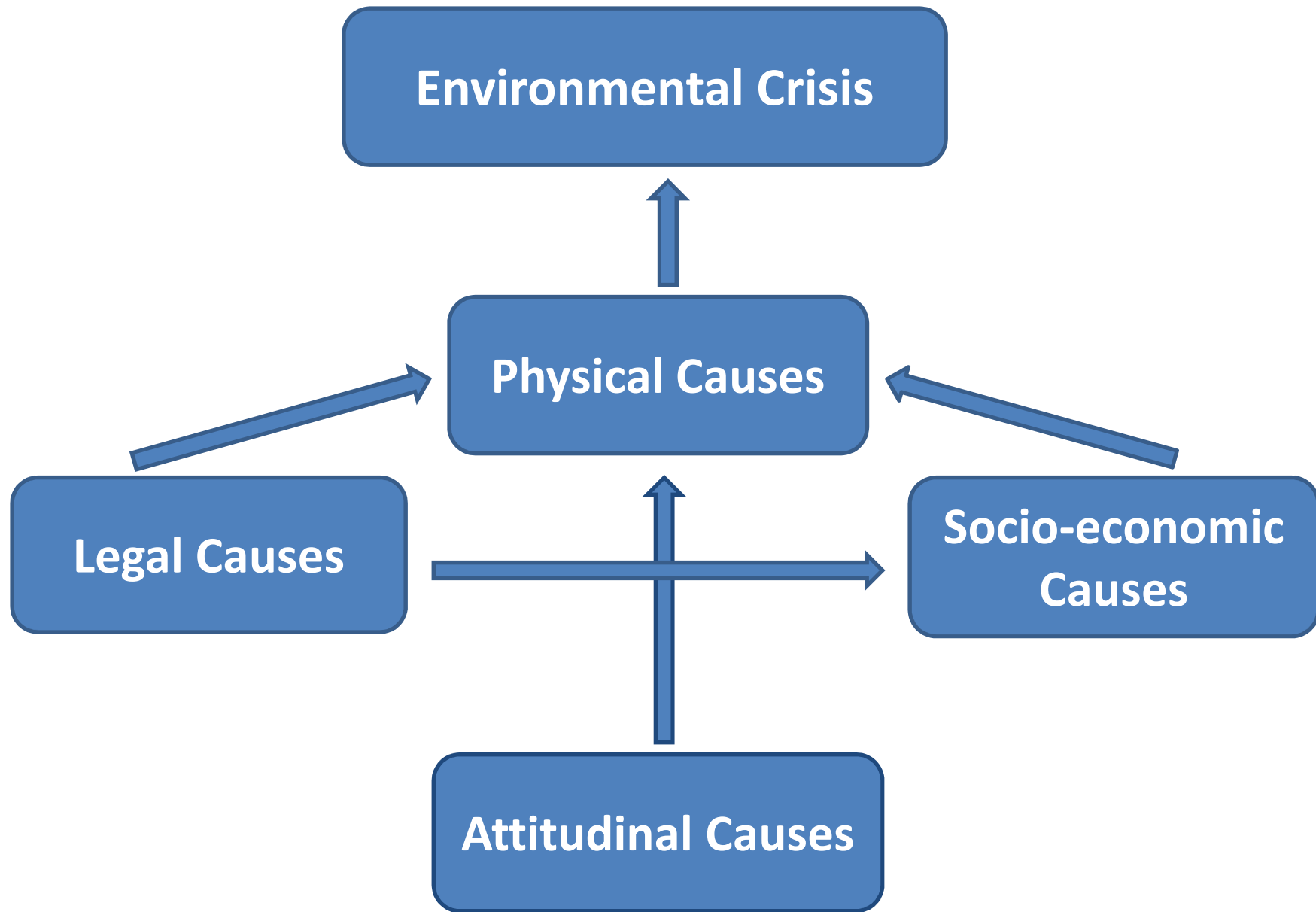
belief that natural resources are unlimited

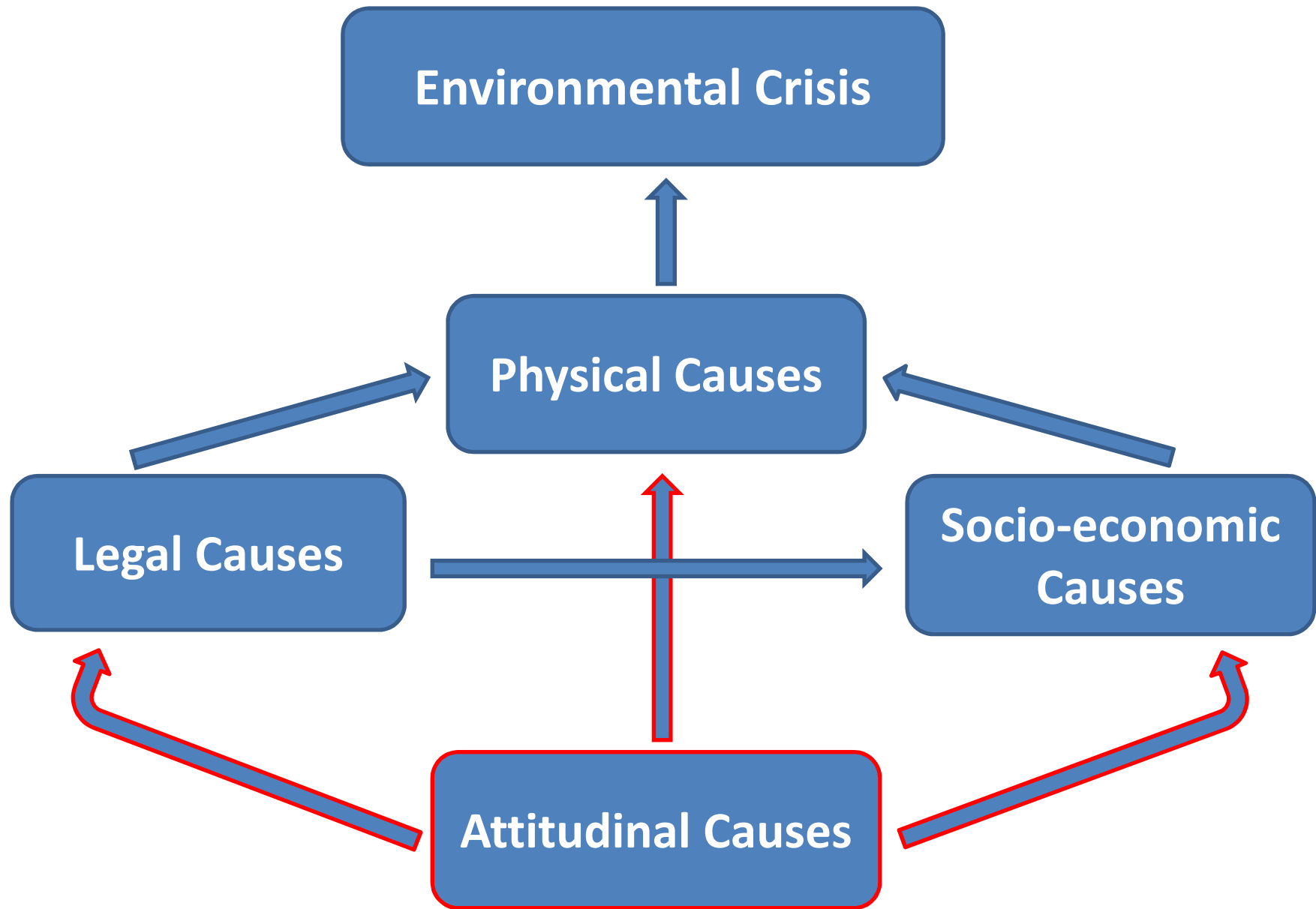
belief that certain aspects of nature such as the ocean and the atmosphere are not owned by anyone

belief that nature is there simply for human consumption or to satisfy human interests.

# The Relationships and Relative Values of the Four Causes







# Addressing the Four Causes



## Physical Causes

- Science (Natural Sciences)
- Technology

## Legal Causes

- Government

## Socio-economic Causes

- Social Sciences
- Government

## Attitudinal Causes

- Philosophy (Environmental Ethics)



## Moral Beliefs About Nature

<b>Environmental Ethics</b>		
<b>Ethical Theories</b>	<b>Moral Attribute</b>	<b>Bearer of Moral Rights</b>
<b>Homocentrism</b>	<b>Rationality</b>	<b>Humans</b>
<b>Utilitarianism</b>	<b>Sentience (Pleasure and Pain)</b>	<b>Humans and Animals</b>
<b>Biocentrism</b>	<b>Membership in Ecological Systems</b>	<b>Humans, Animals, and Plants</b>



**Thank you for listening....**