By 1851 Thoreau began intensive study of nature. In daily walks he used a botany book, and spyglass and collected plant specimens. By 1854 he was a committed naturalist, able not merely to catalogue hundreds of species, but to organize his observations into predictive patterns following the seasons. McGregor finds an ambivalence toward science. Thoreau read botanists yet spoke of the earth as having a spirit akin to the spirit in him and questioned neutral observation, the separation of science and art, and the killing of specimens.

One of the great values of this book is MacGregor's chapter 5 in which he organizes the welter of journal entries from 1851 to 1861 in terms of location and season and traces Thoreau's increasing understanding of the natural and human forces shaping local ecology. There are virtually no other studies of this mass of important journal material. This chapter with its references is a valuable tool for the Thoreau scholar. Part of the philosophical import of this material is that it inverts the tradition of the Great Chain of Being.

McGregor ends with a helpful treatment of the later nature writings.

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The latest in the Fordham University Press American Philosophy Series, Singer's book contains nine independent, though connected, essays plus a postscript essay which serves as a response to reviews and critiques of her earlier Operative Rights (SUNY Press, 1993). The nine essays are grouped into three parts. The first part ("Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in the Theory of Rights") outlines what Singer sees as the received view of the nature of rights as well as a summary treatment of her own alternative conception and her acknowledgement of some historically kindred critiques of the received view (viz., Rousseau, J.S. Mill, and T.H. Green). Her open debt to Justus Buchler, John Dewey, and especially G.H. Mead is evident throughout the essays. The second part ("Democracy and Multiculturalism") contains four essays focusing, on the one hand, on the sociality of rights and their inherent connection with community, and, on the other hand, particular issues related to rights, such as minority rights, group rights, and ethnic conflict. The third part ("Democratic Praxis") consists of two essays.
emphasizing the role of rights in understanding democratic theory and practice, including her attempt at "reconciling liberalism and communitarianism."

The received view of rights, says Singer, rests on four principles: individualism, apriorism, essentialism, and adversarialism. By individualism she means that rights are taken as properties of individual humans and only individual humans can be rights-holders. Apriorism is the principle that the existence of rights is self-evident and they are antecedent to (and independent of) one's membership in a community or society. Essentialism about rights takes rights as a part of the essence of being a person, while adversarialism is the principle that rights are fundamentally socially protective bubbles, claims that individuals hold against others and which demarcate what others may and must do vis-à-vis other individual rights-holders. Singer's alternative view of rights challenges and rejects all of these principles. In their stead, she argues that rights are entitlements; they are institutionalized relations among members of communities. Rights, she says, are grounded in the nature of community and indeed they are "really fruits of the communities in which they are operative" (p. 34). Rights, being social and being normative, presuppose normative communities as well as what she terms "perspectival communities." Because of the normative nature of rights, they are not only entitlements; they also obligate all rights-holders to respect those norms that are in fact constitutive of those very rights. While rejecting the concept of human rights (i.e., rights adhering to all humans qua humans), Singer insists there are fundamental generic rights, "fundamental in that they are necessary conditions for the continuing existence and stability of any normative community, and generic in the sense that they ought to be made universally operative" (pp. 30-1).

Where Singer's position might be taken as controversial is: (1) what she takes a community to be, (2) what sorts of things can be rights-holders, and (3) what justifies the assertion of generic rights. First, though she enunciates various types of communities (e.g., perspectival and normative), and she rightly recognizes that we all live and participate in multiple communities, what gets included as a community might strike some readers as odd. For example, she includes lecture-attendees as a community and all those who speak the same language as a community and even all who know how to read a map. These examples run the risk of making the notion of community disutile. Minimally what would be helpful here is a fuller explanation of what would rule out "accidental" communities from communities that truly emerge and function as organic wholes and which indeed underlie entitlements and
obligations. In addition, to rule out patently strange claims for "map reader rights," a fuller account would help of why community membership is not sufficient for rights.

Second, while some might take exception to her view permitting (indeed, embracing) communal and group rights, she makes a strong case for taking such collectives as rights-holders. However, it is difficult to square these sorts of entities as rights-holders with her assertion that to have rights "presupposes the ability not only to understand what it is to have an entitlement and to respect entitlements, but also to acknowledge the obligation to do so and hold others to be similarly obligated" (p. 153). We certainly need a fuller account of how collectives can understand and respect and acknowledge. In addition (pp. 182-3), she allows dead humans to enjoy operative rights via proxies and newborn humans to enjoy operative rights via their potential to become members in normative and perspectival communities (though neither collective directly meets the above criteria of understanding, respecting, and acknowledging). These, however, are more assertions than arguments, and they demand and deserve fuller treatment.

Finally, Singer's claim that rights-holders "have" generic rights in the sense that they ought to be made universally operative calls for more warrant: why ought they be made universally operative? The traditional views of rights can and do offer a variety of answers: utility, moral agency, human nature, duty, etc. Here, as with the concerns raised above, we await greater explanation and elaboration from Singer.

Despite these concerns, Singer has provided a fine complement to her Operative Rights. More than anyone else, she has focused a pragmatist eye on the nature of rights and has provided the rest of us with both fruitful questions and thoughtful answers.

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In Creatures of Prometheus Gender and the Politics of Technology, Kaufman-Osborn wants to recast the Cartesian subject/object problem of knowledge so that he can assess it as a problem of the relations between things and their makers rather than between things and their thinkers. His intention is to break apart the "Cartesian paradigm" and rework it as an interaction