

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY  
Nineteenth Annual Meeting  
October 10-12, 2015  
Atlanta, GA

## ABSTRACTS

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2015

#### SUNDAY MORNING 9:00-10:30 a.m.

##### Session 1: Invited Session: Sensing and Thinking Complexity and Process

Dahlonge

Moderator: Margret Grebowicz, Goucher College

**"Speaking With Things: A Symposiopsis of Media,"  
Katie King, University of Maryland**

**"Green in Other Epochs: Whitehead and the Color of Ecology,"  
Nicholas Gaskill, Rutgers University**

##### Session 2: Invasion, Resistance, Conatus

Oglethorpe

Moderator: Stephanie Jenkins, Oregon State University

**"Guests, Pests, or Terrorists?"  
Rebekah Sinclair, University of Oregon**

The number of so-called invasive species is on the rise. But who decides who belongs where, or how territories are bordered? Why are some bodies welcomed guests, and others pests or terrorists? Using Butler, Braidotti, and Derrida, I interrogate the production of "invasivity" and "non-nativity," arguing those discourses rely on anthropocentric concepts of nation-states, borders, and atomistic subjects. Invasivity is born when neoliberal, political logics variously combine with speciesist eco-logics to produce an other who threatens the interests and ethical centrality of 'Man'. Suspicious of proper belonging, spaces, and bodies, my biopolitical and new-materialist analysis exchanges pesticide politics of extermination for new ways of rendering communities legible, and better ways of co-becoming.

**"Spinoza's Immanent Ontology"  
Oli Stephano, Stony Brook University**

This paper takes up Spinoza's immanent ontology as a resource for ecological ethics, one uniquely equipped to address how human power and flourishing impinge on the rest of planetary life. After outlining some central features of Spinozist immanence and the ethics it yields, it specifies the ethical implications of immanence for ecology, arguing for an approach that analyzes ecosystemic change in terms of the affective capacities enabled or foreclosed by a given relation. Finally, it offers an ecological re-reading of Spinoza's amoral conception of power, linking human power to the quality of the ecosystemic relations we compose.

**"Re-placing Reason within Soliphilic Materialism"**  
**Molly Sturdevant, Saint Xavier University**

In this essay, I expand Val Plumwood's description of the possibility of ecological rationality as a *negating* force (Plumwood, 2002). I draw on two resources, (1) Jane Bennetts' 2010 study of the vital materialism of Hans Driesch, and (2) Glenn Albrecht's notions of *solastalgia* and *soliphilia* to suggest that ecological reason must be embodied, and must act as a negating or regulatory force. The technē of sustainability is thus decreation. I conclude that the regulatory impulse of Driesch's *entelechy* and the concern of *soliphilia* are both material *and* unproductive in principle, and thus "ecological."

**Session 3: Anthropocentrists against Anthropocentrism**

Marietta

Moderator: Brian Treanor, Loyola Marymount University

**"What is the Original Face? Buddhism, Levinas, and Animality"**

**Brian Schroeder, Rochester Institute of Technology**

The paradox of the Zen Buddhist kōan resists in a significantly different way what Levinas identifies as the totalizing way of the same. Buddhism provides a critical insight into faciality that goes beyond Levinas' anthropocentric view, and undercuts his refusal of "paganism," thereby providing the ground for a deeper realization of ethical relationship between humans and animals. This paper proposes a fundamental experience of "original face" of the animal, which is possible only by way of a direct face to face encounter.

**"Contributions of Levinas' Ethical Phenomenology to the Development of a Phenomenological Theory of Ecological Responsibility"**

**Robert Scott, University of Georgia**

Scholars disagree whether or not Levinas can be a useful resource for environmental ethics. I argue for three ways in which Levinas' ethical phenomenology, with some modifications, can be a useful resource for the development of a phenomenological theory of ecological responsibility. I contend, first, that Levinas' description of desire for the other provides guidance for the conceptualization of ethical imperatives. Second, his description of diachronic responsibility contributes to the conceptualization of temporal character of ecological responsibility. Finally, I argue that his discussion of sensibility offers insight into what a respectful, dialogical relationship with nature involves.

**"The Emergency of Thought"**

**Yong Dou (Michael) Kim, Villanova University**

This paper attempts to overcome the objection to Kantian ethics, viz., that the considerations of practical reason include only our own species. The first part of the paper offers an account of the moral subject as inadequate to reason's practical task without the appropriate affective or passionate attunement by throwing our own freedom into question. The second part of the paper draws on various resources – including Midgley's criticism of Kantian ethics and feminist theory – to gesture toward a new understanding of "subject" and "world", viz., in sympathetic relations of parts – but in a whole that is never completed in thought. The ecological demand of practical reason must therefore be to construct a world in which morality is possible.

SUNDAY MORNING 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

**Session 1: Panel on Bridging Bioethics**

Dahlonga

Moderator: Tom Weidemeyer, Florida Atlantic University

**"Re-Conceptualizing Bioethics: Public, Individual, and Environment"**

**Bruce Jennings, Center for Humans and Nature**

From the perspective of environmental philosophy, contemporary American bioethics remains significantly disconnected, epistemically and ethically, from environmental concerns. In this presentation, I will critique some of the conceptual and normative distinctions that separate dimensions of bioethics. I will then argue that we have good historical, conceptual, and outcomes-based reasons for reconceptualizing bioethics as a commitment to life itself. Contributions from environmental philosophy have the potential to reshape the conceptions of health and autonomy that drive bioethics.

**"Ecological Health and New Frontiers for Environmental Ethics"**

**Jonathan Beever, Pennsylvania State University**

The concept of "environmental health" is morphing into a new conception of "ecological health" that imbricates the human and the natural domains of life. This ecological turn will transform the Cartesian understanding of the human organism, and it will also transform the perspective on the health and functioning of nonhuman species, landscapes, and ecosystems. This ecological turn also implies that ethical concerns for human health and ethical concerns for the healthy functioning of nonhuman species and ecosystems should not be treated separately in ethical analysis, but seen instead as conceptually interrelated and mutually illuminating.

**"Public Health Ethics: Bridging Medical, Public Health, and Environmental Ethics"**

**Lisa M. Lee, Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues**

Public health ethics emerged from bioethics as a result of concerns outside the individual-and-provider relationship and increasing sensitivity to justice in health. Some scholars have suggested a focus on primordial prevention, addressing the broadest level of risk factors associated with disease. Public health ethics is concerned with communities, individuals, and the environment. I will consider the foundational values in these fields and examine how public health ethics can support primordial prevention now and how it might bridge medical, public health, and environmental ethics in the future.

**"Aging and Environment: Ethical Issues at the Interface of Aging Demographics and Environmental Challenges"**

**Peter Whitehouse, Case Western Reserve University**

Human populations are aging in most regions of the world. The dual trajectories of climate change and demographic aging threaten to overwhelm intersecting social and natural systems. This confluence of ecological and social forces inspires the need to rethink the conceptual and practical relationships among clinical biomedical, public health, and environmental ethics. The individual and population challenges presented by dementia will be used in this presentation to illustrate the growing need to build these bridges.

**Session 2: Invited Book Session: Bryan Bannon's From Mastery to Mystery**

Oglethorpe

Moderator: Ladelle McWhorter, University of Richmond

**Irene Klaver, University of North Texas**

**David Wood, Vanderbilt University**

**Bryan Bannon, Merrimack College**

**Session 3: Hermeneutics, Language, and Art**

Marietta

Moderator: Robert Melchior Figueroa, Oregon State University

**"Prejudice, Science, and Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature: Gadamer and Carlson on Science, Aesthetics, and Understanding"**

**M. Joseph Aloï, University of North Texas**

This paper explains how scientific knowledge is relevant to aesthetic appreciation of nature by drawing on Gadamer's observation that all understanding "is to be thought of ... as participating in an event of tradition." Allen Carlson argues that scientific knowledge enhances our aesthetic appreciation of natural environments. This is true, but not because 'applying scientific knowledge' is a step in a methodical approach for appreciating the beauty of nature. Rather, to experience nature aesthetically is a way to understand something about nature through understanding the tradition in which this experience occurs. Science is a crucial part of this tradition.

**"Natural Understanding: The Environmental Relevance of Gadamer's 'World' and 'Environment'"**

**Nathan Bell, University of North Texas**

A careful consideration of the terms "world" (human meaning) and "environment" (general surrounding of existence) as they appear in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer can contribute to evaluating conflicting environmental understandings. Ecologically apathetic understandings of the natural environment seek to sever the world and the environment, and thus are problematic. On the other hand, concerned understandings of the natural environment often hold a more appropriate relation of world and environment. An examination of this distinction gives us new ground for sorting out how positive understandings of the natural environment are hermeneutically better understandings.

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON 2:00-3:30 p.m.**

**Session 1: Agency, Temporality, Freedom**

Dahlonga

Moderator: David Wood, Vanderbilt University

**"A Few Good Men, A Few Hungry Lizards: Emancipating Nature with Sartre and Deleuze"**

**Billy Dean Goehring, University of Oregon**

How could freedom be thought of as a natural category? This paper evaluates the concept of *lines of flight* in the work of Deleuze and Guattari and Sartre, making reference the behavior of Balearic lizards and the evolutionary history of the giant panda. Opposing a naturalized freedom to an emancipatory nature, I argue that the latter enables us to find these lizards and pandas politically instructive. If lizards and pandas are free to live *otherwise*, and if their freedom had dramatic consequences for themselves and the makeup of their worlds, what is stopping human beings from doing the same?

**"Considering Unprecedented Challenges"**

**Eva Maria Raepple, College of DuPage**

Never before in history have the cumulative innovations in science and technology confronted humanity with a scale of unprecedented situations that require equally unprecedented judgments. Tradition cannot provide a seamless “bridge” between thinking lived time and objective time, as it cannot solve the *aporias* between earthbound experience, abstract scientific knowledge and our ability to engineer processes. I argue that the productive imagination prompted by certain works of art can serve as viable path in the task of critically reconsidering unprecedented perplexing environmental challenges.

**"Affectivity and Plants: A Consideration of the Middle Voice"**

**Marjolein Oele, University of San Francisco**

Grasping plant life through the conceptual framework of the *middle voice* alleviates difficulties in deciding whether plants are mostly “active” or “passive” beings. The middle voice explains their *immersion* in transformative, photosynthetic activities that are hardly visible and their capacity for open, indeterminate growth. Additionally, the middle voice with its emphasis on *locality* is particularly well suited to address the positional dispersal of selves that nonetheless still establish a plant community. Finally, the middle voice allows for a consideration of plant life as a symbiotic, communal form of life that defies strict opposition between self and non-self.

**Session 2: Invited Book Session: Cynthia Willett's *Interspecies Ethics***

Oglethorpe

Moderator: Margret Grebowicz, Goucher College

**Stephanie Jenkins, Oregon State University**

**Rebekah Sinclair, University of Oregon**

**Cynthia Willett, Emory University**

**Session 3: *Vulnerability, Hospitality, and Gardens***

Marietta

Moderator: Irene Klaver, University of North Texas

**"Sovereignty, the Earth and an (In)Hospitable Future to Come"**

**Blake Scott, Concordia University**

This paper takes up the notion of ‘turn-taking’ as it appears in Derrida’s *Rogues* in relation to, both, the democratic experience and an understanding of inter-generational justice that it affords. This is done through, both, an analysis of Derrida’s conceptions of self-identity, giving, and sovereignty in *Rogues*, and through taking up Allen Habib’s article ‘Sharing the Earth: Sustainability and the Currency of Inter-Generational Environmental Justice.’ While inter-generational justice is often cast in terms of a Rawlsian model of distributive justice, and while such models are used to discuss environmental sustainability theory—I argue that Habib’s notion of ‘sharing by turns,’ can be shown to have greater normative force *a fortiori* once put into conversation with the ontological considerations of ‘turn-taking’ given by Derrida.

**"Cultivating the Garden: Object-oriented Ontology and New Materialism  
as Environmental Philosophies"**

**Brian Onishi, University of North Texas**

Both object-oriented ontology and new materialism offer radically ecologically perspectives that are capable of informing our theoretical and political frameworks regarding the environment. However, there is little work that explicitly connects these movements to environmental philosophy. In this paper I will provide a brief sketch of both object-oriented ontology and new materialism. I will then turn to the garden as an entity that is intimately enmeshed in human and non-human political milieus and argue that both object-oriented ontology and new materialism should be considered environmental philosophies.

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON 3:45 p.m.-5:15 p.m.**

**Session 1: Rethinking Environmental Philosophy with Merleau-Ponty:  
Aesthetics, Imagination, Perception**

Dahlonga

Moderator: Chaone Mallory, Villanova University

**"Intertwinings: Rethinking Environmental Ethics through Aesthetics with Merleau-Ponty"**  
**Joe Balay, Christopher Newport University**

The following paper examines the claim that environmental aesthetics helps ground environmental ethics by locating an intrinsic form of value in nature. Building on recent observations about the environmental significance of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work, I argue that he helps problematize the lingering anthropologicist belief that nature stimulates human aesthetic experience without being capable of such experience. In turn, I show that in his *Nature* lectures, Merleau-Ponty identifies a proto-aesthetics in the underdetermined and interconnected perceptual relations of the natural world, a finding that helps re-ground environmental ethics in the *ontological value* and *structural freedom* of perceptual being.

**"Modeling Environmental Imagination with Notions from Merleau-Ponty"**  
**Irene Klaver, University of North Texas**

I focus on two rather un-explored Merleau-Pontyan notions, "operative intentionality" and "sedimentation and reactivation," and show how they have a fundamental place in his phenomenology and ontology and could provide a productive conceptual conduit to a further understanding of the workings of an environmental imagination. I develop a notion of environmental imagination as *operative* imagination which can account for change. I conclude by exploring the operative role of images in a practice of reactivating an environmental imagination to facilitate change in sedimented relations to our environment.

**"Dogen and Leopold: Toward a New Ecology"**  
**Gerard Kuperus, University of San Francisco**

This paper engages with the thoughts of both Dogen and Leopold. Their respective non-anthropocentric approaches – to study "the walking mountains" or to "think like a mountain" – propose a decentralized position for the human being. In order to make this decentralization more concrete, I will discuss some important implications of such a non-anthropocentric approach by relating it to current debates regarding indigenous versus non-native species. The paper argues that ecology can learn more from its own discoveries if it is willing to question its categories and ideas.

**Session 2: Panel on *De/Naturalization and Biopolitics: Unsettling "Life Itself"***

Oglethorpe

Moderator: Bryan Bannon, Merrimack College

**"If the Earth Should Tum Upon Herself: Irigaray and the 'New' Feminist Materialisms"**

**Rachel Jones, George Mason University**

This paper examines the 'return to matter' that can be taken to characterize much recent feminist thought. Despite its appeal for both feminist and ecological projects, there is a risk in such a return of (inadvertently) reinstating an objectifying and anthropocentric realism and a reification of 'life itself'. The paper deploys Kant's essays on the Lisbon earthquake to compare different possible feminist/queer/materialist responses to an earth that moves, and to suggest that, despite some of the other problems with her work, Irigaray's 'sensible transcendental' offers a return to matter as generative and differential while avoiding the more problematic return to realism

**"Vulnerability and Elemental Difference"**

**Emily Parker, Towson University**

Judith Butler has been accused of socio-centrism, an unwillingness to think the powers of bodies. I argue on the contrary that Butler's notion of vulnerability is crucial for ecological politics in its unprecedented attention to the elementality of difference. For Butler vulnerability is not in fact something created by political life; it inspires ever-altering political dynamics and resists attempts to define, predict, and control. Vulnerability is an indication of animality and fragility, making it possible to conceive of political life as one manifestation of the ecological.

**"Queer Ethics as Geological Frottage: Rethinking Eros in Anthropocene Feminism"**

**Lynne Huffer, Emory University**

This paper argues that the term "eros" provides us with a powerful philosophical tool for engaging both the renaturalizing and geontological turns in what some have dubbed anthropocene feminism. Specifically, the paper rethinks Foucauldian rupture with Irigarayan lips as rifts or geological failles to describe an erotic undoing and ethopoietic remaking of ethical thinking in the Anthropocene. If queer eros names an ethical struggle in the face of the mass extinction of multiple forms of life, that struggle forces the biopolitical to confront the geontological in a dissolution of life itself that cannot be thought.

**Session 3: Invited Session in Honor of David Seamon: 25 Years of the Newsletter on  
*Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology***

Marietta

Moderator: William Edelglass, Marlboro College

**Robert Mugerauer, University of Washington**

**Dylan Trigg, University of Memphis**

**David Seamon, Kansas State University**

**IAEP BUSINESS MEETING**

**Sunday 5:30 p.m.**

**Dahlongega**

## **MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2015**

**MONDAY MORNING 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.**

### **Session 1: *Ethics of Food and Wine***

Dahlonga

Moderator: Barbara Muraca, Oregon State University

#### **"Valorizing What is Natural"**

**Kristina Gehnnan, University of Tennessee**

This paper explores the pervasive ‘valorization’ of what is natural in the rhetoric of contemporary food marketing and labeling (where to ‘valorize’ is to present as good, right, and choice-worthy). The valorization of what is natural makes naturalness into a powerfully normative concept. But most good food is not natural in any meaningful way. Instead, good food is normally essentially cultured. I hypothesize that valorizing natural food is rhetorically compelling because it speaks to generationally- and culturally-specific anxiety about the human-wrought extinction of nature, and I propose an alternative evaluative framework centered on ecological notions of participation and reciprocity.

#### **"Ecological Feminism, Food Ethics, and the Problem of Incorporation"**

**Anne Portman, University of Georgia**

In this paper I propose to discuss some preliminary theoretical concerns that arise when thinking about how to apply ecological feminist ethics in the area of food production. I will attend to the possible objection that an egalitarian relationship with nonhumans is simply incompatible with the agricultural project. I will suggest that one can skirt objections to the possibility of nonhierarchical relationship in this context by focusing on what is truly problematic about relational definition under dualized conceptual frameworks.

#### **"The Viticulture of Virtues: Organic, Biodynamic, and Sustainable"**

**Julie Kuhlken, Misericordia University/Pedemales Cellars**

Due to perceived improvements in grape quality combined with long-term advantages to soil health, there is an active movement away from conventional viticulture toward organic, biodynamic, and sustainable alternatives. Nevertheless, given the very high costs associated with the conversion, and the fact that there is no associated price premium in the case of wine, these consequentialist reasons for conversion do not seem entirely sufficient to explain and sustain the movement, and in particular cannot explain the choice of organic, biodynamic, or sustainable. What I want to argue is that instead one should look to environmental virtue ethics to account for and encourage their adoption.

### **Session 2: Invited Session: *Environmental Philosophy and Critical Disability Studies***

Oglethorpe

Moderator: Steven Vogel, Denison University

#### **"Rethinking the Land Ethic, Crippling Environmentalism"**

**Kim Hall, Appalachia State University**

#### **"Autism and Environmental Identity: Neurodiversity, Interspecies Empathy, and Environmental Justice"**

**Robert Melchior Figueroa, Oregon State University**

#### **"Accessible Environments: Does Disability Studies Matter for Environmental Philosophy?"**

**Stephanie Jenkins, Oregon State University**



**Session 3: New Perspectives on Aldo Leopold**

Marietta

Moderator: Matthias Fritsch Concordia University

**"Aldo Leopold's Integrative and Mundane Phenomenology"**

**Charles Brown, Emporia State University**

This paper compares and contrasts the methodologies of Edmund Husserl and Aldo Leopold while arguing that both combine a deconstruction of philosophical concepts constructed from the perspective of what Husserl calls "naturalism" and what Leopold calls "conventional science" with a return to the thing themselves as a way of recovering what has been concealed by the methodologies of mainstream natural science. Each attempts to rescue moral discourse from what Husserl calls the "ideology of positivism" through descriptions of everyday life-world experience.

**"Norton vs. Callicott on Interpreting Aldo Leopold: A Jamesian View"**

**Piers Stephens, University of Georgia**

In this paper, I present an overview of the debate between Bryan Norton and J. Baird Callicott over the interpretation of Aldo Leopold's body of work leading up to and including the land ethic. A key point of differentiation is the question of whether Leopold may legitimately be read as a supporter of American pragmatism, as derived from Arthur Twining Hadley or William James. I defend Norton's claim that a pragmatist reading is plausible, but diverge from him in seeing this influence as being both drawn more directly from James and being more nebulous in its impacts across Leopold's work.

**MONDAY MORNING 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**

**Session 1: Reconsidering "Nature"**

Dahlonaga

Moderator: Steven Vogel, Denison University

**"Critique, Myth, and the Hermeneutic of Nature"**

**Bryan Smyth, University of Mississippi**

There is renewed interest in the contribution that Critical Theory can make to contemporary environmental thought. Current proposals, however, tend to discard the concept of 'nature'. This is problematic from a phenomenological perspective, which shows the hermeneutic need to retain a positive conception of nature as the outer horizon of experience. I will argue that for a critical-theoretic environmentalism this conception will, in epistemic terms, necessarily be *mythic* in the sense of a narrative process that generates pre-cognitive horizontal significance, and that this is the case precisely because of and not despite its more highly 'enlightened' character.

**"General Economy and Nature's Gift (Mauss, Bataille, Derrida)"**

**Matthias Fritsch, Concordia University**

This paper will re-read Marcel Mauss's famous *The gift* to defend it against Derrida's charge that its references to nature are foundationalist and romantic. While Mauss's attempt to turn to archaic societies to find a firm bedrock of our own deserves criticism, I will argue that this should not lead us to overlook that even on Derridian premises, every gift draws on natural forces and what Bataille called cosmic energies.

**"Cinema as EcoDharma: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter...and Spring"  
William Edelglass, Marlboro College**

Kim Ki-Duk's film, *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, ... and Spring*, is frequently read as an exemplar of eco-cinema. It is also often cited as a Buddhist movie, a kind of dharma teaching through film. I argue that Kim's film is indeed an excellent example of ecobuddhism. However, Kim's gorgeous and meditative film, in the end, is problematic in its implicit suggestion that a flourishing life is achieved through a nostalgic escape to a nature beyond history and culture.

**Session 2: Panel on John P. Clark and The Impossible Community**

Oglethorpe

Moderator: Barbara Muraca, Oregon State University

**"Social Ethos and Value Theory in John Clark's Ecocommunitarian Anarchism"  
Keith Peterson, Colby College**

This paper will consider the fruitful "four sphere" framework developed by John Clark in *The Impossible Community*. It affirms that his analytical distinction between social ideology, social imaginary, institutional structure, and social *ethos* is indeed a productive one. It isolates Clark's treatment of the sphere of the social *ethos*, the "most neglected" sphere of analysis among leftists, but the most indispensable for engaging behavioral and social change. Since clearly articulating value priorities is central to the latter, it argues that a more fully developed political ecological value theory than Clark offers is needed to better frame value-oriented social engagement and change.

**"Ecofeminist Political Philosophy and Clark's Impossible Community"  
Chaone Mallory, Villanova University**

This paper uses ecofeminist political philosophy as a lens to explore Clark's notions of community and political subjectivity. Clark's work presents a version of community and political life in which human relations with the more-than-human world are politically foregrounded. The paper asks whether the political subject that would be created through and with the "possible impossible" community could encompass a political subject-position for beings and entities in the more-than-human world. It also asks whether the core political concept of solidarity could be a trans-species political relation as well.

**"'That which situates all situations': World, Ontology, and Realism at the  
Limits of The Impossible Community"**

**Rick Elmore, Appalachian State University**

**Response, John Clark, Loyola University (Emeritus)**

This paper explores Clark's Hegelian account of ontology in relation to recent continental accounts of realism and immanence in environmental philosophy. It argues that Clark's insistence on a non-universalizing ontological account of the world and community helpfully traces the limits of a realist account of the world and ontology, but may also succumb to the limitations of Hegel-inspired ontology, particularly insofar as it seems to risk the continuation of subtle forms of anthropocentric idealism.

**Session 3: Satellite Group Session: Society for Nature, Philosophy and Religion**

Marietta

Moderator: James Hatley, Salisbury University

**"Nature as Created Order in The Brothers Karamazov"  
Bruce Foltz, Eckerd College**

**"Nature as a Manifestation of the Divine: The Divine Energies in Creation"  
David Bradshaw, University of Kentucky**

**MONDAY AFTERNOON 1:45 p.m.-3:15 p.m.**

**Session 1: Ecology and Ethics**

Dahlonge

Moderator: David Craig Alexander, University of Colorado (Denver)

**"Getting a Feel for Life: The Ethical Moment of a Subversive Subject"**

**Jake Greear, Johns Hopkins University**

In 1964 Paul Sears dubbed ecology the “subversive subject,” suggesting this branch of natural science has uniquely political implications. However, fifty years of ecological criticism have yielded diverse and divergent accounts of how, why, and whether ecology is politically subversive or ethically revolutionary. As a contribution to this conversation, this paper draws upon Michel Foucault’s analysis of “alethurgic forms” to examine an often overlooked aspect of the politics of the natural sciences, concerning how the ecologically enlightened individual constitutes herself or himself as an ethical subject in relation to ecological truths.

**"The Concept of an Ecosystem"**

**Darrell Arnold, St. Thomas University**

Talk of ecosystems is widespread. However, a clear analysis of the concept is rare. In this paper I discuss the origins and early use of the term and describe some of the key conceptual developments of it in ecosystems biology as well as extensions of the concept to social systems and ideas. I argue that the term is fruitfully used to refer to a complex physical system that has less cohesion than an organism, but more cohesion than a mere “aggregate.” I further argue that greater clarity about this concept would benefit various “new materialists.”

**"Is Hans Jonas an Ecological Thinker?"**

**Bob Sandmeyer, University of Kentucky**

I hold that Hans Jonas fails to offer an explicit ecological understanding of living entities. In defending this thesis, I will, first, elucidate the conception of metabolism at the heart of his philosophy of life. Second, I will turn to a number of Jonas’s shorter writings to highlight what Jonas, himself, felt to be the central contribution of this existential interpretation of biological facts. Third, I will argue that even though he advances an environmental ethic in his later years, he fails to develop the ecological implications of his earlier philosophy of the organism.

**Session 2: Plants and Animals**

Oglethorpe

Moderator: Piers Stephens, University of Georgia

**"Synchronicity: An Ideal for an Interspecies Compositionist Ethics"**

**Zachary Piso, Michigan State University**

Compositionists such as Bruno Latour and Antonio Negri have oriented ethical and political reflection to the temporality of agents’ reshaping of the shared world. Whereas many ethical traditions attend to our spatial confrontation, compositionists understand these confrontations as inevitably arising from the different rates at which assemblages compose and decompose through their labor. Challenges in environmental ethics (invasive species, GMOs, geoengineering) suffer from contradictions if constrained to spatial confrontation, and I here motivate “synchronicity” to help navigate these problems. After fleshing out the ontology of synchronicity, I consider the advantages of the ideal for making sense of these environmental challenges.

**"The Displeasure in Meat: Vegetarianism, Moral Sentimentalism, and the Aesthetics of Disgust"**  
**Brendan Mahoney, University at Albany**

Although much of the scholarship on vegetarianism is grounded in ethical theories (e.g., utilitarianism, deontology, feminist care ethics), the decision to eat meat—when it is an option and not a necessity—is often amoral; i.e., instead of ethics, it is guided by the aesthetic experience of pleasurable taste. In this paper, I examine an aesthetic basis for vegetarianism. Specifically, I propose that the aesthetic experience of disgust surrounding the killing of animals and the preparation of them for meat offers a moral sentimentalist argument for vegetarianism.

**"Ethical Extensionalism and Ontological Veganism"**  
**Jessica Polish, Vanderbilt University**

Drawing on environmentalist Val Plumwood's critique of ethical extensionalism and 'ontological veganism' (both reinforce human exceptionalism with grave consequences for the way we conceive and treat the environment and understand our place in it), I put into question the logic by which Michael Marder recently extends dietary ethics to include plants. I take my critique further than Plumwood's to argue that the ethical extensionalism implicit in 'ontological veganism' parallels the 'inexorable,' teleological thrust of capital, the 'progress' devastating the environment. While we must find ways to remedy our ethical neglect of particular regions of being such as plant life, gestures of inclusion are caught up in the very production of exclusion we attempt to resist.

**Session 3: Satellite Group Session: *Society for Nature, Philosophy and Religion***

Marietta

Moderator: Bruce Foltz, Eckerd College

**"Modern Art and the Problem of Beauty"**  
**Joseph Aziz, University of Dallas**

**"Henry Bugbee, Wilderness and the Omni-relevance of the 10,000 Things"**  
**James Hatley, Salisbury University**