

Ricardo Rozzi, S.T.A. Pickett, Clare Palmer, Juan J. Armesto, and J. Baird Callicott, eds., *Linking Ecology and Ethics for a Changing World: Values, Philosophy, and Action*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2013

Foreword

Living on Earth, we need to figure out who we are, where we are, and what we ought to do. “The unexamined life is not worth living” (*Apology*, 38). The classic search has been to figure out what it means to be human. Socrates, however, was sometimes wrong. Socrates loved Athens. We live in towns; humans are “political animals” (Greek: *polis*, “town;” Aristotle, *Politics* 1. 2). Cultures shape our humanity. But Socrates avoided nature, thinking it profitless. “You see, I am fond of learning. Now the country places and trees won’t teach me anything, and the people in the city do” (*Phaedrus*, 230d).

I have claimed to be wiser than Socrates. “Life in an unexamined world is not worthy living either.” Humans, the only species capable of enjoying culture, are also the only species capable of enjoying the splendid panorama of life. In the pages that follow, my more inclusive conviction is endorsed, fortunately, by over 40 contributors sharing their accounts, of living well in place, combining nature and culture, residing on landscapes: “Rozzi’s biocultural ethics.” “The inclusive ecosystem recognizes humans as components” (Pickett). Nadkarni shows how “ecologists might bring the ‘humanist’ aspects of their work to provide more compelling arguments to connect humans with nature to help solve environmental problems.” The reader can look forward to diverse spiraling around this common theme.

This requires examining as Meine says following Leopold, “these spheres—what we know from science, what we do in practice, what we value and believe through our philosophies, and how we govern ourselves.” The conclusions of this array of scholars and activists agree with another of my claims, that abundant living requires a deep sense of place in three dimensions—the rural, urban, and wild. Otherwise we will be one-dimensional persons, under-privileged. Here is a strong sense of “inhabiting” landscapes, not just as citizens but as residents, not just supported by ecosystem services, but of dwelling in one’s country, and co-dwelling with the larger community of life, even of spiritual ties to a landscape.

These spiritual (or religious, or deeper philosophical) dimensions are found here often—as with Chapin and his co-authors examining the Alaskan indigenous peoples, or Cafaro recalling Carson’s reverence for life, or Sideris and her sensitivity

to ecospirituality in classical traditions. Religious values appear again in Nadkarni's surveys of how urban people value nature. Mallory exposes the errors in the view "that nature is something out there, removed, displaced from the social and cultural dwelling places of people and the sites of human community ... fundamentally irrelevant to human problems of inequality and injustice." We conserve our landscapes, and that includes "linking ecology and ethics for a transition to the sustainable city" (Pincetl).

People and their landscape "co-constitute" each other. In the sense that we humans are searching for our appropriate behavior on landscapes, as Hayward develops, "there is always, and inevitably, some 'anthropocentrism' at the heart of environmental ethics." We need living on a landscape with "environmental imagination," as Klaver sees it, even with urban Texans engaging surroundings more grey than green, "being in, or being with" hodgepodge slices of nature/culture. Pincetl envisions how Los Angeles could become much greener than it is, and at the same time more equitable in its opportunities for those who live there to experience nature—green, grey, or brown. This requires resisting the "homogenization" (the "McDonalization") of both culture and nature, and insisting on regional distinctiveness. We heed Rachel Carson's "warnings concerning the increased artificiality and simplification of the landscape" (recalled by Cafaro).

This two way people-nature interchange is a repeated focus here, about which there is both welcome and warning. "Biogeochemistry + anthrogeochemistry = novel world." Naeem knows that humans require their "ecosystem services," but, should this become simply an anthropocentric concern for human benefits in a future world, he is also apprehensive: "Is a planet servicing one species likely to function?"

We need, repeatedly, as Meine contends, "Leopold's special contribution as a defining moment in the discourse connecting conservation science, ethics, policy, and practice. That discourse continues, especially in emerging interdisciplinary fields, even as our critical environmental concerns make the need for integrated thinking ever more apparent and immediate." Leopold already saw in the last century what has become central on our agenda in the new millennium: We live, "I think, at what might be called the standard paradox of the twentieth century: our tools are better than we are, and grow better faster than we do. They suffice to crack the atom, to command the tides. But they do not suffice for the oldest task in human history: to live on a piece of land without spoiling it."

Callicott, following Leopold, opens up his project of "world view remediation," concluding with some uncertainty: "Is there anything that can be characterized as an ecological worldview? And, if so, in what does it consist? Does ecology, that is, provide us with a conceptual framework that functions as a lens through which our sensory experience is classified and organized to form a coherent whole, an ecological worldview?"

Pickett recalls "the changes that ecological paradigms have undergone" and addresses some of the issues that bother Callicott: "the flux of nature: changing worldviews and inclusive concepts." Pickett replies: "What matters most, as embodied in the new paradigm, is the underlying resilience of ecological systems, the degree to which they can adjust to new opportunities or adapt to changing situations."

A feature that contributes to such resilience, according to Wu, is their hierarchical structure. “Hierarchy theory neither implies inflexibility nor a lack of diversity and creativity. On the contrary, an appropriate hierarchical, dynamic structure provides opportunities for diversity, flexibility, and creativity, as well as higher efficiency and stability that are difficult to obtain in non hierarchical complex systems.” Naeem shares this account of the biosphere as a “vision of Earth as a series of nested spheres.” Interestingly, such biosphere structure returns us somewhat toward the stability about which Pickett has his misgivings. But, on further thought, one can readily expect that a resilient biosphere, challenged over millennia, will have settled into some repeated stabilities—in some modular components and at some hierarchical levels (predators, prey, plants, animals, photosynthesis, trophic pyramids, DNA codings, seasonal patterns) within its ongoing dynamisms. “Hierarchic structures ... provide the most viable form for any system of even moderate complexity” (Wu).

That resilience can regularly be found on the landscapes we inhabit, but it is equally needed by the human residents in search of “remediating” their world views. Thankfully, Callicott finds that some worldviews are superior to others, “a more tenable and a more viable worldview” and also more “aesthetically and spiritually satisfying as well” (as Lintott and Carlson concur). This more viable worldview is hopefully one that sees Earth as a planet with a biosphere because that is in fact what Earth is (Naeem). Life on Earth has been ongoing, dynamic, and resilient for over four billion years. We can claim such a view (in Callicott’s terms) as “‘knowledge’ because it is a highly confirmed, self consistent worldview that is also consistent with and comprehensive of all known relevant facts.”

A major trouble is humans with a sense of arrogant dominion (as Mallory realizes) as they estimate who they are and what they ought to do, inadequately appreciating that they are earthlings on Earth. Let’s hope that more knowledgeable humans are resilient in reforming their worldviews and behaviors accordingly and cherishing this biosphere in which we are incarnate. “A myth is that with enough knowledge and technology we can manage planet Earth... What might be managed is us: human desires, economies, politics, and communities” (Poole, following David Orr).

Any adequate environmental philosophy, as Palmer claims, has to include issues of environmental justice and justice between generations, as well as concerns whether “non-human animals, living organisms, ecosystems and species have some kind of moral status,” and there can be “deep fissures” between analysts. Hayward worries about “justice in the world today as those of a crowded planet where some people deprive others (as well as non humans) of access to sufficient ecological space.” “One of the greatest ethical problems is that humans, rather than being concerned too much about humanity, are generally not concerned enough about caring for other humans.” “In fact, we are now being forced to recognize that we inhabit a contained, dense biosphere that is being put under enormous strains and as we make increasing demands on its capacities, the space becomes increasingly crowded.” The nature/culture—is/ought challenge is figuring out “ecological space in a crowded biosphere” (Hayward). By Northcott’s account, “The inability of industrial civilisation to adapt to the climatological limits of the biosphere arises from the refusal of liberal economists and others to recognise that justice is contextual to the bounded nature of political communities, and to the limits of the earth system.”

Power is another returning theme here, always closely related to justice and injustice. So Mallory undertakes how “the critique of unequal power relations, both intra human and that between humans and what ecophilosophers term ‘the more than human world’ can help scientists and policy makers to comprehensively address current environmental issues, such as global climate change, environmental racism, biodiversity loss, inequalitarian social arrangements, and recognition of ecosystem services in remote, rural, and urban areas.” She is convinced that “ecological issues not only have particular cultural manifestations, but are raced and gendered as well—and that equity and sustainability go together.”

Questions of values and their separation and integration in sciences, such as ecology, and in the humanities, such as ethics and policy have complex dimensions. Longino examines positivism, revising that worldview into her “critical contextual empiricism,” and finds a “socially contextualized conception of knowledge and of scientific inquiry,” which also has a “conformation of representation to object represented.” “Both philosophers and scientists must admit the role values play in the sciences while preventing the empirical from being overrun by the normative and the ideological.” The need to “recognize that advocacy and public engagement [are] a necessary path for ecology” was well seen in Rachel Carson, as Cafaro details here.

Taking Pickett and Callicott’s concerns about whether and how the ecological sciences can feed into a worldview in a new direction, Eliot is encouraging: “Environmental ethics does not require objects more robust than those ecology already offers.” The descriptions of ecological process and products are “sufficiently real in the right sort of way.” That underscores the need for “ethics literacy in environmental education,” advocated by Poole and her collaborators.

Hayward invites us to “an ‘ecological’ way of seeing the place of humans in the world, as they relate both to the rest of nature and to each other. This leads to a conceptualisation of ‘ecological space’ as what answers to the most fundamental needs of human beings, such as to be appropriately regarded as the object of a human right.” “By attending to lessons of ecology, we can develop much more appropriate ethical thinking than we otherwise might—not only regarding our treatment of the natural environment, but also regarding some fundamental questions of justice, and on a global scale” (Hayward). That is carefully analyzed by Northcott looking at the multiple dimensions and effects of climate change. “Anthropogenic climate change however represents a new kind of exile, this time not from ancestral lands but from earth itself.”

But there are limits to the kinds of value questions that ecology can answer. “Ecology can provide insight into how we might rescue a species from extinction if we decide to do so, how to preserve a forest patch if we remove its human occupants, or how to manage a forest patch if people remain, but the questions of ethics, morality and fairness are for society to answer” (Naeem). Larson carefully examines “metaphorical links between ecology, ethics, and society,” the subtle “feedback” between nature and culture again, scientific metaphors in social context. “Metaphoric choices in ecology should be subject to ethical scrutiny” (analyzed also by Pickett). Keep a critical openness—as Bratton can do with her own Christian tradition and equally of the ecologists, of which she is one, and as Sideris can do pressing those

who advocate “a mythopoeic rendering of scientific information as a robust and superior rival to religion” “recasting scientific information as a consecrated narrative and poetic vision.” All this brings us to big questions about this big outdoors we inhabit, the sky over our head and the ground under our feet, the community of life, the biosphere.

We have entered the first century in 45 million centuries of life on Earth in which one species can jeopardize the planet’s future with their “novel biosphere” (Naeem). The main concerns on the world agenda for the new millennium are: war and peace, escalating populations, escalating consumption, degrading environments. They are all inter-related. Ecology is about living at home (Greek: *oikos*, “house”). We don’t want to live a de-natured life. Humans neither can nor ought to de-nature their planet. Be a good citizen, and more. Be a resident on your landscape. Read on, think together with these deeply concerned environmentalists, and you will get put in your place. I guarantee it.

Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO, USA

Holmes Rolston III