

Editors' Introduction

THE URGENCY OF ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT IN THESE TIMES IS OBVIOUS. WE STAND before a catalog of environmental crises. Headlines routinely report record-high temperatures and issue grim warnings about our planet's peril; meanwhile, proposals to distance ourselves from the more-than-human world through virtual reality gain traction. As concerned students and denizens of the Earth, we sought to use the platform of this publication to highlight the work of those who are bringing the tools of philosophy to bear on discussion of the environment. Yet in our search for authors and interviewees, a rather simple question vexed us: *What is environmental philosophy?*

A year after beginning work on this issue, we must admit we still find it hard to furnish an answer. Recourse to the anthologies, encyclopedias, and introductions written about the field clarified the many divisions in the discipline, but these works offer little in the way of an encompassing definition that characterizes the common project of environmental philosophy's practitioners. If the professionals cannot come up with an answer to our question, then perhaps we might be excused as well. And such an exercise may be beside the point, anyway.

In the process of putting together this issue, we came to understand that meaningful engagement with this topic, in its multifaceted urgency, necessitates a project of inclusion and interrelation that eschews disciplinary definition. The enormity and the complexity of the environmental crisis demand a response that transcends philosophy's present parameters. To paraphrase one of our interviewees, J. Baird Callicott, environmental philosophy is radically expansive and interdisciplinary. Whereas most of academic philosophy has rapidly specialized over the past century or so, with its fields siloed off both from one another and from other disciplines, environmental philosophy decidedly bucks that trend. Indeed, environmental philosophy's scope is far-reaching both temporally and topically. For instance, its adherents might indulge in the grand ambition that animated the ancients—to situate ourselves, like, for example, the pre-Socratics, within a larger, natural whole—at the same time as they interface with contemporary advances in the social and life sciences, such as economics and evolutionary biology. Environmental philosophy is, then, the place where the ancient Greeks and Lovelock's Gaia, ethics and ecology, and historical thought and novel theories can come together. Perhaps this is the best answer we can give to our question.

Thus, rather than have this present volume bear the title "Environmental Philosophy," we instead chose "Philosophy and the Environment," in recognition of environmental philosophy's defiance of disciplinary divisions. We did not want to impress upon readers the idea that we took the work in this issue to be emblematic of what we think environmental philosophy is or should be (or that the strands of scholarship not featured here are somehow *not* deserving of that label). Such a stance would, we thought, be antithetical for the reasons highlighted above.

We also understood that some of the thinkers assembled here may not necessarily fashion themselves as environmental philosophers. The common characteristic we sought in our solicitations and were pleased to find coursing through each paper in this issue is a concern for and confrontation with the environment as a genuine philosophical problem. Whether writing explicitly as environmental philosophers, or as ethicists or ecocritics, or without a disciplinary or movement label at all, they approach the environment—in the words of our contributor Serenella Iovino—as “a full-fledged subject rather than a mere background.” Here, we take ‘the environment’ to mean the more-than-human world—protozoa, plants, animals, mountains, ecosystems—while also recognizing the extent to which *our* stance towards and interrelation with these environmental entities is constitutive of this environment that we often speak of ourselves as being at some remove from. The environment, construed in this way, is a vast, conceptually challenging entity that beckons us to think deeply—and it now *begs* us to do so amid a climate crisis that is arguably as much a conceptual calamity as it is an economic or geopolitical one.

The thinkers gathered in this present volume have resolutely answered this call, each using their own philosophical proclivities and perspectives to meaningfully engage with the environment. One of the first works our editors read in preparation for this issue was Ernest Partridge’s 1998 article “Now Is the Time for Philosophers to Come to the Aid of Their Planet.” There, Partridge argues that philosophers should occupy one of five distinct roles when addressing the environment: *social critic*, *conceptual analyst*, *critical spectator of science*, *ethicist*, and *educator*. In a happy coincidence (or perhaps a function of Partridge’s prescience), each of the following articles finds our contributors applying their unique knowledge and skills to one or more of these essential modes of engagement.

Bryan G. Norton opens the issue with an exploration of how social and natural sciences, including economics and ecology, can come together to shed light on issues of environmental ethics and complement each other in ways that demonstrate the value of interdisciplinary approaches.

Like Norton, Michael Marder takes a bird’s-eye view of the task at hand for environmental thinkers, but from a different vantage point. Drawing on classical and continental thought, he seeks to rehabilitate the concept of “nature,” so as to combat the fatal error of treating the environment as infinitely self-renewing.

Elisa Aaltola’s article is a labor of love. She endorses the “quality view” of love, as articulated in Kant and Plato: loving certain universally valuable qualities in the objects of our affection. She asks us to consider how this kind of love for nonhuman animals and nature substantiates moral obligations towards its objects.

Simon P. James also picks up the question of how exactly we value elements of the nonhuman world—rather than love, his answer is constitutive value. Writing against the increasingly popular concept of “relational value,” he argues that more standard accounts already integrate the relationships we have with the things we value.

Serenella Iovino casts a different light on relationality, showing us how a character in a novel, retreating to a life in the trees, finds himself as part of a greater whole. Her narrative article weds philosophy and literature to draw from Italo Calvino’s *The Baron in the Trees*, a compelling example of human interrelatedness with the environment and its inhabitants.

Marion Hourdequin, meanwhile, works with the tools of ethical theory to link environmental thought with environmental action. Investigating the underpinnings of intergenerational buck-passing, which she, following Stephen Gardiner, takes to be one of the main

drivers of climate change inaction, Hourdequin seeks to combat the moral ambivalence that she argues buck-passing brings about.

Daniel Haybron pushes back against the idea of creating a specifically environmental ethic, calling instead on our existing aesthetic sensibilities. He, too, brings narrative to bear on aesthetic and ethical analysis in a project of defining the value of the nonhuman world and reaching an understanding of our duty to preserve nature.

In this issue, the *Review* continues its proud tradition of publishing interviews with significant scholars, conducted collaboratively by our editors. J. Baird Callicott, the teacher of the world's first college course dedicated to environmental ethics, joins us for a conversation about his holistic environmental ethic and reflects on the origins of environmental philosophy and the state of the field today. Holmes Rolston III, the first American philosopher to publish an environmental ethics paper, offers commentary and guidance regarding the roles of science, politics, and religion in environmental philosophy. Peter Singer elaborates on his influential utilitarian framework's implications for action based on human and animal interests, the roles of politics and individual altruism in combating suffering and climate change under capitalism, and his hopes and concerns regarding the future.

We would like to express our great gratitude to the many people who have helped make this publication possible: our Faculty Advisors, Professors Bernhard Nickel and Jeffrey K. McDonough, have offered years of support for the journal's efforts; George Leaman, Gregory Swope, and everyone else at the Philosophy Documentation Center guided us through the publication process and digitized twenty-three of our past volumes for online open access; and Joshua Harlan and William Roberts served as our trustees and trusted mentors. We are also indebted to each of our editors, whose effort, energy, and enthusiasm buoyed us throughout this endeavor.

As we write this, our new editors-in-chief, Nicolas Medrano and Manuel Yepes, are hard at work on the *Review*'s thirtieth volume, whose theme will be Free Will. We can think of no better pair to take over our roles, and we look forward to reading the issue they put together.

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