



## SOME RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

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### **Louke van Wensveen, *Dirty Virtues: The Emergence of Ecological Virtue Ethics* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000)**

This is the first extensive study of ecological virtue ethics and the new rhetoric of environmentalists. Based on a wide-ranging survey of environmental literature, Louke van Wensveen offers an overview of current "green" virtue language and proposes the basic elements of a matching ecological virtue theory, dubbed "dirty virtues" by ecological philosophers.

Environmental ethics is not exhausted by debates about the need to preserve rivers, our duties to bioregions, and the intrinsic value of nonhuman nature; rather, eco-literature also contains a rich virtue language. Highlighting the integrity, diversity, internal tensions, dynamism, and visionary character of this ecological virtue language, the author shows both its historical roots and innovative features. Van Wensveen illustrates a widespread awareness of attitudes and habits that help or harm our relations with the nonhuman world. She includes a unique catalog of 189 virtues and 174 vices that mark the vision and praxis of people committed to ecological flourishing.

The second part of *Dirty Virtues* presents carefully crafted criteria to help discern genuine virtue and vice in an ecological age. Her arguments are distinguished by a critical balance of moral sources, including Aristotelian virtue theory, Christian tradition, women's experiences, psychological theory, and metaphorical representations of nonhuman nature.

Methodologically innovative and boldly interdisciplinary, *Dirty Virtues* will challenge and inspire virtue theorists, as well as environmental ethicists and theologians.

### **Brian Treanor, *Emplotting Virtue: A Narrative Approach to Environmental Virtue* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014)**

Despite its ancient roots, virtue ethics has only recently been fully appreciated as a resource for environmental philosophy. Other approaches dominated by utilitarian and duty-based appeals for sacrifice and restraint have had little success in changing behavior, even to the extent that ecological concerns have been embraced. Our actions often do not align with our beliefs. Fundamental to virtue ethics is an acknowledgment that neither good ethical rules nor good intentions are effective absent the character required to bring them to fulfillment. Brian Treanor builds on recent work on virtue ethics in environmental philosophy, finding an important grounding in the narrative theory of philosophers like Paul Ricoeur and Richard Kearney. Character and ethical formation, Treanor argues, are intimately tied to our relationship with the narratives through which we view the human place in the natural world.

By reframing environmental questions in terms of individual, social, and environmental narratives about flourishing, *Emplotting Virtue* offers a powerful vision of how we might remake our character so as to live more happily, more sustainably, and more virtuously in a diverse, beautiful, wondrous, and fragile world.

### **Philip Cafaro, *Thoreau's Living Ethics: Walden and the Pursuit of Virtue* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004)**

*Thoreau's Living Ethics* is the first full, rigorous account of Henry Thoreau's ethical philosophy. Focused on *Walden* but ranging widely across his writings, the study situates Thoreau within a long tradition of ethical thinking in the West, from the ancients to the Romantics and on to the present day. Philip Cafaro shows Thoreau grappling with important ethical questions that agitated his own society and discusses his value for those seeking to understand contemporary ethical issues.

Cafaro's particular interest is in Thoreau's treatment of virtue ethics: the branch of ethics centered on personal and social flourishing. Ranging across the central elements of Thoreau's philosophy—life, virtue, economy, solitude and society, nature, and politics—Cafaro shows Thoreau developing a comprehensive virtue ethics, less based in ancient philosophy than many recent efforts and more grounded in modern life and experience. He presents Thoreau's evolutionary, experimental ethics as superior to the more static foundational efforts of current virtue ethicists.

Another main focus is Thoreau's environmental ethics. The book shows Thoreau not only anticipating recent arguments for wild nature's intrinsic value, but also demonstrating how a personal connection to nature furthers self-development, moral character, knowledge, and creativity. Thoreau's life and writings, argues Cafaro, present a positive, life-affirming environmental ethics, combining respect and restraint with an appreciation for human possibilities for flourishing within nature.

### **Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2009)**

Since its original publication in 1975, this groundbreaking work has awakened millions of people to the existence of "speciesism"—our systematic disregard of nonhuman animals—inspiring a worldwide movement to transform our attitudes to animals and eliminate the cruelty we inflict on them.

In *Animal Liberation*, author Peter Singer exposes the chilling realities of today's "factory farms" and product-testing procedures—destroying the spurious justifications behind them, and offering alternatives to what has become a profound environmental and social as well as moral issue. An important and persuasive appeal to conscience, fairness, decency, and justice, it is essential reading for the supporter and the skeptic alike.



## SOME ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO ENJOY

- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*
  - Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitare*
  - Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*
- Loren Eiseley, *The Immense Journey: An Imaginative Naturalist Explores the Mysteries of Man and Nature*
- Arne Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess* (Deep Ecology)
- Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Lives of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate – Discoveries from a Secret World*
  - And....almost anything by Thoreau & Walden!