Pre-print version. Final version published in *Environmental Ethics* 35(4):489-492 (2013)

Anthony O'Hear, ed. *Philosophy and the Environment*. Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement, vol. 69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. vii, 277 pages.

The Royal Institute of Philosophy has published a new volume on environmental philosophy. The previous volume, edited by Robin Attfield and Andrew Belsey, was published in 1994. My, how times have changed! In the previous volume there was not a single paper about climate change. In this volume eight of the thirteen papers are about climate change. In 1994 most authors were working through the general metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical principles they deemed appropriate for thinking about human interactions with the natural environment. Here most authors focus on principles adequate to dealing with climate change. Yet this volume isn't just policy analysis dressed up as philosophy. As many philosophers have noticed, the social struggle to deal with climate change has presented a number of important philosophical challenges to us, many of which are addressed here. Moreover, there are still quite a few general problems with which environmental philosophers grapple: here, one can find discussion of the ongoing debates about the justifiability of anthropocentrism and the aesthetic value of the natural world in particular.

Let us begin with one interesting difference: the 1994 volume was entitled *Philosophy and the Natural Environment*; the current volume is entitled *Philosophy and the Environment*. One might think that the change is due to changes in linguistic practice: 'the environment' is now assumed to be 'the natural environment' unless one specifies otherwise (hence references to 'the built environment'). But there is a deeper philosophical shift that has been at work too: the distinction between 'nature' and whatever is claimed to be its opposite ('culture,' 'humanity,' etc.) has undergone a sustained philosophical critique over the last couple of decades. Erik Swyngedouw describes some of these arguments in "Depoliticized Environments: The End of Nature, Climate Change and the Post-Political Condition," where he claims that not only is "there no Nature out there that needs or requires salvation" (p. 261), but that in constructing our ideas of Nature in certain ways, we mask the element of choice in our determinations of what constitutes a 'good' environment. By masking the value judgments that underlie climate policy, we remove these value judgments from their proper place in the political realm. Even a philosopher as well known for his embrace of the nature/culture distinction as Holmes Rolston, III describes 'nature' and 'culture' not as independent realms, but as "twin foci" that generate a "domain of *hybrid* or *synthetic* events...under the simultaneous control of both foci" (p. 6). He argues that we should want to retain both foci, rather than let everything become influenced by culture alone.

The long-running debates about anthropocentrism are far from over, no matter how many of us like to believe that we have given decisive arguments on the issue. In "Beyond Anthropocentrism," Robin Attfield provides an excellent overview of the recent literature on anthropocentrism, one that will be a great benefit to anyone who teaches these issues. He then argues that anthropocentrists have failed to make a good case against nonanthropocentric value, the existence of which has independent intuitive plausibility. Brian Garvey takes up a particular argument against nonanthropocentric value in "Darwinism and Environmentalism." He argues against Richard Lewontin, who claims that because there is no such thing as 'the environment,' (there are only particular environments of particular organisms, including humans, the activities of which always partly constitute those environments) "the idea that any non-human entity has moral standing independent of our interests makes no sense" (pp. 68-9). Garvey makes a careful and persuasive case for his criticism, which defends a version of deep ecology. One would hope it would be enough to make famous biologists think twice before pronouncing on matters of ethics. In "Foundations of a General Ethics: Selves, Sentient Beings, and Other Responsively Cohesive Structures," Warwick Fox steps back from the debates about anthropocentrism, sentientism, and biocentrism, and tries to describe the general structural features of different kinds of organism that explain our moral intuitions regarding their relative moral importance. His is an ambitious project; readers looking for more than a brief overview of its components and their rationales should consult the more detailed arguments in *A Theory of General Ethics: Human Relationships, Nature, and the Built Environment* (MIT Press, 2006).

The second general issue raised within this volume comes from environmental aesthetics, where lots of interesting and thoughtful work is being done these days. Allen Carlson, in "Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature and Environmentalism" describes five requirements of an environmental aesthetic that come out of environmentalism. He claims that environmentalism demands environmental aesthetic appreciation that is acentric, environment-focused, serious, objective, and morally engaged. On this basis, he judges that contemporary environmental aesthetics that aim to combine scientific cognitivism and the aesthetics of engagement (a form of noncognitivism) are superior to more traditional picturesque and formalist aesthetics. Emily Brady, in "The Ugly Truth: Negative Aesthetics and Environment," argues against a view within positive aesthetics which claims that "what might seem to be ugly is in fact beautiful" (p. 84). In a triumph of common sense and careful analysis, Brady concludes that some things really are ugly and that ugliness is an aesthetic disvalue even though it might be good in other ways for humans to have some ugliness around.

And then, there is climate change. There are two basic themes about climate change running through this volume: (1) Climate change isn't a theoretical problem but a motivational one: it's pretty much obvious what the right thing to do is; we just need to get ourselves to do it. (2) Climate change reveals the inadequacy of our most basic philosophical assumptions: only a radical rethinking of our approach to the world will be adequate to a challenge such as this. Let us consider (1) first. Chukwumerije Okereke argues that the global North has treated the global South unjustly in a number of ways: industrialization has benefitted the North at the expense of the South; globalization has rendered the South less economically self-sufficient, more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and less powerful in international negotiations than the North. The North has then used its advantage to insist on further sacrifices from the South for the benefit of the North in climate negotiations; this is unjust. It doesn't take a radical theory of justice to reach this conclusion; most deem it unacceptable to use the undeserved disadvantages of others, produced by oppression and exploitation, to further undeservedly disadvantage them. Okereke's analysis makes clear that what we need isn't a new theory of the just; what we need is for people in powerful positions to consider matters of justice in deciding what to do. Likewise, when James Garvey, in "Climate Change and Causal Inefficacy: Why Go Green When It Makes No Difference?" considers whether one has an obligation to reduce one's emissions if doing so won't make any appreciable difference to climate change, one can see that we don't need any radical new theory to answer this question 'yes.' What Garvey makes clear is that we need, at most, is a not-entirely-consequentialist ethical theory. Simon Caney and Cameron Hepburn, in "Carbon Trading: Unethical, Unjust and Ineffective?" argue that there are no good ethical objections to cap-and-trade programs as such: there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such a policy tool, and implemented correctly, it needn't have unjust outcomes. In making this argument, they do applied ethics in the old-fashioned sense: they start with uncontroversial ethical claims and use them to draw a clear policy conclusion. In Dieter Helm's "Sustainable Consumption, Climate Change and Future Generations," we get what is perhaps the most controversial theoretical grounding for policy recommendations. And yet what we get is Hume rather than Kant: that we should accept policy agreements that allow us to give more weight to the interests of our nearest and dearest rather than insist on thoroughgoing equality, both temporally and geographically. This is controversial in all the ways that Hume typically is, but it hardly asks us to stray from the domain of well-accepted ethical theories.

J. Baird Callicott (in "The Temporal and Spatial Scales of Global Climate Change and the Limits of Individual and Rationalistic Ethics") and Erik Swyngedouw think that what's needed is something more radical. While Swyngedouw argues for a radical revision of the way we frame the problem of and solutions to climate change, Callicott argues that we need to give up both individualism and rationalism in our approaches to ethics. While giving up the rationalism might be a matter of going with Hume instead of Kant, giving up the individualism is rather a different challenge. Instead of thinking of myself as obligated by the interests of future individuals, we should think of ourselves (together, as a collective agent) as responsible for the future of human civilization (together, as a collective patient). David Wiggins, in "A Reasonable Frugality," raises fairly deep theoretical criticisms of current ethical assumptions about climate change, though he presents them as matters of mere common sense rather than revolutionary thinking. He describes anthropocentrism as a "highly questionable idea" (p. 180), and rejects the economist's assumption that our obligations to future generations are matters of altruism or benevolence. He concludes with what he sees as a more reasonable description of our obligations: "we must look always for any means consistent with our ordinary happiness and ordinary justice to reduce our demands upon resources which are not in any realistic sense renewable" (p. 187).

One thing that this volume makes clear is that given public discourse about climate change, even claims that are terribly modest within ethical theory turn out to be radical in the current policy context. 'It is unjust for the well-off to use their greater power to benefit themselves at the expense of the badly-off'; 'If you can take small steps to prevent the demise of human civilization, you should do so': these are hardly controversial claims. But when it comes to climate change, they seem to be claims that we need to argue for all over again.

There is a broader literature out there that does make more philosophically radical claims, and it would be nice to see more of it represented here. There is nothing from ecofeminists, who have offered deep and interesting analyses of how gendered power structures have affected both the causes of and the proposed solutions to climate change. There is not much from political philosophers either, though discussions of political liberalism and cosmopolitanism, and problems of global governance more broadly, abound within that literature. One might hope for more than one representative of the continental tradition, as well. But these omissions aside, as collections of papers from lecture series go, this one offers a useful snapshot of the current state of the field.