



International Society for Environmental Ethics

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021

Corey Katz, Newsletter Editor
Alex Lee, Secretary



Advancing the field of environmental philosophy since 1990

IN THIS ISSUE:

News and Reports	3
ISEE at the APA	6
Awards	8
Reflections	11

For further engagement with the society, the ISEE Listserv offers a chance to communicate news, information of interest, and announcements in the field of environmental ethics. Submissions to the list can be sent to ISEE-L@listserv1.coloradocollege.edu. Anyone wishing to join the list can do so by emailing the secretary at: aplee@alaskapacific.edu

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Allan Thompson

VICE-PRESIDENT

Marion Hourdequin

TREASURER

Megs Gendreau

SECRETARY

Alexander Lee

MENTORING DIRECTOR

Simona Capisani

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Corey Katz

To submit to future newsletters, please email the editor at: enviroethicsnews@gmail.com

WELCOME

From the ISEE President

Allen Thompson

Looking toward the end of my term as the ISEE President—which will mark the end of nine continuous years serving as an Officer of the Society—I'm proud to report our organization is great shape. On my view, the main purpose of the ISEE is two-fold: to provide opportunities for members to present and develop their work and, in the process, to build a community and network with other environmental philosophers. ISEE organizes two group sessions at each divisional meeting of the American Philosophical Association and organizes one larger, annual meeting of the Society. The global pandemic changed the way we convened these meetings, of course, but we accommodated well and carried on quite successfully. With high hopes I look forward to getting back together in person, starting in 2022.

Our efforts recognizing work in public philosophy, intersectionality and under-represented voices, and excellence in early career writing continue with the Andrew Light Award for Public Philosophy, the Victoria Davion Award for Intersectionality in Environmental Ethics, and the Holmes Rolston III Early Career Essay Prize. Keep on the lookout for new calls for nominations. These awards are not reserved for established scholars and have been developed to encourage work in areas that deserve recognition. We also run a Mentoring and Peer Networking Initiative and encourage any members with

new ideas to contact the Officers. We are here to help you grow professionally and have resources to help develop projects.

Elections for new Officers, including a new Vice-President/President-Elect and new members of the Nominating Committee, will be held in November. The newly elected Officers will take their roles in late January of 2022, when Marion Hourdequin begins her term as the 11th President of the Society. Self-nominations are welcome; please contact members of the current Nominating Committee with any questions or expression of intent.

As the new Editor in Chief of the journal *Environmental Ethics*, I will continue working closely with the ISEE. Each year, one issue of the journal will be a special issue, guest edited by the current ISEE President and Vice-President, dedicated to representing the best work presented by members at ISEE meetings. Independently, the journal welcomes submissions by ISEE members at any time for consideration.

In closing, I express gratitude to Corey Katz and Alex Lee for their work assembling this Newsletter, which is important as a report and record of ISEE activities. An informative picture of ISEE history can be found in the past newsletters, at enviroethics.org. My association with the ISEE and its members (all y'all) has been invaluable, both personally and professionally. It's a fantastic organization and I'll look forward to seeing you down the road sometime, at another ISEE event.

UPDATES AND REPORTS

Mentorship and Syllabus Initiative Update

Simona Capisani

The mentoring program is continuing to develop a freely available, [shared pedagogical resource collection](#) that includes syllabi, assignments, community-based learning projects, and class activities related to environmental philosophy, environmental ethics, climate justice, and related fields. Our goal is to provide a collection that can support the design of stand-alone environmentally focused classes, as well as environmentally related units in broader courses (e.g., a section on climate refugees in a political science class, a case study on the Standing Rock Sioux resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline in an Indigenous studies course, a discussion of environmental risk assessment in an epistemology class, etc.). ISEE and the Mentoring Initiative is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we are specifically seeking teaching resources that support, and foreground engaged and inclusive pedagogies. A call for submissions was circulated prior to the Fall 2021 semester, and the initiative aims to curate and update the collection annually.

In addition to the pedagogical resource collection, the Mentoring Initiative has created a Slack site to foster peer-to-peer engagement and support on a range of topics. Participants can self-organize around specific issues or can join pre-established channels which include a

channel for collaboration opportunities, an equity/intersectionality/anti-racism channel, a research/publications channel, and a channel to connect with others about teaching/pedagogy.



For 2021-2022 the Mentoring Initiative plans to develop two additional webinars for its webinar series. The first will focus on how philosophers can effectively participate and engage in fieldwork and policy spaces with a particular focus on climate change and environmental issues. The second webinar will provide a space to discuss public writing on climate change and the environment and will create the opportunity to learn from the experience of colleagues who have successfully engaged readers in their public writings. Last fall's webinar, Teaching Environmental Philosophy: Engaged and Inclusive Pedagogies, is also available for viewing. We hope to record and make all future webinars freely available on the ISEE website.

The initiative depends on the generous efforts of many volunteers, and we invite those who are interested to contribute project ideas or collaborate on existing initiatives. To get involved with the Mentoring Initiative or to join the mentoring Slack group, please email ISEE Mentoring Director **Simona Capisani** (scapisani@fas.harvard.edu) or ISEE Vice President **Marion Hourdequin** (mhourdequin@coloradocollege.edu).

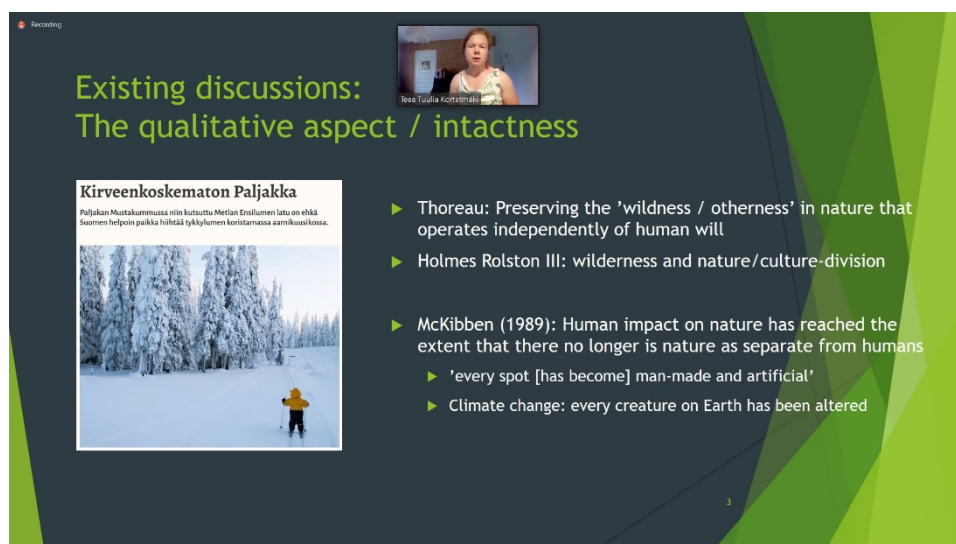
Report on the 18th Annual ISEE Meeting

Laura Puumala

This year's ISEE Conference took place between June 30th and July 3rd. The organizing team was based at the University of Turku, Finland, and consisted of Dr. Helena Siipi, Dr. Elisa Aaltola, and PhD students Mikko and Laura Puumala, all from the philosophy unit.

The special themes of the conference were space and population ethics, and the title of the conference was "Need More Space?" Fitting the theme, the conference was supposed to take place on the island of Seili in the Turku archipelago. Seili is a former leper colony and insane asylum. However, due to the ongoing covid-19 situation, this year's conference was forced to be arranged online. The sessions took place on Zoom, and the Padlet and SpatialChat platforms were provided for after-hours socializing. "After-hours" had different meanings for different participants due to time differences. The conference saw participants from the US, Canada, UK, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, and Latvia!

The conference consisted of seven blocks with two parallel sessions each. There were 24 presentations in total, with topics varying from sustainable energy solutions to feral cats, from Mars colonization to the concept of extinction. In this conference the concept of "space" was broadly



Dr. Teea Kortetmäki from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, gave a keynote talk on coexistence with wild animals.

interpreted to include topics on space ethics, as well as questions relating to terraforming Mars or spreading life to other solar systems. The population aspect inspired presentations on the ethical aspects of limiting or reducing human population or the population of (other) “problem animals,” and questions concerning human land use, wildlife, restoration and biodiversity.

In addition, the conference saw two keynote talks and an award ceremony. Dr. Melanie Harris was granted the Victoria Davion Award for intersectionality in environmental ethics for her work on eco-feminism. Dr. Teea Kortetmäki from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, gave a talk on the sustainable coexistence of people and wild animals that share the same spaces. Professor Allen Thompson from the University of Oregon, US, talked about our duty toward future generations to demonstrate that we sincerely tried to prevent or mitigate climate change.

All in all, the conference ran smoothly, and thanks to the compelling presentations and intriguing discussions it was no pity at all to spend a few of the most beautiful summer evenings on the computer. It seems that we have become quite accustomed and even good at online conferences and other remote communication. But despite different online platforms and applications, something is inevitably missing when there is no immediate contact and no shared physical space – no loitering in the halls after the sessions, no queuing for coffee, and no shared table at the conference dinner. Be that as it may, it seems that we can definitely have successes in “the new normal,” as well.



ISEE AWARDS



Attendees applaud Dr. Melanie Harris, winner of the Victoria Davion Award for Intersectionality, at the 18th Annual ISEE Meeting.

The International Society for Environmental Ethics recognizes scholars in the field annually through three awards. Nominations for these awards are solicited through the ISEE website and listserv.

THE VICTORIA DAVION AWARD FOR INTERSECTIONALITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

To help build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive field of environmental ethics, ISEE seeks to highlight intersectional scholarship in environmental philosophy. This includes, but is not limited to, work that examines linkages between environmental philosophy, feminist and gender studies, critical race theory, Indigenous studies, and disability studies. ISEE aims to support research, teaching, and service that extend the scope of environmental ethics to incorporate perspectives and methods that have been historically marginalized or excluded from environmental

philosophy as a discipline, and that address questions of epistemic justice, such as the devaluation of certain forms of knowledge within academic environmental philosophy, barriers to and opportunities for developing more inclusive perspectives, and approaches to respectfully collaborating across perspectives and traditions. We seek to honor and advance work that brings different threads of philosophy and environmental thought together.

Awarded to: Dr. Melanie Harris

This year's Victoria Davion Award for Intersectionality was given to Dr. Melanie Harris. Dr. Harris is Professor of Black Feminist Thought and Womanist Ideology at Wake Forest University. She also directs the Food, Health, and Ecological Wellbeing Program. Her work critically examines the intersections between race, religion, gender, and environmental

ethics. Her books include *Gifts of Virtue: Alice Walker and Womanist Ethics*, and *Ecowomanism: Earth Honoring Faith*. As a scholar, teacher, and community leader, Dr. Harris further embodies the goal of the Davion Award, building an inclusive, equitable, and diverse field by highlighting linkages between environmental ethics and diverse intellectual traditions.

THE ANDREW LIGHT AWARD FOR PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

The International Society for Environmental Ethics established an award to promote work in public philosophy and honor contributions to the field by Dr. Andrew Light, who received the inaugural award in his name at our 2017 annual summer meeting. The Light Award recognizes public philosophers working in environmental ethics and philosophy, broadly construed, those who are working to bring unique insights or methods to broaden the reach, interaction, and engagement of public philosophy with the wider public. This may be exemplified in published work or engagement in environmental issues of public importance.

Awarded to: Dr. Keith Hyams

This year's Light Award winner is Dr. Keith Hyams, Reader in Political Theory and Interdisciplinary Ethics in the Department of Politics and International Studies at University of Warwick (United Kingdom). Dr. Hyams, who earned his DPhil at University of Oxford in 2006, has published academic research in areas that include climate ethics, climate justice, urban resilience, and the governance of global catastrophic risk. However, what distinguishes him as a public

environmental philosopher is his work across disciplines, sustained collaboration with non-governmental organizations, and public engagement on issues that include urban adaptation in low-income countries, environmental and human rights for Indigenous peoples, and health and environmental injustice in informal settlements in six African cities (Johannesburg, Lusaka, Kampala, Nairobi, Lagos, and Freetown). Dr. Hyams's collaborators describe his approach as "always one of developing a constructive partnership," and note that he brings to this work methodologies that help various publics and policymakers to integrate and constructively discuss ethical issues at stake in environmental decisions. Dr. Hyams's work on climate adaptation is especially notable. In this area, he has served as an ethics advisor to the Indigenous Health Adaptation to Climate Change network, co-authored a report on ['Remedying Injustice in Indigenous Climate Adaptation Planning: Climate Ethics, Inequality, and Indigenous Knowledge.'](#) served as an advisor to Cape Town's climate adaptation department, and worked with international NGOs, Oxfam and Practical Action on the ethics of climate adaptation. Dr. Hyams has mentored six postdoctoral researchers and multiple doctoral students, helping them to develop their own skills in publicly engaged environmental philosophy. This year's Andrew Light Award recognizes the collaborative, publicly engaged, and ethically grounded work of Dr. Keith Hyams.

This year's finalists are **Dr. Kian Mintz-Woo** of University College Cork (Ireland) and **Dr. Jeremy Moss** of University of New South Wales (Australia).

ISEE AT THE APA

Please check the ISEE website and Listserv for information on submitting to the ISEE group sessions at annual American Association of Philosophy meetings. Typically, submission for Eastern are due in mid-July, submissions for Central are due in mid-September, and submissions for Pacific are due in early October.

Kimberly Dill (Santa Clara University): “A Call to Environmental Reverence”

Corey Katz (Georgian Court University): “Scanlon’s Contractualism and Animal Ethics”

Connor Kianpour (Georgia State University): “Protections without Rights”



Photo by Alex Lee, 2021

APA EASTERN (ONLINE)

January 2021

Session 1: Animals and the Environment: Rights, Responsibilities, and Reverence

Chair: Marion Hourdequin (Colorado College)

Keith Hyams (Warwick University): Winner, Andrew Light Award

Session 2: Perspectives on Anthropocentrism, Non-Anthropocentrism, Agency, and Value

Chair: Marion Hourdequin (Colorado College)

Suvielise Nurmi (University of Helsinki): “Environmental Responsibilities as Responsibilities for Relational Moral Agency”

Espen Dyrnes Stabell (Norwegian University of Science and Technology): “Why Environmental Philosophers Should Be Buck-Passers about Value”

APA CENTRAL (ONLINE)

February 2021

Session 1: Aesthetics

Chair: Megs S. Gendreau

Violeena Deka (Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati): “Perception, Painting and Nature: An Exploration in Merleau Ponty’s Philosophy”

Jordan Daniels (Emory University): “Adorno on the Problem of ‘Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms’”

Session 2: Climate Change and Moral Responsibility

Chair: Nathan Carson

Kelly Coble (Baldwin Wallace University): “Welcoming Strangers in a Climate-Disrupted World”

Ludovica Adamo (University of Leeds): “Climate Change and Human Rights: How to Include the Environment in the Sphere of our Moral Rights”

APA PACIFIC (ONLINE)

April 2021

Session 1: Environmental Philosophy

Chair: Alexander Lee (Alaska Pacific University)

Charles Starkey (Clemson University): “Literary Style and the Moral Psychology of Leopold’s Land Ethic”

Avram Hiller (Portland State University): “On Land (and Other) Acknowledgments”

Anna Peterson (University of Florida): “Religion and the Possibility of a Materialist Environmental Ethic”

Session 2: Understanding Environmental Problems

Chair: Corey Katz (Georgian Court University)

Matthew Auer (University of Georgia): “Environmental Aesthetics in the Age of Climate Change”

Blake Francis (University of Maryland Baltimore County): “The Individual Denialists’ Playbook: Climate Ethics and Competing Conceptions of Harm”

Corey Katz (Georgian Court University): “Theorizing Negative Environmental Rights: Addressing the Problem of Risk and Paralysis”



Photo by Alex Lee, 2020

NEWS

Public Philosophy

Todd Dufresne published an Op Ed on climate change at CBC News, and then aired three lengthy radio lectures (with transcripts online) at CBC IDEAS, a longstanding Canadian program about ideas. These lectures, called “Climate Change and the Unborn Future,” aired June 16-18, 2021, and will re-air in the Fall 2021.

- [Op Ed: “Your hemp bags... won't save the planet”](#)
- [Audio Lecture 1 CBC IDEAS: On Capitalism & Climate Change](#)
- [Audio Lecture 2 CBC IDEAS: On Philosophy & Climate Change](#)
- [Audio Lecture 3 CBC IDEAS: On Covid-19 & Climate Change](#)

Alex Lee and Ben Hale published an opinion piece in Grist: [“To protect federal lands, the burden of proof is on conservationists. It should be on extractors.”](#)



New Publications

Bernice Bovenkerk & Jozef Keulartz, Editors (2021) *Animals in Our Midst: The Challenges of Co-existing with Animals in the Anthropocene*. Springer.

[This Open Access collected volume](#) brings together authoritative voices in animal and environmental ethics, who address the many facets of changing human-animal relationships in the Anthropocene.

[Jahnne Pasco-White: Kin](#) documents the artist’s pre- and post-pregnancy paintings and drawings, alongside a dozen essayists who interrogate the limits and possibilities of kinship. Edited by N.A.J. Taylor, the book includes original chapters by: Jessica Bridgfoot, Helen Johnson, Maya Hey, Redi Koobak, Umut Ozguc, Amelia Wallin, Abbra Kotlarczyk, Jennifer Mae Hamilton, Tara McDowell, Kate Wright, Stefanie Fishel and Jan Bryant.

Simon P. James, [“Climate Justice: Some Challenges for Buddhist Ethics,”](#) *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 27 (2020).

Lautensach, A.K. 2020. [Survival How? Education, Crisis, Diachronicity and the Transition to a Sustainable Future.](#) Paderborn, Germany: Schoeningh-Brill.

A summary is given here: Lautensach, A.K. 2020. [“Educating Teachers as if Sustainability Mattered. International Portal of Teacher Education.”](#) The MOFET Institute.

THE REFLECTION POND

Population—Fifty Years On

COMMENTS ON CAFARO AND
WILLISTON, ISEE NEWSLETTER,
FALL 2020

Ronnie Hawkins

My thanks to Phil Cafaro for his brave recognition that we are clearly on an unsustainable path, threatening the entire planet with “climate disruption, ocean acidification, mass species extinction, and other ecological stressors *driven by excessive human numbers.*” There it is, finally—the driver behind all of these things is us. Yes, we would like to eliminate poverty, get to “zero hunger,” and live in a world where everyone has enough and then some—but there are already just too many of us to accomplish this now without doing terrible damage to the natural world. It’s shocking to realize that it’s been over fifty years—fifty years!—since the awareness that we could not keep expanding our numbers indefinitely first dawned on us, starkly and globally. What were we doing, over all those decades now gone by, when we could have worked together to update cultural values and ensure voluntary access to birth control for all the world’s citizens?

One revealing statistic highlighting the result of our social inertia comes from Bar-On, Phillips and Milo (2018), [“The biomass distribution on Earth.”](#) PNAS 115

(25), 6506–6511. By their estimates, the total biomass of Earth’s remaining wild mammals equals only about 4% of the biomass of humans plus our domesticated food animals. When the great whales and other marine mammals are subtracted, moreover, the biomass of all terrestrial wild mammals is around 5% of the biomass of our single human species and makes up less than 2% of the biomass of us plus our livestock. That startlingly precarious disproportionality between species is where the “I” that relentlessly emerges from the I=PAT equation (Impact = Population x Affluence x Technology) has taken us.

Never again should those who want an honest conversation about human population growth be silenced and scapegoated as “Neo-Malthusians.” This has long been a tactic to avoid recognizing the simple fact that the more of us there are, the less of everything else there is to go around, and vanishingly less for those lacking a human voice to call out that their lives matter, too. I once wrote about the “intersectionality” of domination, oppression and exploitation of one group by another, whether it be humans or nonhuman beings on the receiving end. Dismantling the attitudinal core underpinning this approach could help us live equitably and peacefully, within our own and among other species. Now, however, seriously working for nature is in danger of being seen as competitive with or oppositional to overcoming intrahuman inequities and injustices, and negative social

feedback could block needed attention to correcting interspecific imbalances.

Can we not see that we're already living way, way outside of anything like an appropriate ecological niche for a large primate, from diet and trophic level to reproductive potential and population densities? We stand poised on the brink of taking another, fateful step into the Anthropocene, cementing ourselves into the fabric of the planet to create the "fused-peg-and-hole" envisioned by Byron Williston in the previous issue of this newsletter. But this "fit" looks more like a piece of wood being penetrated by a drill bit—the complex contours of an ecologically harmonious human interdigitation with na-

more by harnessing all the rest of nature to supply us with "products" and "services," covering remaining lands not already devoted to food and feed crops with wind and solar installations to power endlessly expanding human numbers. The sustainability of such a project is highly questionable, however, and the road forks sharply ahead: this hoped-for future would be the antithesis of E. O. Wilson's Half Earth. With Williston's suggestion of "the effective erasure between nature and culture," what room could possibly be left, between peg and hole, for anything wild?

We can still decide not to take that next step. But our future demands from the Earth will follow in large part from how



By Holder, Charles Frederick, 1851-1915. Public Domain.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5060069>

ture have been ground down, shaved away as the tool burrows in, relentlessly carving out a larger and larger hole for our single species. Some think we might maintain a population of ten billion or

many of us there are to "demand." The generation just now coming into its reproductive years, globally, is going to be the "make or break" generation for the planet's remaining wildlife, and possibly

for the planetary system itself. The rest of us need to ensure that they have access to the full range of reproductive options—and understand the consequences—as they make their own choices about what it means to be a human being on a planet full of other lives in peril.

EMBODYING TALKING HEADS

CONCERNING EXPERIENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Christina Bovinette

Questioning what constitutes moral behavior toward nature is the task of professional environmental ethics. Some of the field’s most widely acknowledged theories stress the importance of reason in moral decision-making while downplaying the roles of emotional and physical experience. For instance, environmental ethicists often model their frameworks for environmental moral thinking after classic moral systems like utilitarianism and Kant’s ethics (which both emphasize the intellect and reduce other human capacities).

efforts to be objective. For one thing, our social, economic, and cultural situations shape our physical and emotional lives, which in turn impact which issues we believe are deserving of ethical attention. Reflecting on such matters reminds us that a theory which proposes ethics as a matter of rote calculation or cool deliberation is unrealistic and mostly useless in everyday life. Professional environmental ethics represents a sincere attempt to apply philosophical thinking to real life environmental concerns. Imagining just environmental relations demands efforts which respect and integrate not only our rational capacities but also our physical and emotional dispositions—our experience.

Some feminist thought has exposed the limitations of theory that overemphasizes objectivity, or the attempt to think without reference to the aspects of experience I have mentioned (namely, the physical and emotional aspects). For example, some feminist perspectives have brought the primacy of intellectual interiority, or “mind,” into question by demonstrating its necessary dependence on the body and the physical world. One thinker who does

Traditional theorizing of environmental ethics is constrained by a rationalist bias and requires an examination of the epistemological commitments of this thinking.

While these theories are valuable, they have limitations. Our physical and emotional lives also affect moral deliberation. These aspects of experience interrupt our

this is Bonnie Mann who suggests that a particular reformulation of feminist epistemology can radically change how we engage with the environment and

environmental questions (see Bonnie Mann, "World Alienation in Feminist Thought: The Sublime Epistemology of Emphatic Anti-Essentialism," *Ethics & the Environment* (2005)). Mann confronts us with the fact that we are literally dependent upon Earth which provides the material conditions for our survival. A reflection on the relationship of human life and its material conditions reveals weaknesses of intellectual thinking divorced from corporeal life and improves the work and culture of professional environmental ethics.

Traditional theorizing of environmental ethics is constrained by a rationalist bias and requires an examination of the epistemological commitments of this thinking. By contrasting these commitments with a theory such as Mann's, which centralizes the fact that intellectual life depends on material conditions and necessary ties to Earth, we see that an emphasis on our physical connections with the planet can benefit professional environmental ethics by revealing its limitations and inviting an awareness of experience beyond rational deliberation to ethical work.

The work of Second Wave feminists illustrates a similar theoretical project and serves as a guide toward including our corporeal experience in our environmental ethics. The Second Wave feminists in the U.S. relied on particular methods to deepen their understanding of the socio-political issues oppressing women. Sharing the details of their lives, the facts of everyday experiences, helped individual women to realize their shared experience of discrimination. Another example of theory which integrates lived experience,

and which might offer lessons for professional environmental ethics in terms of adapting practices which incorporate extra-rational experience into ethical thinking is the environmental health movement. The environmental health movement has developed an ethics through its focus on human health and well-being as they relate to environmental problems.

A significant overarching goal of this discussion is to gesture at the importance of diversity in doing good philosophical work. I mean "diversity" in two ways: (1) the diversity of professional environmental ethics in terms of ethnicity and race, gender, and class among students and professors, and (2) the diversity of professional environmental ethics in terms of the kinds of issues that are accepted as worthy avenues of reflection within professional environmental ethics. For me, these two types of diversity are related. Experience of that which is outside of what is considered "normal" encourages critical reflection on the value of the status quo. As philosophers, we are proud of our ability to challenge accepted beliefs, but such analysis requires a broad and comprehensive understanding. So, professional environmental ethics needs both sorts of diversity to ask deeper, more nuanced questions as well as to offer more complex and creative solutions.