



Character and Environment: A Virtue-Oriented Approach to Environmental Ethics

By Ronald L. Sandler

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Virtue ethics is now widely recognized as an alternative to Kantian and consequentialist ethical theories. However, moral philosophers have been slow to bring virtue ethics to bear on topics in applied ethics. Moreover, environmental virtue ethics is an underdeveloped area of environmental ethics. Although environmental ethicists often employ virtue-oriented evaluation (such as respect, care, and love for nature) and appeal to role models (such as Henry Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, and Rachel Carson) for guidance, environmental ethics has not been well informed by contemporary work on virtue ethics.

With *Character and Environment*, Ronald Sandler remedies each of these deficiencies by bringing together contemporary work on virtue ethics with contemporary work on environmental ethics. He demonstrates the many ways that any ethic of character can and should be informed by environmental considerations. He also develops a pluralistic virtue-oriented environmental ethic that accommodates the richness and complexity of our relationship with the natural environment and provides effective and nuanced guidance on environmental issues.

These projects have implications not only for environmental ethics and virtue ethics but also for moral philosophy more broadly. Ethical theories must be assessed on their theoretical and practical adequacy with respect to all aspects of the human ethical situation: personal, interpersonal, and environmental. To the extent that virtue-oriented ethical theory in general, and Sandler's version of it in particular, provides a superior environmental ethic to other ethical theories, it is to be preferred not just as an environmental ethic but also as an ethical theory. *Character and Environment* will engage any reader with an interest in environmental ethics, virtue ethics, or moral philosophy.

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Character and Environment: A Virtue-Oriented Approach to Environmental Ethics By Ronald L. Sandler Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1970722 in Books
- Published on: 2009-04-03
- Released on: 2009-05-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .49" w x 6.00" l, .65 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 216 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

A welcome addition to a much neglected corner of the ethical foundations of environmental ethics... Recommended.

(*CHOICE*)

A pleasure to read.

(Philip Cafaro *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*)

A challenging, original, worthwhile addition to the environmental ethics literature that is bound to pique curiosity and stimulate controversy.

(Michael Allen Fox *Environmental Values*)

A substantial contribution to both virtue ethics and environmental ethics.

(*Ethics*)

Sandler's work admirably succeeds... a welcome and much needed accomplishment.

(*Environmental Ethics*)

Review

I believe *Character and Environment* deserves to become a significant contribution to the fields of environmental ethics and ethical theory.

(Phil Cafaro, associate professor of philosophy, Colorado State University, and author of *Thoreau's Living Ethics*)

Arguing that earlier attempts to extend classical conceptions of virtue, eudaimonia, and moral considerability fall short of capturing the plurality of goods humans have reason to pursue, Ronald Sandler offers a pluralistic alternative on which we cannot call ourselves virtuous unless we cultivate dispositions of environmental sensitivity and concern that go beyond the scope of any classical virtue theory. Sandler's position will be a groundbreaking if controversial contribution to environmental ethics.

(Jennifer Welchman, University of Alberta)

Character and Environment takes virtue ethics out of the academy and into the wild, demonstrating that it is fitted to flourish and bear fruit even in this unfamiliar habitat. Naturally, this calls for some adaptations, and Ronald Sandler offers a new development of the virtue-oriented approach which is, at once, a substantial contribution to virtue theory and an exciting development in environmental ethics.

(Rosalind Hursthouse, University of Auckland, New Zealand)

Until recently, environmental virtue ethics has been more of a slogan than a real option in environmental ethics. With the publication of *Character and Environment*, that has changed. Ronald Sandler has given us the first well-developed virtue-theoretic approach to environmental questions. This is a major contribution to environmental ethics and a significant contribution to moral philosophy generally.

(Dale Jamieson, New York University)

About the Author

Ronald L. Sandler is an associate professor of philosophy in the Department of Philosophy and Religion and a researcher in the Technology and Society Research Group and the Environmental Justice Research Collaborative at Northeastern University.

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