Environmental Ethics
Duties to and Values in The Natural World

HOLMES ROLSTON, III
"Environmental Ethics unravels the ethics question, then weaves the strands back together in a tight fabric of analysis and proposal. ... By refusing to be pulled toward either an economics-based or a "biocentric" position, Rolston bridges an otherwise yawning gap between the two camps. ... A model of the environmental thinking—and acting—required now and in the future."—Christian Science Monitor

"Rolston's incisive logic ... poetic insights ... and almost conversational style reassure the reader. ... With luck, lots of people will accompany him on this journey, returning with ideas with which to launch sophisticated discussions of environmental ethics."—Los Angeles Times Book Review

"Rolston's work—worthy of becoming a classic itself—explores values from several points of view. ... The work is not a carefully structured argument, but a delightful series of insights and concrete examples leading to a new gestalt ... a unique groundbreaking work appropriate for all reader levels."—Choice

"Most insightful and poetic. ... We need ... Rolston’s wisdom."—Kristin Shrader-Frechette, Sierra

Holmes Rolston, III, is Professor of Philosophy at Colorado State University and the author of Science and Religion: A Critical Survey (Temple).
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Published Critical Notice of Environmental Ethics

Steven Bouma-Prediger (Philosophy, North Park College), says: "Environmental Ethics is a splendid and provocative contribution to a field of study that has been gaining increasing scholarly attention in recent years. Environmental Ethics is, in short, nothing less than the single best available work in its field: comprehensive, clear, learned, insightful, wise. ... Rolston's work is in a class by itself as both a basic introduction to the important issues and a carefully constructed argument for a particular position. In language accessible to the nonspecialist and with an astonishing command of the sciences that yields a multitude of relevant examples, Rolston methodically builds his case for a value-centered ecological ethic. ... Required reading." (Zygon 27[1992]:354-357)

Donald C. Lee (Philosophy, University of New Mexico), in the American Library Association's Choice, says: "Rolston is a prominent environmental ethicist who explores and expands here the traditional realm of value. ... Rolston's work--worthy of becoming a classic itself--explores value from several points of view: of human beings as superior, of animals as sentient, of organisms, species, and ecosystems as having intrinsic value. He also considers economic, public, and individual realms of value. The work is ... a delightful series of insights and concrete examples leading to a new gestalt. ... It is a unique groundbreaking work appropriate for all reader levels." (Choice, June 1988, p. 379)

Mark Sagoff (Philosophy, Center for Philosophy and Public Policy, University of Maryland) says that "this excellent book" explores "the human power to understand, appreciate, and enjoy nature far beyond their biological uses of it. Environmental Ethics describes and analyzes just this unique power. ... [and] contributes to our ways of appreciating nature by aptly distinguishing and explaining types of values associated with the natural environment. ... While Rolston does draw a great many distinctions, they are necessary to reflect the many dimensions of the human relationship to nature. He uses a complex and sensitive style to study the interplay of subtle dimensions in the human attitude toward nature. ... Throughout this book, Rolston ably uses philosophical analysis to address major environmental problems and challenges. ... Rolston admirably shows how a good society would approach its natural surroundings, not with the question, 'What can we get away with?' but 'What should we respect?'" (Hastings Center Report 19, no. 4, 1989), pp. 39-40)

Robin Attfield (Philosophy, University of Wales, Cardiff) concludes, "Rolston's work is a major contribution to environmental ethics, based on comprehensive study of the field, and well illustrated by a wealth of examples drawn from the biological and physical sciences and from environmental decision making. His language is always evocative, veering sometimes into pedagogy and sometimes into poetry. ... The reader is carried along by the enthusiasm and rich ingenuity of the text. ... Much is to be learned from the sensitivity and insights of this monumental work. ... It well deserves a place on the reading lists of environmental ethics and related courses worldwide." "The theory of Holmes Rolston [is] elegantly presented" (Environmental
Eric Katz (Philosophy, New Jersey Institute of Technology) says of *Environmental Ethics*: "This is a culmination of a twenty year investigation into the nature of environmental value and ecological ethics by the foremost scholar in the field. Rolston presents a philosophy of nature, but this is no traditional metaphysic; it is a philosophy of nature imbued with ecological science and value. One of the strengths of this book is that Rolston is reluctant to close the door on any kind of natural value. He presents his case in steps, starting with anthropocentric instrumental values of nature, moving to the intrinsic value of sentient life experiences in the animal kingdom, to the intrinsic good-of-its-kind of natural organisms, on to the environmental fitness of species in ecosystems. The argument is supported by many real life examples. Like the ecosystem itself, this book as a whole has more value than its individual parts." (*Research in Philosophy & Technology* 9(1989):256-257)

Baird Callicott (Philosophy, University of North Texas, Denton) says that Rolston "is, as everyone knows, the poet laureate of environmental philosophy." He writes with "poetic brilliance" using "the associative ambiguity and concrete imagery that characterize his luxuriant prose." Rolston is one of "our best, most systematic, and thoroughgoing environmental philosophers" and *Environmental Ethics* is "a recently consolidated and definitive statement of his revolutionary moral theory." (*Between the Species*, vol. 6, no. 4 [Fall 1990]:193-195) "Rolston's book [is] now at the forefront of the field" (p. 131). "His philosophical style is artful, seductive, and persuasive. His arguments are many and ingenious. Cumulatively, his labyrinthine argumentation is overwhelming." (p. 133, "Rolston on Intrinsic Value: A Deconstruction," *Environmental Ethics* 14(1992):129-143)

Jeffrey Burkhardt (Ethics and Policy Studies Program, University of Florida), in a review in *Teaching Philosophy*, says that *Environmental Ethics* "is carefully thought and written, ... integrated in such a way that Rolston can claim to have presented a systematic environmental philosophy." As a "tight analysis of the ways in which Nature 'carries value', ... there have been few if any better discussions in the literature." (*Teaching Philosophy* 13 [December, 1990]:390-394)

Freya Mathews (Philosophy, LaTrobe University, Victoria, Australia) says that *Environmental Ethics* is a "seminal discussion of intrinsic value" in nature and says that "Rolston has argued persuasively against" prevailing but inadequate conceptions of endangered species and why they should be saved, and given "illuminating arguments" leading to more adequate understanding and justification of saving species. (*The Ecological Self* [Savage, MD:: Barnes and Noble, 1991], pp. 175-176, pp. 179-180, p. 187)

David C. Waters (Staff writer, *Christian Science Monitor*), in the *Christian Science Monitor* says, *Environmental Ethics* "unravels the ethics question, then weaves the strands back together in a tight fabric of analysis and proposal. ... By refusing to be pulled toward either an economics-based or a "biocentrist" position, Rolston bridges an otherwise yawning gap between the two camps (with) rich explorations in ethics. *Environmental Ethics* provides a model of the environmental thinking--and acting--required now and in the future." (*Christian Science Monitor*, Tuesday, August 16, 1988, p. 18)

Bob Sipchen (Staff writer, *Los Angeles Times*): *Environmental Ethics* presents a "strong argument" with which "to launch sophisticated discussions of environmental ethics. Imagine how the world would be different today if such discussions had begun decades ago." (*Los Angeles Times*, The Book Review, Sunday, February 21, 1988, page 6)

Edward O. Wilson, a Pulitzer prize winner and zoologist at Harvard University, says: "Rolston provides a lucid introduction to environmental ethics that will be of value to scholars, students, and general readers. No domain of philosophy is today chancier or potentially richer than ethical philosophy and no application of sound moral reasoning more urgently needed than in management of the environment. *Environmental Ethics* is packed with information and a good deal of wisdom obviously acquired through long experience." [Book endorsement] He cites *Environmental Ethics* as "greatly aiding" him "in evaluating the environmental ethic." (Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson, eds., *The Biophilia Hypothesis* [Washington: Island Press, 1993], p. 41)
David Hales (Director, Institute of Wildlife Management, School of Natural Resources, University of Michigan) says, "Rolston's analysis ... is perceptive philosophy yet accessible to a general audience. His comprehensive scope, accurate references, examples given, and clarity of text make the book invaluable to students of environmental ethics in a very practical way. ... Rolston clearly makes the case that we now find ourselves standing at an ethical threshold. ... What a wonderful effort!" (Book endorsement)

Donald Scherer (Philosophy, Bowling Green State University, Ohio) says, "This work is vintage Rolston. ... He has a wonderful and intimate knowledge of matters environmental, which he again uses here in insightfully new ways, to evoke from his reader the sensitivity for the environment and the human-environment relationship which he concludes is appropriate for the likes of a human being. This book reads well, reads easily, reads enticingly." (Book endorsement)

Kristin Shrader-Frechette (Philosophy of science, University of Notre Dame): "Philosopher-naturalist Holmes Rolston provides the most insightful and poetic work" and "presents some of the best work in the field." (Sierra 75, no. 6, 1988:118-123)

Janelle London (School of Law, University of California, Berkeley, and an editor of Ecology Law Quarterly) says, "While on the whole Rolston's style makes for easy and enjoyable reading, the book's real worth lies in its content, both abstract and concrete. ... His book is primarily a philosophical treatment of humans in nature," supporting an environmental ethic and "the Rolston account of that ethic is persuasive in its concreteness." (Ecology Law Quarterly 15(1988):747-750)

M. V. Nadkarni of Bombay, India, in a review for the International Journal of Development Banking, says that Rolston analyzes "environmental ethics ... with distinction, lucidity, clarity and an abundance of concrete real life examples which also makes it delightful and rewarding reading. Though most relevant to the contemporary world, it is bound to be of enduring interest also for decades to come. ... This is a profound book by any standard." (International Journal of Development Banking 9(1991):95-98)

Nicholas Agar (Philosophy, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand) repeatedly cites Environmental Ethics and Rolston as one of the "four biocentrist pioneers" (p. 64). In Life's Intrinsic Value: Science, Ethics, and Nature (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), citations passim.

Wim Zweers (Philosophy, University of Amsterdam) says: "The philosopher Holmes Rolston is one of the best known and (in my view) most original environmental philosophers of our time" (p. 294). In Participating with Nature: Outline for an Ecologization of our World View (Utrecht, Netherlands: International Books, 2000), citations passim. Earlier in Dutch (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Van van Arkel, 1995).


Clare Palmer (University of Lancaster, UK) says: "Holmes Rolston is one of the most important figures in the current environmental ethical debate, most prominently for his early collection of essays Philosophy Gone Wild ... and his later book Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World. In "A Bibliographic Essay on Environmental Ethics," Studies in Christian Ethics 7(1994):68-97.

Michael W. Northcott (Christian Ethics, University of Edinburgh): "Rolston provides one of the most carefully nuanced approaches to the ethics of human duties to nature and the intrinsic more value of the natural world" (p. 104). In The Environment and Christian Ethics (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

David Strong (Philosophy, Rocky Mountain College, Billings, MT): "Holmes Rolston [is] currently the most comprehensive and sensible philosopher in this field." In Crazy Mountains: Learning from Wilderness to Weigh Technology (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

James A. Nash (Theology, Executive Director, Churches Center for Theology and Public Policy, Washington): "the most impressive achievement in the field" (p. 240, *Yale Journal of International Law* 18(1993):235-249.

Anthony Weston, (Philosophy, Elon College): "the most complete account so far of the notion of intrinsic natural value, ... a subtle and complex study with ample use of biological examples." ("Before Environmental Ethics" in Susan Armstrong and Richard Botzler, eds., *Environmental Ethics: Convergence and Divergence* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993], pp. 96-103)

Susan Armstrong (Philosophy, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA): "a subtle and carefully worked out account of intrinsic value, ... a ground-breaking account." (*The Trumpeter* 8 (no. 1, 1991):29-34)


Robert E. Bowen (Environmental Sciences, University of Massachusetts): "a lucid, well argued, and detailed introduction to one of the most fundamental public policies of our time. ... Rolston brings insight, informed judgment, and reason ... a beautiful, richly textured, intimate, and knowledgeable examination of a set of questions that should concern us to a much greater degree than they apparently do." (*Conservation Biology* 2[1988]:404-405.)