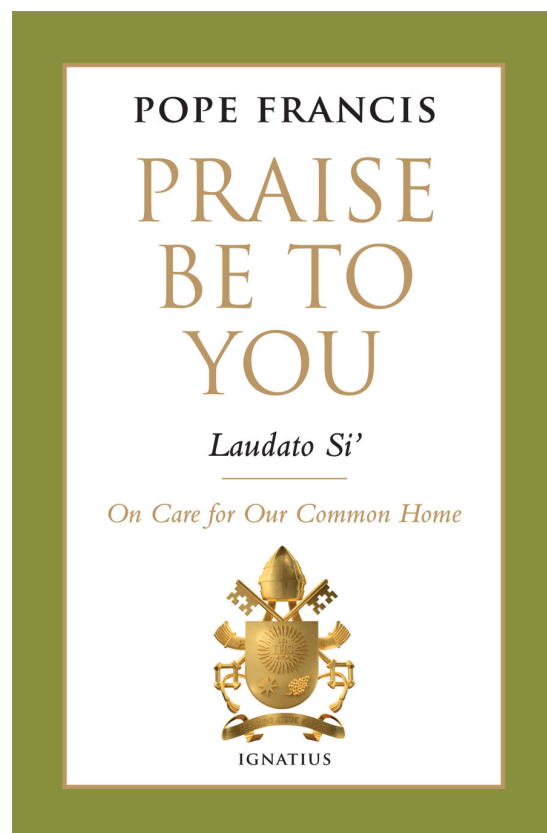


INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS NEWSLETTER

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ADVANCING THE FIELD OF
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND
PHILOSOPHY SINCE 1990

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REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT ON THE 12TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN KIEL, GERMANY

The 12th annual conference of the International Society for Environmental Ethics was held July 22nd to July 25th in Kiel, Germany, at the Christian-Albrechts Universitat. Hosted by Konrad Ott and a crack team of organizers from CAU, this year's conference was titled "Environmental Ethics between Action and Reflection." 160 scholars participated, from six continents and as far away as South Africa and New Zealand, making this the largest ISEE conference yet.

Papers given covered a full range of issues within environmental ethics, from differentiated responsibilities to mitigate global climate change to the ethics of de-extinction. Compared to previous years, participants seemed more critical of mainstream economic approaches to environmental problems. Keynote speakers included Clare Palmer (Texas A&M University) on "Staying in Place While the Climate Changes: Facilitated Adaptation and the Wildness of Wild Animals," Thomas Potthast (Tübingen University) with an ecological talk titled "Biocoenosis or Living Community," Darrel Moellendorf (Goethe University Frankfurt) on "Poverty and Dangerous Climate Change," and Alan Warde (University of Manchester) on "Sustainable Consumption: Practices, Habits and Politics." The full program can be found [here](#).

In addition to the scholarly talks and panel discussions, conference participants enjoyed half-day excursions to nearby Geltinger Birk and the Dosenmoor, one of the last healthy bogs left in the area, and a full day trip to Wadden See National Park on the North Sea coast. There was also a lovely conference dinner at the Forstbaumschule, a biergarten in an urban forest. All in all, the conference was a great success, thanks to all the good work put in by Konrad, Lieske, Christian, Gunda and the

gang in organizing it. Next year's will be at Pace University in New York City, June 29th to July 2nd. Hope to see you there!

- Phil Cafaro, outgoing ISEE President

ISEE SESSIONS AT THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION (APA) 2016

ISEE is planning an excellent slate of group sessions for next year's meetings of the Eastern, Central, and Pacific APA. The Eastern and Central sessions below are confirmed and the Pacific sessions are planned but not confirmed.

AT THE EASTERN APA

January 6th to 9th

Washington Marriott Wardman Park
Washington, District of Columbia

Wednesday, January 6: 3:00–6:00 p.m.

Rebekah Spera (Emory University) "A History of California's Water Politics"

David M. Pena Guzman (Emory University) "The Ethical Challenges Posed by the Crisis Today"

Jessica Locke (Emory University) "The Crisis in a Global Context"

Friday, January 8: 11:15 a.m.–1:15 p.m.

Justin Donhauser (University at Buffalo–SUNY) "The Value of Weather Event Attribution for Adaptation Decision-Making and the Shape of the UNFCCC Policy Framework Going Forward"

Danny Shahar (University of Arizona) "A Tale of Two Systems"

Ian Smith (Washburn University) "Why De-Extinction Is Not Possible"

AT THE CENTRAL APA

March 2nd to 5th

Palmer House Hilton
Chicago, Illinois

Dates and times still to be determined.

Session I (2 hours)

ISSUES IN CLIMATE JUSTICE

"Climate Change and Intrinsic-Deontological Theories of Human Rights", C

"Geoengineering: A Neocolonial Discourse", Thomas E. Randall, Sir Sandford Fleming College

"Understanding Collective Guilt and Shame about Climate Change: One Step toward Restorative Climate Justice", Sarah E. Fredericks, University of Chicago Divinity School

Session II (3 hours)

"NATURE" AND DELIBERATIVE DISCOURSE

"Assessing the Critique of the Appeal to 'Nature' in Environmental Ethics", J. Michael Scoville, Eastern Michigan University

"The Environment as a Public Good: Information and Citizen Participation", M. Teresa La Valle, Universidad Tres de Febrero

DAOISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

"Beyond Corporate Social Responsibility: Chinese Daoism and its Contribution to Environmental Ethics", Alicia Henning, Harbin Institute of Technology

"Harnessing the Power of Nature: Heidegger, Daoism, and Sustainable Energy", Christopher K. Tong, Washington University in St. Louis

AT THE PACIFIC APA*

March 30th to April 3rd
The Westin St. Francis
San Francisco, California

*These proposed sessions are subject to change.

Session 1

Session Chair: Geoffrey Frasz (College of Southern Nevada)

“Enhancing Welfare Without Welfarism: An Integrated Approach to Climate Justice,” Idil Boran (York University)

Commentator: Avram Hiller (Portland State University)

“Does Individual Responsibility Matter for a Human Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change?,” Corey Katz (Saint Louis University Corey Katz)

Commentator: Lorraine Code (York University)

“‘Chemicals Compatible With Life’: Science, Ethics, and Precaution’s Outer Limits in Deployment of New Synthetic Compounds,” Amy Knisley (Warren Wilson College)

Commentator: Chris Cuomo (University of Georgia)

“Caring for Novel Ecosystems,” Andrea Gammon (Radboud University)

Commentator: Mark Woods (University of San Diego)

Session 2

Session chair: Chris Cuomo (University of Georgia)

“Challenges of Narrative Construction in Non-anthropocentric Environmental Ethics, or, Should I Become a Druid?,” Loren Canon (Humboldt State University)

Commentator: Brian Treanor (Loyola Marymount University)

“How Should We Tell the Story of Species Extinction?,” Philip Cafaro (Colorado State University)

Commentator: Brian Treanor (Loyola Marymount University)

“Ethical Imperatives in Pope Francis’ Laudato Si’ and Beyond: Similarities with Secular Environmental Ethics,” Jame Schaefer (Marquette University)

Commentator: Corey Katz (Saint Louis University Corey Katz)

“Rethinking Aldo Leopold’s Land Community Concept,” Roberta Millstein (University of California/Davis)

Commentator: Geoffrey Frasz (College of Southern Nevada)

What will Catholics do now about climate change? A discussion of the significance and probable impact of *Laudato Se* with Gretel Van Wieren

Gretel Van Wieren is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Michigan State University. Her work focuses on religion, ethics, and the environment and she is author of the book, *Restored to Earth: Christianity, Environmental Ethics, and Ecological Restoration* (Georgetown University Press, 2013). I spoke with Gretel in September about whether Pope Francis' recent encyclical (a) really marks a sea change in Catholic thinking and whether (b) it is likely to have much impact on the environmental values of Catholics and (c) other Christians. The short answer is “yes and no,” “maybe but not clearly” and “more likely.” Find out why below.

Ferkany: So we have this new, big event in the world of faith and environmental ethics, this encyclical. I'm wondering what's new here. As I looked at the document, I saw a lot of nodding to previous statements by previous popes on the importance of relationship to the natural environment and having a stewardly relationship. What's going on here that's interesting and new? What's consistent? What's come before? So far as you know, what's quite different?

Van Wieren: Encyclicals have to do this to a certain extent in terms of listing the continuity with the tradition. Pope Francis does mention various popes that have promoted a sense of religious ecology. Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II who, of course, called Francis the patron saint for those who promote ecology, sounding similar to Lynn White, Jr. in his famous 1967 essay in *Science*. But then Francis also cites the leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Patriarch Bartholomew, who has called ecological destruction a sin.

I'm not sure what's entirely new if anything about the encyclical, although I do think some aspects are distinctive. Francis advance a

very harsh critique of industrial capitalism and global socio-economic inequity, for example. I think the wedding of this critique with climate change is distinctive. Also, he calls for concrete political actions, noting the importance of global conventions around transitioning to renewables, such as the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol.

The term he uses to refer to the sort of cosmology that he's interested in promoting, “integral ecology,” is somewhat novel for the Church. Additionally, he states in the encyclical that it is important that indigenous peoples are principle dialogue partners, and so the integral ecology that he talks about is this vision of real human interdependence with the natural world, even though in traditional Christianity humans are considered to be the only ones with divine image. Nevertheless, this integral ecology as a cosmology does significantly de-center humans in the broader scheme of things. There might be something significant there in terms of just how integral his view of humans and nature is.

I think probably the most significant thing about the encyclical is that Francis has chosen climate change as the most significant global issue of the day. Then these other issues, he sees as intrinsic to that—global, social inequality and global industrial capitalism, and so forth—he sees as part of all of this. Still many Catholics don't choose climate change as the principal significant moral issue of today. They choose instead issues such as abortion or the economy.

Ferkany: Okay, so it's a combination of a critique of global industrial capitalism, a different kind of cosmology in which the human is displaced a little bit in the hierarchy of significance, and then the choice of climate change as the focal issue or problem. One thing that I seem to pick up a lot from the press was also this feeling that the view or perspective the pope had taken on climate change, either the science of it or the imperative to mitigate the problem, was

somehow distinctive. You didn't say quite that. So is there any sense in which that's true or was the big thing more simply him having chosen that issue as such a focal concern?

Van Wieren: Well, his agreement with consensus science that anthropogenic climate change is real and that religion needs science as a dialogue partner, I think is significant. But among the Catholic academic elite, which at some level I would consider the Pope, there really hasn't been resistance to consensus science, particularly in the last decade. So the alignment with consensus science, at the level of the elite anyway, is not especially new. I do think there's definitely been a resistance to consensus science among other lay groups or other even bishops groups in the Roman Catholic Church. But I'm not sure that I would say that was the real distinctive part of the encyclical. Certainly though Francis is very clear in the encyclical that scientific information about anthropogenic climate change needs to be recognized and the church needs to work with this as a source of information in order to take faithful action. It's a strong point that he makes.

Ferkany: That's interesting. The next thing I wanted to ask you about is what influence you think this will have, and how broad a scope that influence will have. You're just suggesting that, within the Catholic elite, intellectual elite or whatever it is, leadership elite, this position isn't exactly novel or new, although for some wings of Catholicism it might be altogether new and different. How much of an influence will this have on those groups in the broader constituency of Catholics in general, especially in say the U.S. where climate change denial is pretty prominent?

Van Wieren: I think globally it's very difficult to say because Roman Catholicism is a huge faith group — approximately 1.2 billion people, 50% of all Christians worldwide, and 16% of the total global population. In terms of U.S. Catholics different studies say different things.

For example, one study conducted before the encyclical—a large randomized telephone survey by the Public Religion Research

Institute, PRRI, in November 2014—found that overall approximately 50% of Americans say that climate change is a very significant issue. But interestingly, a significantly higher percentage of Hispanic Catholics in the U.S., approximately 66% say that. So that was pre-encyclical.

But the PRRI also did a more recent study, and what it found is that there appear to be two camps, a Francis camp and a bishops camp. The Francis camp tends to be democratically liberal and more social justice oriented. The bishops camp tends to be more conservative socially and politically, prioritizing abortion over social justice issues. Another Gallup poll conducted shortly after the encyclical found that the Francis effect actually dropped among U.S. Catholics — from about 70% to 59%.

Still the problem with social scientific research on religious effects on environment is that they are so general, especially if they are large scale. So we're really not sure often times, which aspect of religious belief or practice may be driving particular environmental views. In terms of effects on voting Catholics, I would guess the climate encyclical is going to have a positive effect among more liberal Catholics, but among more conservative Catholics perhaps there may even be some backlash in terms of an anti-Francis effect, perhaps causing an even deeper digging into climate skepticism.

Ferkany: Okay, so maybe a backlash emerges. You were saying earlier that part of what came out was this more broad social criticism with an economic component. Might it be that reactions to the bit about climate change are tied in together with opposition to that kind of ideology that they're hearing and that they maybe don't like so much?

Van Wieren: I do think that. But also research has shown that only 40% of all Catholics had even heard of the encyclical weeks after it came out. Only about 30% of Catholic churches mentioned it or preached anything related to it in the pulpit. I did a little anecdotal poll in my intro to environmental ethics class, where I have a 100 students. I asked: "How

many of you have heard of the pope's encyclical against climate change?" and no one raised their hands. And then I said, "Well how many of you grew up, however loosely, Roman Catholic?" There were probably 25 total students. Then I said, "Keep your hands up. How many of you have heard of it?" None of them said that they had heard of it.

Ferkany: None of them? Wow!

Van Wieren: Many professionally trained environmental ethicists, myself included, may think the encyclical is a big deal, and it is in a sense. But whenever religious statements issued by church leadership come out, one has to ask what the actual effect is or will be on the lay population, particularly with a religious tradition such as Roman Catholicism that is so huge.

Ferkany: Yeah, so if the impact within the Catholic faith is unpredictable, if not nil, then probably its impact in the broader world of faith and with respect to environmental issues is insignificant if anything.

Van Wieren: Well, if anything I think it might have more in a sense. It might have more of a broad cultural and cross-religious effect than say, affecting particular actions among individual Catholics. So for example the Pope's visit to Congress next week, where he will undoubtedly speak about climate change, will likely have more of an effect at the public level than necessarily changing individual Catholics or even communities of Catholics.

Ferkany: Okay, well that's really interesting if not quite what I would have expected. Being for all practical purposes an atheist who doesn't really think much about religion or faith, this struck me as pretty momentous in terms of progress of the Catholic church and faith on environmental issues, or even the social justice issues that you flagged earlier. It made me wonder, so what does it say about the state of faith, traditions, and environmental ethics generally. Maybe you can put that in terms of the old debate about this idea that religious cosmologies of certain kinds, including Christian cosmologies, devalue the natural

environment inherently. And others who think, "No, that stuff's nonsense. It's something else." Does this tell us anything about the state of that argument right now?

Van Wieren: Obviously the famous argument of Lynn White's that Christianity was the most anthropocentric religion the world had ever seen kicked off a huge debate. A whole slew of large-scale, social scientific studies followed on White's hypothesis. There is empirical evidence that certain aspects of what we might call a more conservative theological view—so views of dominion, belief in inerrancy of the Bible, things like that—are related to lack of environmental concern.

I do think that there is social scientific evidence that more conservative Christian views, including evangelical views in general, exhibit lower levels of environmental concern than the general public or other religious cosmologies. Early studies, again focusing on denominational divides—which I'm not sure is the most helpful divide to be making—found that, say, liberal Catholics are just as likely or even more likely than the general public to elicit environmental concern. But then academic theologians from all faiths have been revising their cosmologies since White's critique, and obviously philosophers have done that in a secular way with ecocentric ethics.

So there is some evidence that certain theological views put pressure on environmental concern. But one would want to know whether this is because religious ideas are affecting cultural beliefs, or, in a Durkheimian sense, it's the other way around. I don't think I would come out one way or the other on whether recent events resolve the argument.

I'm a religion scholar, so I do think that religion matters in some sense for shaping worldview and shaping what people do in the world. I do think religion matters, whether "religion" is intended in a more traditional conventional sense (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.) or whether one calls religion something more secular, like a deep spiritual affinity with the natural world.

So I would say religious cosmology, in some sense, shapes environmental concern or lack thereof. But also I don't think there's just one thing at work here. I think there's a problem with the ongoing need of some philosophers and theologians, and scientists for that matter, to have the one grand cosmology that's going to be the best for creating more cooperative relationships between people and land. I don't really think that's how it goes.

Ferkany: Yes, thank you. Well it seems *a priori* sensible to think that religion is going to have some influence on what people think and believe, and therefore, do. But it's one component of a person's motivational set and how it's going to interact with the rest of the pieces of the set is hard to say, and it could be very different for different groups as you have suggested.

Van Wieren: For the past several years I have been involved (with Bron Taylor and Bernie Zaleha) with a giant review of the entire literature of social scientific studies since White, trying to figure out what we know empirically about how religion shapes environment. I think we have something like 600 articles in our review database as of now. So far, there does not appear to be very much social scientific evidence that the world's religious traditions are in some sense shaping better environmental behavior. Still 99% of the empirical studies have been focused on U.S. Christianity, especially denominational differences. So we do not really know a whole lot empirically speaking. It's yet to be seen as more research emerges, especially on the more affective dimensions of people's relationship to the natural world.

Ferkany: Okay. Well, thanks, Gretel for talking with me today. Is there anything else you would want to add in terms of the state of faith and religion and the environmental movement that we haven't touched on?

Van Wieren: Not really. I think it's only positive, of course, that the pope has come out with a statement. It's a 190-page document, so it's not something that everyone is going to be reading. But, nevertheless, he's obviously had

a big public presence and maybe it's having more an effect on non-Catholics than Catholics. I'm looking forward to seeing what the conversation is going to be in Congress next week. But yeah, thanks for doing this.

Ferkany: My pleasure.

Global Ethics and Climate Change. Paul G. Harris, Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

This book combines the science of climate change with ethical critique to expose its impact, the increasing intensity of dangerous trends – particularly growing global affluence, material consumption and pollution – and the intensifying moral dimensions of changes to the environment. It shows you that global justice is vital to mitigating climate change.

New for this edition:

- Includes recent climate diplomacy and international agreements
- Presents current data and information on climate science
- Updated statistics; e.g. in chapters and sections that look at poverty and wealth
- Expanded learning guide for students and lecturers

The Battle for Yellowstone: Morality and the Sacred Roots of Environmental Conflict. Justin Farrell, Princeton University Press, 2015.

Yellowstone holds a special place in America's heart. As the world's first national park, it is globally recognized as the crown jewel of modern environmental preservation. But the park and its surrounding regions have recently become a lightning rod for environmental conflict, plagued by intense and intractable political struggles among the federal government, National Park Service, environmentalists, industry, local residents, and elected officials. The Battle for Yellowstone asks why it is that, with the flood of expert scientific, economic, and legal efforts to resolve disagreements over Yellowstone, there is no improvement? Why do even seemingly minor issues erupt into impassioned disputes? What can Yellowstone teach us about the worsening environmental conflicts worldwide? Justin Farrell argues that the battle for Yellowstone has deep moral, cultural, and spiritual roots that until now have been obscured by the supposedly rational and

technical nature of the conflict. Tracing in unprecedented detail the moral causes and consequences of large-scale social change in the American West, he describes how a "new-west" social order has emerged that has devalued traditional American beliefs about manifest destiny and rugged individualism, and how morality and spirituality have influenced the most polarizing and techno-centric conflicts in Yellowstone's history. This groundbreaking book shows how the unprecedented conflict over Yellowstone is not all about science, law, or economic interests, but more surprisingly, is about cultural upheaval and the construction of new moral and spiritual boundaries in the American West.

What We Think About When We Try Not to Think About Global Warming: Toward A New Psychology of Climate Action. Per Espen Stoknes, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015.

The more facts that pile up about global warming, the greater the resistance to them grows, making it harder to enact measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare communities for the inevitable change ahead. It is a catch-22 that starts, says psychologist and economist Per Espen Stoknes, from an inadequate understanding of the way most humans think, act, and live in the world around them. With dozens of examples—from the private sector to government agencies—Stoknes shows how to retell the story of climate change and, at the same time, create positive, meaningful actions that can be supported even by deniers. In *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming*, Stoknes not only masterfully identifies the five main psychological barriers to climate action, but addresses them with five strategies for how to talk about global warming in a way that creates action and solutions, not further inaction and despair. These strategies work with, rather than against, human nature. They are social, positive, and simple—making climate-friendly behaviors easy and convenient. They are also story-based, to help

add meaning and create community, and include the use of signals, or indicators, to gauge feedback and be constantly responsive. Whether you are working on the front lines of the climate issue, immersed in the science, trying to make policy or educate the public, or just an average person trying to make sense of the cognitive dissonance or grapple with frustration over this looming issue, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming* moves beyond the psychological barriers that block progress and opens new doorways to social and personal transformation.

Unprecedented: Can Civilization Survive the CO2 Crisis? David Ray Griffin, Clarity Press, 2015.

“Unprecedented is a valuable book in that it not only delineates the nature and magnitude of the climatic threat to Mankind and the urgency of taking action, but also sets this global crisis within its proper moral dimension involving our ethics and religious sense. It makes the very important point that anthropogenic climate change didn't just happen - it is the result of choices that we as a species made to give preference to greed and exploitation rather than to caring stewardship of our limited spaceship. Any salvation depends on a moral change as much as a technical effort.” PETER WADHAMS, Center for Mathematical Sciences, Cambridge

Religion Without God. Ronald Dworkin, Harvard University Press, 2013.

In his last book, Ronald Dworkin addresses questions that men and women have asked through the ages: What is religion and what is God's place in it? What is death and what is immortality? Based on the 2011 Einstein Lectures, *Religion without God* is inspired by remarks Einstein made that if religion consists of awe toward mysteries which “manifest themselves in the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, and which our dull faculties can comprehend only in the most

primitive forms,” then, he, Einstein, was a religious person. Dworkin joins Einstein's sense of cosmic mystery and beauty to the claim that value is objective, independent of mind, and immanent in the world. He rejects the metaphysics of naturalism—that nothing is real except what can be studied by the natural sciences. Belief in God is one manifestation of this deeper worldview, but not the only one. The conviction that God underwrites value presupposes a prior commitment to the independent reality of that value—a commitment that is available to nonbelievers as well. So theists share a commitment with some atheists that is more fundamental than what divides them. Freedom of religion should flow not from a respect for belief in God but from the right to ethical independence. Dworkin hoped that this short book would contribute to rational conversation and the softening of religious fear and hatred. Religion without God is the work of a humanist who recognized both the possibilities and limitations of humanity.

The New Wild: Why Invasive Species Will Be Nature's Salvation. Fred Pearce, Boston: Beacon Press, 2015.

For a long time, veteran environmental journalist Fred Pearce thought in stark terms about invasive species: they were the evil interlopers spoiling pristine “natural” ecosystems. Most conservationists and environmentalists share this view. But what if the traditional view of ecology is wrong—what if true environmentalists should be applauding the invaders? In *The New Wild*, Pearce goes on a journey across six continents to rediscover what conservation in the twenty-first century should be about. Pearce explores ecosystems from remote Pacific islands to the United Kingdom, from San Francisco Bay to the Great Lakes, as he digs into questionable estimates of the cost of invader species and reveals the outdated intellectual sources of our ideas about the balance of nature. Pearce acknowledges that there are horror stories about alien species disrupting ecosystems, but most of the time, the tens of thousands of introduced species usually swiftly die out or

settle down and become model eco-citizens. The case for keeping out alien species, he finds, looks increasingly flawed. As Pearce argues, mainstream environmentalists are right that we need a rewilding of the earth, but they are wrong if they imagine that we can achieve that by reengineering ecosystems. Humans have changed the planet too much, and nature never goes backward. But a growing group of scientists is taking a fresh look at how species interact in the wild. According to these new ecologists, we should applaud the dynamism of alien species and the novel ecosystems they create. In an era of climate change and widespread ecological damage, it is absolutely crucial that we find ways to help nature regenerate. Embracing the new ecology, Pearce shows us, is our best chance. To be an environmentalist in the twenty-first century means celebrating nature's wildness and capacity for change.

Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live by. Arran Stibbe, Taylor & Francis, 2015.

The increasingly rapid destruction of the ecological systems that support life is calling into question some of the fundamental stories that we live by: stories of unlimited economic growth, of consumerism, progress, individualism, success, and the human domination of nature. Ecolinguistics shows how linguistic analysis can help reveal the stories we live by, open them up to question, and contribute to the search for new stories. Bringing together the latest ecolinguistic studies with new theoretical insights and practical analyses, this book charts a new course for ecolinguistics as an engaged form of critical enquiry. Featuring:

- A framework for understanding the theory of ecolinguistics and applying it practically in real life;
- Exploration of diverse topics from consumerism in lifestyle magazines to Japanese nature haiku;
- A comprehensive glossary giving concise descriptions of the linguistic terms used in the book;

- Discourse analysis of a wide range of texts including newspapers, magazines, advertisements, films, nonfiction books, and visual images.

This is essential reading for undergraduates, postgraduates and researchers working in the areas of Discourse Analysis and Language and Ecology.

Thinking Like A Mall: Environmental Philosophy After the End of Nature. Steven Vogel, MIT Press, 2015.

Environmentalism, in theory and practice, is concerned with protecting nature. But if we have now reached "the end of nature," as Bill McKibben and other environmental thinkers have declared, what is there left to protect? In *Thinking Like a Mall*, Steven Vogel argues that environmental thinking would be better off if it dropped the concept of "nature" altogether and spoke instead of the "environment"—that is, the world that actually surrounds us, which is always a built world, the only one that we inhabit. We need to think not so much like a mountain (as Aldo Leopold urged) as like a mall. Shopping malls, too, are part of the environment and deserve as much serious consideration from environmental thinkers as do mountains. Vogel argues provocatively that environmental philosophy, in its ethics, should no longer draw a distinction between the natural and the artificial and, in its politics, should abandon the idea that something beyond human practices (such as "nature") can serve as a standard determining what those practices ought to be. The appeal to nature distinct from the built environment, he contends, may be not merely unhelpful to environmental thinking but in itself harmful to that thinking. The question for environmental philosophy is not "how can we save nature?" but rather "what environment should we inhabit, and what practices should we engage in to help build it?"

“Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home,” Pope Francis, 24 May 2015. [1]

In this Encyclical, Francis urgently appeals “for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environment challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.” “The ecological crisis,” he argues, “is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an ‘ecological conversion’, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; **it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.**”

“U.S.-Brazil Joint Statement on Climate Change,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. June 30, 2015.

Presidents Barack Obama and Dilma Rousseff commit to intensify collaboration between the United States and Brazil, both bilaterally and under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as our countries work to address the challenges posed by climate change. The global scientific community has made clear that human activity is already changing the world’s climate system, causing serious impacts, putting ever larger numbers of people at risk, posing challenges to sustainable development, affecting

particularly the poor and most vulnerable, and harming economies and societies around the world, including in the United States and Brazil. [2]

“Faith and Science Can Find Common Ground,” David M. Lodge, *Nature*, VOL 523, July 2015.

David M. Lodge, Protestant biologist, is director of the University of Notre Dame Environmental Change Initiative, Indiana, and editor (with historian Christopher Hamlin) of *Religion and the New Ecology* (2006). He argues that faith and science, especially when it comes to saving creation and biology, mix quite well.

“The Ethics of Adaptation to Climate Change,” Kathleen Dean Moore, Center for Humans and Nature, N.d. [3].

In this essay Moore wants “to call attention to the danger that the same moral failings that characterize climate change itself are being replicated and amplified in many of the plans to adapt to it—as if storm and extinction had taught us nothing about justice or reverence for life.” She argues that “we can armor shorelines, modify the genetics of trout, build giant dams, and in countless ways change the Earth, but effective and honorable adaptation will begin to take place only when we change ourselves.”

“Accelerated modern human–induced species losses: Entering the sixth mass extinction,” Gerardo Ceballos, Paul R. Ehrlich, Anthony D. Barnosky, Andrés García, Robert M. Pringle and Todd M. Palmer, *Science Advances* Vol. 1, No. 5, June 2015.

The oft-repeated claim that Earth’s biota is entering a sixth “mass extinction” depends on clearly demonstrating that current extinction rates are far above the “background” rates prevailing between the five previous mass extinctions. Earlier estimates of extinction rates have been criticized for using assumptions that might overestimate the severity of the extinction crisis. We assess, using extremely conservative assumptions, whether human activities are causing a mass extinction. First, we use a recent estimate of a background rate of 2 mammal extinctions per 10,000 species per 100 years (that is, 2 E/MSY), which is twice as high as widely used previous estimates. We then compare this rate with the current rate of mammal and vertebrate extinctions. The latter is conservatively low because listing a species as extinct requires meeting stringent criteria. Even under our assumptions, which would tend to minimize evidence of an incipient mass extinction, the average rate of vertebrate species loss over the last century is up to 100 times higher than the background rate. Under the 2 E/MSY background rate, the number of species that have gone extinct in the last century would have taken, depending on the vertebrate taxon, between 800 and 10,000 years to disappear. These estimates reveal an exceptionally rapid loss of biodiversity over the last few centuries, indicating that a sixth mass extinction is already under way. Averting a dramatic decay of biodiversity and the subsequent loss of ecosystem services is still possible through intensified conservation efforts, but that window of opportunity is rapidly closing.

“We Have Never Been Natural: As Environmentalism Fragments, Competing Stories about the Anthropocene Emerge,” Jim Proctor, *The Breakthrough*, April 5, 2013. [4]

Environmentalism is no longer about saving *nature* alone: increasingly, it's about saving *people* given their dependencies on nature (witness the sustainability movement) and since environmental problems are often symptoms of deeper social problems (witness dumping in Dixie). Yet concepts of nature still suffuse the movement—perhaps no longer just wilderness, national parks, and Gaia, but also a spirit of wildness, community gardens, and an optimal 350-ppm-CO2 atmosphere. It is not surprising that manifold notions of nature are found throughout contemporary environmentalism, since that is what environment means to most people.

“North American scientists call for end to tar sands mining,” Suzanne Goldenberg, *The Guardian*, 10 June 2015. [5]

More than 100 US and Canadian scientists publish letter saying tar sands crude should be relegated to fuel of last resort because it causes so much pollution.

“A Mojave Solar Project in the Bighorns' Way,” Thomas E. Lovejoy and Edward O. Wilson, *The New York Times*, September 11, 2015. [6]

Two important environmental imperatives, ecosystem protection and renewable energy development, are squared off against each other in the Soda Mountains of California’s Mojave Desert. The area is home to a resurgent population of bighorn sheep,

declining numbers of desert tortoises and other creatures adapted to survive in what seems, on the surface, to be a bleak and unforgiving environment. It is also where the Bechtel Corporation is seeking to build a 264-megawatt photovoltaic facility on about 1,900 acres of federal land along Interstate 15 near Baker, Calif., less than a mile from the Mojave National Preserve. The plant would convert the sun's energy into electricity to power 79,000 homes without generating the greenhouse gases that are heating up our planet.

“The Sunniest Climate-Change Story You've Ever Read,” Jonathan Chait, *New York*, Sept. 7 2015. [7]

This fall, as world leaders prepare to gather in Paris for the United Nations climate-change conference in December and bureaucrats bureaucratize, onlookers could be excused for treating the whole affair with weariness... But guess what everyone's been missing in the middle of their keening for the dear, soon-to-be-departed Earth? There is good news. And not just incremental good news but transformational good news, developments that have the potential to mitigate the worst effects of climate change to a degree many had feared impossible. Those who have consigned the world to its doom should reconsider. The technological and political underpinnings are at last in place to actually consummate the first global pact to limit greenhouse-gas emissions. The world is suddenly responding to the climate emergency with — by the standards of its previous behavior — astonishing speed. The game is not over. And the good guys are starting to win.

“U.S. protected lands mismatch biodiversity priorities,” Clinton N. Jenkins, Kyle S. Van Houtan, Stuart L. Pimm, and Joseph O. Sexton, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, Vol. 112, No. 16, 2015.

Because habitat loss is the main cause of extinction, where and how much society chooses to protect is vital for saving species. The United States is well positioned economically and politically to pursue habitat conservation should it be a societal goal. We assessed the US protected area portfolio with respect to biodiversity in the country. New synthesis maps for terrestrial vertebrates, freshwater fish, and trees permit comparison with protected areas to identify priorities for future conservation investment. Although the total area protected is substantial, its geographic configuration is nearly the opposite of patterns of endemism within the country. Most protected lands are in the West, whereas the vulnerable species are largely in the Southeast. Private land protections are significant, but they are not concentrated where the priorities are. To adequately protect the nation's unique biodiversity, we recommend specific areas deserving additional protection, some of them including public lands, but many others requiring private investment.

“Evaluating whether nature's intrinsic value is an axiom of or anathema to conservation,” John A. Vucetich, Jeremy T. Bruskotter, and Michael Paul Nelson, *Conservation Biology* 29(2015):1-12

That at least some aspects of nature possess intrinsic value is considered by some an axiom of conservation. Others consider nature's intrinsic value superfluous or anathema. This range of views among mainstream conservation professionals potentially threatens the foundation of conservation. One challenge in resolving this disparity is that disparaging portrayals of nature's intrinsic value appear rooted in

misconceptions and unfounded presumptions about what it means to acknowledge nature's intrinsic value. That acknowledgment has been characterized as vacuous, misanthropic, of little practical consequence to conservation, adequately accommodated by economic valuation, and not widely accepted in society. We reviewed the philosophical basis for nature's intrinsic value and the implications for acknowledging that value. Our analysis is rooted to the notion that when something possesses intrinsic value it deserves to be treated with respect for what it is, with concern for its welfare or in a just manner. From this basis, one can only conclude that nature's intrinsic value is not a vacuous concept or adequately accommodated by economic valuation. Acknowledging nature's intrinsic value is not misanthropic because concern for nature's welfare (aside from its influence on human welfare) does not in any way preclude also being concerned for human welfare. The practical import of acknowledging nature's intrinsic value rises from recognizing all the objects of conservation concern (e.g., many endangered species) that offer little benefit to human welfare. Sociological and cultural evidence indicates the belief that at least some elements of nature possess intrinsic value is widespread in society. Our reasoning suggests the appropriateness of rejecting the assertion that nature's intrinsic value is anathema to conservation and accepting its role as an axiom.

“Anthropogenic environmental changes affect ecosystem stability via biodiversity,” Yann Hautier, David Tilman, Forest Isbell, Eric W. Seabloom, Elizabeth T. Borer, Peter B. Reich, *Science* VOL 348 ISSUE 6232, April 2015, pp. 336-340.

Human-driven environmental changes may simultaneously affect the biodiversity, productivity, and stability of Earth's ecosystems, but there is no consensus on the causal relationships linking these variables.

Data from 12 multiyear experiments that manipulate important anthropogenic drivers, including plant diversity, nitrogen, carbon dioxide, fire, herbivory, and water, show that each driver influences ecosystem productivity. However, the stability of ecosystem productivity is only changed by those drivers that alter biodiversity, with a given decrease in plant species numbers leading to a quantitatively similar decrease in ecosystem stability regardless of which driver caused the biodiversity loss. These results suggest that changes in biodiversity caused by drivers of environmental change may be a major factor determining how global environmental changes affect ecosystem stability

“Gratitude and the Environment: Toward Individual and Collective Ecological Virtue,” Reed Elizabeth Loder, 2011 *JOURNAL JURISPRUDENCE* 383 (2011)

This project aims to examine environmental gratitude systematically as a moral virtue, or well-developed disposition to experience positive emotions across appropriate situations and develop attitudes and patterns of conduct accordingly. Specifically, the virtue of environmental gratitude is a finely tuned propensity to notice and feel grateful for one's surroundings on a regular basis, which generates pervasive attitudes of concern for planetary welfare and commitment to contribute ecological benefits to the extent of one's ability. My thesis is that individuals can cultivate virtuous environmental gratitude, converting rudimentary feelings of thankfulness into generalized sensibilities, improved knowledge, sustaining motivation, and effective action. I contend further that social institutions can foster such development collectively, and that law can play a significant role in this process.

External Links

[1] http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

[2] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/30/us-brazil-joint-statement-climate-change>

[3] <http://www.humansandnature.org/earth-ethic---kathleen-dean-moore-response-81.php>

[4] <http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/programs/conservation-and-development/we-have-never-been-natural>

[5] <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jun/10/tar-sands-mining-ban-scientists>

[6] http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/12/opinion/a-mojave-solar-project-in-the-bighorns-way.html?_r=0

[7] <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2015/09/sunniest-climate-change-story-ever-read.html>

President: Philip Cafaro

Address: Department of Philosophy, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1781 USA

Tel: 970-491-2061

Fax: 970-491-4900

Email: philip.cafaro@colostate.edu

Responsibility: Organizing ISEE at the Annual Joint ISEE-IAEP Meeting on Environmental Philosophy

Vice-President: Ben Hale

Address: Philosophy and Environmental Studies, 1333 Grandview, UCB 0488, University of Colorado, Boulder, Boulder, CO, 80309

Tel: 303-735-3624

Fax: 303-735-1576

Email: bhale@colorado.edu

Responsibility: Organizing ISEE sessions at the Eastern APA

Secretary: William Grove-Fanning

Address: Department of Philosophy, University of Portland, 5000 N. Willamette Blvd., Portland, OR, 97203, USA

Email: grovefan@up.edu

Responsibility: Organizing ISEE sessions at Pacific APA

Treasurer: Allen Thompson

Address: Department of Philosophy, Oregon State University, 102C Hovland Hall, Corvallis, OR, 97331-3902, USA

Tel: 541-737-5654

Fax: 541-737-2571

Email: allen.thompson@oregonstate.edu

Responsibility: Organizing ISEE sessions at the Central APA

Newsletter Editor: Matt Ferkany

Address: Department of Philosophy, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 48824, USA

Tel: 517-353-6470

Email: ferkanymatt@gmail.com

Responsibility: Assemble and circulate the newsletter 3 times annually

Website and listserv manager: Aline Ramos

Address: CRC en Théorie de la Connaissance, Université du Québec à Montréal, Pavillon Thérèse-Casgrain (W), 455, Boulevard René-Lévesque Est, 5e. Étage, Local W-5245, Montréal, QC, CANADA H2L 4Y2

Email: alineramos@gmail.com

Editor of Environmental Ethics: Eugene Hargrove

Address: Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of North Texas, P.O. Box 310980, Denton, TX 76203-0980, USA

Tel: 940-565-2266 Fax: 940-565-4448

Email hargrove@unt.edu

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SOUTH AFRICA: Johan P. Hattingh, Department of Philosophy, University of Stellenbosch, 7600 Stellenbosch, South Africa. Hattingh heads the Unit for Environmental Ethics at Stellenbosch. Office Phone: 27 (country code) 21 (city code) 808-2058. Secretary Phone: 808-2418. Home Phone: 887-9025. Fax: 886-4343. Email: jph2@akad.sun.ac.za.

Australia:

William Grey, Room E338, Department of Philosophy, University of Queensland, 4067, Queensland 4072 Australia. Email: wgrey@mailbox.uq.edu.au.

Asia:

CHINA: Yang Tongjing, Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, 100732, China. Email: yangtong12@sina.com.

PAKISTAN AND SOUTH ASIA: Nasir Azam Sahibzada, Founder Member, Independent Trust for Education (ITE), T-28 Sahibzada House, Zeryab Colony, Peshawar City (NWFP), Pakistan. Postal Code. 25000. Phone: (92) (91) 2040877. Cell Phone: 0334-9081801. Email: sahibzan@unhcr.org and nasirazam@hotmail.com.

TAIWAN: King Hen-Biau, President, Society of Subtropical Ecology, 4th Fl. #3, Lane 269, Roosevelt Road, Section 3, 106 Taipei, Taiwan. Phone: 886-2-2369-9825. Cell Phone: 886-9-3984-1403. Fax: 886-2-2368-9885. Email: hbking@tfri.gov.tw.

Europe:

EASTERN EUROPE: Jan Wawrzyniak, Prof. UAM dr hab., Institute of Linguistics UAM, Al. Niepodleglosci 4, 61-874 Poznan, POLAND. Phone: +48 / 61 / 8293691 and +48 / 61 / 8293663. Mobile: +48 / 66 / 3787032. Fax: +48 / 61 / 8293662. Email: jawa@amu.edu.pl.

FINLAND: Markku Oksanen, Department of Social Policy and Social Psychology, University of Kuopio, P.O. Box 1627, 70211, Finland. Email: majuok@utu.fi or markku.oksanen@utu.fi.

THE NETHERLANDS: Martin Drenthen, ISIS, Faculty of Science, Radboud University of Nijmegen, Postbox 9010, 6500 GL Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Office Phone: 31 (country code) 24 (city code) 3612751. Fax: 31-24-3615564. Home Address: Zebrastraat 5, 6531TW Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Home Phone: (31) – (24) –3238397. Email: m.drenthen@science.ru.nl.

UNITED KINGDOM: Isis Brook, Centre for Professional Ethics, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, Lancashire, United Kingdom PR1 2HE. Phone: +44(0)1772 892542. Email: ihbrook@uclan.ac.uk.

GREECE: Stavros Karageorgakis, Theofilou 26, 54633, Thessaloniki, Greece. Email: ouzala@hotmail.com.

South America:

Ricardo Rozzi, Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies, P.O. Box 310920, University of North Texas, Denton, TX 76203-0920. Phone: 940-565-2266. Fax: 940-565-4448. Email: rozzi@unt.edu.

Mexico and Central America:

Teresa Kwiatkowska, Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa, Departamento de Filosofia, Av. Michoacan y Purissima s/n, 09340 Mexico D.F., Mexico. Office Phone: (5) 724 47 77. Home Phone: (5) 637 14 24. Fax: (5) 724 47 78. Email: tkwiatkowska@yahoo.com.

North America:

CANADA:

Thomas Heyd, Department of Philosophy, University of Victoria, P.O. Box 3045, Victoria, British Columbia V8W 3P4, Canada. Office Phone: 250-721-7512. Fax: 250-721-7511. Email: heydt@uvic.ca.

Nathan Kowalsky, Philosophy, St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2J5, Canada. Office phone: 780-492-7681 ext. 257. Email: nek@ualberta.ca

UNITED STATES:

Ned Hettinger, Philosophy Department, College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina 29424, USA. Office Phone: 843-953-5786. Home Phone: 843-953-5786. Fax: 843-953-6388. Email: hettingern@cofc.edu.

Holmes Rolston III, Department of Philosophy, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523, USA. Office Phone: 970-491-6315. Fax: 970-491-4900. Email: rolston@lamar.colostate.edu.

Jack Weir, Department of Philosophy, Morehead State University, UPO 662, Morehead, Kentucky 40351-1689, USA. Office Phone: 606-783-2785. Home Phone: 606-784-0046. Fax: 606-783-5346 (include Weir's name on Fax). Email: j.weir@morehead-st.edu.

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