

**Philip Cafaro and Ronald Sandler, eds.**  
*Virtue Ethics and the Environment.*  
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It has been nearly now 30 years since the field of Environmental Virtue Ethics (EVE) began as an active philosophical position. Whether it is seen as an alternative approach to doing environmental ethics or whether it is viewed as a complement to the traditional approaches it is clear, as one of the editors of this anthology says, that “EVE now appears to be a vital part of the environmental philosophy landscape.” (4) With manuscripts, anthologies, presented papers, and sections of philosophy conferences devoted to the subject, EVE continues to provide an important viewpoint on all issues in environmental ethics. The title under review here continues this trend.

In fact this title represents the third anthology on EVE put together by the authors. The first one was a special issue on EVE in *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* (2001). The second was an anthology of new articles titled *Environmental Virtue Ethics* (2005) and now this anthology. The current title represents the desire of Richard Haynes, editor of the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* to have Cafaro and Sandler put together a sequel to their 2005 anthology as a tribute to Haynes’ colleague, the late Dr. Marilyn Holly. What developed was a special double issue of the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, guest edited by Cafaro and Sandler. That special issue (2010) Vol. 23:1 has been republished by Springer as a separate volume containing all ten articles from that issue as well as an introductory essay to the articles by Philip Cafaro. The articles referred to in this review are from that volume.

The articles reflect three overarching themes: 1) how political and social issues with an environmental aspect receive new insights from the EVE perspective; 2) the kinds of “public” virtues that will benefit not only the members of polities but the surrounding and supporting environment as well (also, what public vices might harm both); and 3) some of the difficulties, theoretical and practical, that EVE faces with this political focus. Some of the articles address several of these themes and this, along with the emphasis on political issues from an EVE perspective, is what makes this volume a new and important contribution to discussions in the field of EVE.

The first theme is explored by Brian Treanor’s “Environmentalism and public virtue”. Treanor calls for “public virtues” to complement the more personal virtues that have been explored so far in EVE. These public virtues “bring us into virtuous relationships with our communities and environments” (18). Many of the personal virtues described by virtue theorists can be expanded to the public sphere, but at the public level Treanor calls for political virtues that foster an active, political engagement. This, according to Treanor, can bring about a greater flourishing of both citizens of communities and the environment within which the well being of human and non-humans will be sought.

Allen Thompson's "Radical hope for living well in a warmer world" argues that to address the global changes of climate change, species extinction and environmental degradation will require new forms of traditional virtues. It will not be enough to find new applications of existing virtues, but also to rethink some of the basic virtue concepts in order to deal with the likely radical changes brought about by global climate change. Thompson offers as an example "radical hope" as a new form of courage necessary to face the changes we face today. He also suggests that we need to rethink the idea of "naturalism" and understand it in terms of the autonomy of the natural world functioning with much less human interference.

Rethinking the traditional virtues in light of global issues makes up the second theme of the anthology. Kate Norlock, in "Forgiveness, pessimism and environmental citizenship," recognizes that the reality of great environmental harms may give rise to a sense of defeat, despair and anger. Norlock urges the cultivation of an environmental form of *preservative forgiveness* that "promotes good ecocitizenship, and specifically those practices that take the form of environmental activism and dedication to policy change (30). Norlock, however, recognizes that when the effects of global degradation are so extensive, it is understandable that some people do give in to pessimism. In the face of such pessimism Norlock argues for a "rational pessimism" that reflects an acceptance that in some cases we may have only a limited range of policy options that may only limit harms to nature rather than resolve or cure the ills. Holding to such pessimism, a virtuous person can accept that people – the thinker included – are fallible yet capable of better actions than what has been the case. Norlock argues that interpersonal and intrapersonal forgiveness can improve our own character in living with such pessimism, making one more motivated to engage in collective actions to achieve environmental goals.

The flip side of environmental virtues are the vices that when present in our character make it difficult for humans and nonhumans alike to flourish. One such environmental vice is "thoughtlessness" or the lack of consciousness of what one is doing when engaging in practices that are ultimately environmentally destructive. To counter this vice, Jeremy Bendik-Keymer in "Species extinction and the vice of thoughtlessness: The importance of spiritual exercises for learning virtue" offers a set of spiritual exercises designed to cultivate the habits of listening, becoming aware of our actions, and taking responsibility for our actions. When we work at cultivating these habits—what Bendik-Keymer calls the *habits of conscience*—we will be able to *live* as virtuous persons.

One such personal virtue which when made into a habit will enable individuals and communities to flourish is simplicity. In their paper, "The virtue of simplicity," Joshua Gambel and Philip Cafaro present an account of this virtue as a mean between vicious extremes along several axes. They further hold that cultivation of this virtue will aid in the flourishing of both individuals and societies. By considering what is truly needed for one's self and societies we can replace harmful consumptive actions and goals with more significant ones.

The environmental slogan "Act locally and think globally" is developed by Philip Cafaro in his paper "Patriotism as an environmental virtue." Cafaro calls for a nuanced form of patriotism to counter the knee-jerk patriotism found in many today. He argues that a genuine, green form of patriotism calls for a greater focus on particular places and peoples, often the

places where we live and interact in communities. While caring and acting on behalf of people and places far away is important, Cafaro holds that a true patriot is one who acts on behalf of one's own "land" in a Leopoldian sense of the term. One advantage of people cultivating this virtue, Cafaro holds, is that peoples of different political positions can find a common "ground" to work together to preserve.

The final theme in this anthology is how EVE can respond to criticisms, problems and challenges that are leveled against this approach or emerge from internal features of the approach itself. One paper that addresses such internal problems is Jason Kawall's "The epistemic demands of environmental virtue." Kawall points out that in order to live an environmentally virtuous life, we need information about ourselves and the natural world and the processes in action in Nature. We have to gather and analyze such information, but we are faced with the fact that we don't always have either the time or the ability to gather all the relevant information, nor do we always have a high level of certainty about the information we might otherwise want. Faced with this uncertainty, Kawall concludes that "given our limited abilities as individuals to investigate and act upon a wide range of issues, we would do well to encourage changes in our social and political contexts that help us to overcome or compensate for these limitations." (126) Kawall offers five initial social policy guidelines that can increase the likelihood that our actions will be right actions.

One problem that supporters of EVE face today is the problem of motivating people to live in environmentally virtuous ways. Some environmental ethicists have argued for a weak form of anthropocentrism that encourages for environmentally prudent actions. Others have argued that the cultivation of virtues based on a non-anthropocentric worldview will better allow for the flourishing of both human and nonhuman entities. In answering the question "Why should I be environmentally virtuous?" the non-anthropocentric options often leave people unmoved to change their character or actions in meaningful ways. Thus people may support actions to promote environmental justice, yet at the same time take advantage of exceptions to such general principles when doing so benefits them individually. A challenge for those who want to promote a non-anthropocentric worldview will be to show why it is better for persons to cultivate environmental virtues. One response to this challenge is found in Paul Haught's "Hume's Knave and non-anthropocentric virtues." In an environmental context, the problem of the Knave is found when people realize that on an individual basis they can act primarily to promote their self-interest in prudential ways, while appearing to support others in environmental solutions. Such a person might live according to principles of justice, live a lifestyle of simplicity, but do so simply out of a sense of prudential self-interest. The problem for EVE is that prudence is often held to be an environmental virtue. So why not base our actions on having a prudential character? Haught argues that Hume's response to such a person is appropriate when it comes to debates held within EVE. Haught points out that for Hume the

prudence-dominated agent unfits herself for appreciating the benefits of the wide range of non-prudential virtues by allowing her attachment to self interested (instrumental) rationality to occlude her appreciation of social and noneudaimonistic goods made possible through possession of other virtues. (135)

But it is hard to get people who are satisfied with their lives without an appreciation of such goods to want to cultivate environmental virtues and a non-anthropocentric worldview. Faced with this difficulty, Haught suggests that the only way to engender such a change is to show people how what they actually value in their lives reflects these virtues and that such an environmentally virtuous life can be even better than a merely prudential one.

If EVE does seem to demand a valuing of nonhuman entities for their own sake, it faces the problem of how to respond to the pressures of prudential self-interest mentioned above. This dilemma is addressed in Christine Swanton's "Heideggerian Environmental Virtue Ethics." Swanton argues for an environmental ethic that places Heidegger's notion of "dwelling" and the virtues of dwelling in a central position. Swanton argues that environmental ethics faces a dilemma today. On one hand, we adopt a position of partiality to make sense of our practices that allows us to flourish as a species. On the other hand, there is the biocentric view that we should extend impartiality to other species, which have an equal inherent worth. The way out of the dilemma, Swanton argues, is first to see that it emerges from "a metaphysics of value according to which entities have value from a single perspective-less, impartial metaphysical view, which assigns values to entities as if there were ethical brute facts, to which our moral judgments correspond or fail to correspond" (146–147). Once this is realized, then we can look to another metaphysics that provides a better foundation for an environmentally superior value theory. She argues that Heidegger's metaphysics, containing a relational account of human beings and the world, and the idea that the world is "holy" in a variety of ways, provides such a foundation. In this account, our essence as human beings is one of *dwelling*, of being-in and being-with the world. Understanding humans as beings who dwell allows us to make sense of what the virtues are that are appropriate to beings who dwell. Swanton further argues that to understand fully this essence, it is necessary to understand Heidegger's four-fold notion of truth as *aleithia* or a basic disclosing or opening up of the world. She presents an account of this four-fold notion and shows its application to EVE through the idea of dwelling. Thus there are a set of dwelling virtues based on a sense of wonder at the "holiness" of the world. These virtues include openness, care, love, and benevolence. An EVE that contains such virtues derived from this understanding of human beings as in-dwelling beings can, according to Swanton, provide "an ethics appropriate to our life form, without appearing 'species chauvinistic'." (148)

Building on the kinds of criticisms of traditional ethics such as are contained in the previous article, Ronald Sandler addresses what might be basic challenge facing EVE: "Why should I cultivate environmental virtues in order to be moral?" The question can be made more refined so as to ask: "Why not stick with traditional ethical traditions such as Kantian Ethics or some non-virtue forms of utilitarianism in order to address environmental problems?" Sandler, in his paper "Ethical theory and the problem of inconsequentialism," provides a defense for the adequacy of EVE. Sandler rightly notes that the large-scale environmental problems we face today require concerted action by a large number of people. At the same time, the actions of individuals have so little effect on these problems as to be nearly inconsequential. This is part of the source of pessimism mentioned earlier in the paper by Norlock. The solutions to such problems seem to require longitudinal collective action. How can individuals avoid the sense of inconsequentiality in their actions? Sandler argues that the effort required for such actions is supported by virtue-orientated normative theories. Such theories, unlike other normative theories, can better respond to the challenge of inconsequentialism. To show this Sandler argues

that virtue-oriented normative theories will have a two-tiered structure: a theory of virtue, either teleological or consequential, and an evaluative principle of right action based on an account of the virtues. Sandler's paper spells out in more detail what these two tiers involve, why virtue-oriented ethical theory better responds to the problem of inconsequentialism than non-virtue-oriented forms, and why environmental ethicists should embrace some form of EVE.

This anthology provides another welcome addition to the growing body of work that makes up the theoretical structures and practical applications of EVE. What is especially useful is how the anthology addresses the connection between the personal and the public aspects of living an environmentally good life and its discussion of current challenges to EVE. It is a welcome addition to anyone who is interested in developing further the features of EVE. The only negative aspect of the text comes from the cost. Springer is charging nearly \$80 for what can already be found in any large university library that carries the original issue of the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*. Anyone who has ready access to such a library will be tempted to use the original. But persons who do not have such an access, or persons such as myself who want personal copies of all the current articles dealing with EVE, will want to purchase the hardcopy monograph version.

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