Redefining Ecological Ethics: Science, Policy, and Philosophy at Cape Horn
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Abstract

In the twentieth century, philosophy (especially within the United States) embraced the notion of disciplinary expertise: philosophical research consists of working with and writing for other philosophers. Projects that involve non-philosophers earn the deprecating title of “applied” philosophy. The University of North Texas (UNT) doctoral program in philosophy exemplifies the possibility of a new model for philosophy, where graduate students are trained in academic philosophy and in how to work with scientists, engineers, and policy makers. This “field” (rather than “applied”) approach emphasizes the inter- and transdisciplinary nature of the philosophical enterprise where theory and practice dialectically inform one another. UNT’s field station in philosophy at Cape Horn, Patagonia, Chile is one site for developing this ongoing experiment in the theory and practice of interdisciplinary philosophic research and education.

Key words: environmental ethics; Cape Horn; applied philosophy; science policy

Introduction

In 1946 the Argentinean Navy introduced 25 pairs of North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) into Fagnano Lake on the island of Tierra del Fuego (54° S; figure 1). The Navy’s goal was to bolster the local economy through the development of a fur trapping industry. Commercial trapping never prospered, but the beavers did quite nicely. The lack of natural predators and the suitability of the terrain allowed the offspring of those hardy pioneers to spread far beyond the lake. The beaver soon established themselves throughout the region by migrating up streams, crossing highlands, and swimming from island to island. By the 1990s, 50 beaver had become more than 50,000.

The beaver have also had a marked effect on the landscape. Arial photographs of the Cape Horn region show areas of new marshland and meadows, and the tree canopy has been reduced along stream banks (Anderson, et al., 2006). Scientific research has documented changes in species composition (including more waterfowl), an increase in exotic species, as well as the increased retention and deposition of organic materials (e.g., Rozzi, 2004; Anderson et al., 2006). Moreover, the beaver are likely to continue spreading beyond their current distribution, northward throughout the Patagonian Archipelago region to Chiloe Island (42°S), and southward to the pristine Cape Horn Islands (56°S), the last land southward before Antarctica.
This much is clear, at least in outline. But when the question turns to what should be done about the beaver in southern South America, the issues shift from history and biology to politics, economics, and philosophy. Are exotic species inherently “bad”? (The spread of potatoes to Europe significantly reduced the consequences of warfare on civilian populations, since marauding soldiers were seldom willing to dig.) Should effort be expended in (possibly fruitless) effort to eliminate the beaver? Or should their presence be viewed as a positive improvement in the region? (The beaver has become a mascot in Puerto Williams, the southernmost town in the world.) In North America, landscape changes effected by beaver are considered appropriate and even attractive. In 2006, New York City celebrated when a beaver showed up in Central Park for the first time in 200 years. Is the beaver a pest in South America simply by virtue of being introduced by humans? If they had reached there on their own, would there be celebration? And what, after all, is an exotic species? Depending on the temporal scale, every species is exotic. Eighteen thousand years ago the northern plains of North America were covered by an ice sheet. Anything living there now – pre- or post-Columbian – can be counted as an exotic.

Such questions fall within the province of environmental ethics and philosophy. Unfortunately, since its founding in the 1970s, environmental ethics has struggled to find its place in the world. On the one hand, despite its decades-long effort to construct a sound theoretical foundation, the field still lacks academic bona fides. Environmental ethics — or, as it is increasingly called, environmental philosophy — does not qualify as “real” philosophy within
much of the philosophical community. Mainstream philosophers regarded it as too topical, insufficiently theoretical in its deliberations, and tainted by an impulse toward advocacy. On the other hand, within the larger worlds of environmental science, engineering, and public policy, environmental philosophers are often dismissed as being too abstract and too distant from real world environmental challenges. That is, if these groups pay environmental philosophy any attention at all.

In a 2005 essay in Conservation Biology Ben Minteer and Jim Collins address the second half of this failure. Focusing on the “ethical issues confronting ecologists and managers in their work,” they call for the development of an “ecological ethics” tool kit for scientists and policy makers for addressing real world problems. Enlisting the help of others, Minteer and Collins seek to develop a pluralistic framework for describing the moral responsibilities of ecologists and biodiversity managers to the public, the scientific and professional community, as well as to plants, animals, and ecosystems. This framework was to be developed by an interdisciplinary “deliberative community” of academic researchers and managers. Eventually, they hope, a database of ethical decision procedures will be developed by a growing set of case studies that show how “ethical questions emerge in the course of field and laboratory practices and about the moral claims that may be placed on them [i.e., scientists and policy makers] in a given situation” (Minteer and Collins, 2005: 1810).

Minteer’s and Collins’ proposal forms part of a growing movement within environmental philosophy, in which environmental philosophers seek to become more relevant to scientists, engineers, policy makers, and the public. This has been described as a “policy turn within environmental philosophy—a shift from philosophers writing philosophy essays for other philosophers to philosophers doing interdisciplinary research and working on projects with public agencies, policy makers, and the private sector.” (Frodeman, 2006 – p. 3). While attention to policy concerns date from the early days of the field of environmental ethics (see, for instance, Marietta, Jr., 1979), in recent years this orientation has grown much more common (e.g., Norton, 2002; Light, 2003; Callicott, 2005; Frodeman, 2003).

This essay argues that the goals described by Minteer and Collins can be strengthened by a philosophic critique of the institution of academic philosophy. Philosophers style themselves as radical thinkers, interrogating the most basic assumptions of each and every field, including their own. However, there has been a remarkable lack of thought about the status of the concept of ‘field’ or ‘discipline’ of philosophy itself. This paper challenges the current institutional assumptions about philosophy, how these assumptions affect both the training and employment prospects of graduate students in the field, and most generally the place of philosophy in society. In what sense is philosophy a “discipline”? Should philosophers think of themselves as experts in a way similar to those in other fields? Are those who work with non-philosophers engaged in “applied” philosophy, simply applying pre-created concepts? These questions will be explored through an account of the development of the world’s first field station in philosophy at Cape Horn (Patagonia), Chile.

Two Models of Institutional Philosophy

While Socrates walked the agora, speaking to judges, artists, and politicians, Leibniz worked as a philosopher and a diplomat, and Descartes crossed easily from philosophy to physics to mathematics, late nineteenth and twentieth century philosophy has embraced an entirely different notion of philosophy: philosophy as regional ontology. For more than a
hundred year, in a way that is in principle no different from the other disciplines, philosophy has worked on problems within a particular theoretical area or region—typified in the twentieth century by logic and the philosophy of science. This “regional” approach is simultaneously ubiquitous and unquestioned: ethicists write for ethicists, aestheticians for aestheticians, and Hegelians for Hegelians. Put simply, there is no active tradition of the public intellectual within academic philosophy—a role that as recently as Dewey was considered central to the work of philosophers.

The origins of this approach lie in Kant. It was Kant who sought to apply Adam Smith’s division of labor to philosophy:

All industries, crafts, and arts have gained by the division of labor, viz., one man does not do everything, but each confines himself to a certain kind of work that is distinguished from all other kinds by the treatment it requires, so that the work may be done with the highest perfection and the greatest ease. Where work is not so distinguished and divided, where everyone is a jack of all trades, there industry remains sunk in the greatest barbarism. Whether or not pure philosophy in all its parts requires its own special man might well be in itself a subject worthy of consideration. (Kant, 1981)

A few fought this trend toward academicization and specialization—for instance, William James—but by the turn of the twentieth century notions of disciplinary expertise had come to dominate academic philosophy. Despite the wholesale changes across philosophy in the intervening years—the rise and fall of logical positivism, the development of existentialism, phenomenology, and various forms of post-modern philosophy—specialization and expertise have only increased. Granted, it is possible to find a few doctoral programs that have specialized in applied philosophy. But strikingly, these programs have pursued what might be better called the theory of applied philosophy—careful accounts of real world problems, written with philosophers rather than other academics and practitioners in mind.

One can identify fledgling attempts at a developing an entirely different approach. In 2005 the University of North Texas (UNT) inaugurated its doctoral program in philosophy. While covering all the traditional areas of philosophy (e.g., ancient philosophy, epistemology, philosophy of science), the program is distinguished by two elements. First, UNT has the largest group of specialists in environmental ethics and philosophy anywhere in the world. Seven of its professors specialize in the field, and the department is the home of the first journal in the field, Environmental Ethics. Second, UNT is creating a distinctive (if not unique) doctoral program, one that not only trains philosophers to teach and conduct research within academia, but also to work with—and in—the public and private sectors, with scientists, engineers, and decision makers on the ethics and values inherent in societal problems.

The implications of this approach go well beyond environmental philosophy. The department is challenging twentieth century assumptions about what counts as “philosophy.” Two examples illustrate the point. First, the department has an ongoing research project into the nature of the peer review process in science and engineering. In 1997 the National Science Foundation (NSF) changed its merit review criteria for evaluating grant applications, replacing its four criteria with two—“intellectual merit”, and the “broader impacts” of the research. The broader impacts criterion has elicited controversy concerning both its meaning and implementation. Some scientists doubt that they are competent to judge the possible societal impacts of their research, and express concern that such demands threaten to tear down the wall that separates science from politics. UNT Philosophy is working with scientists, engineers, and
policy analysts to better understand what “broader impacts” could mean, and how to more effectively integrate ethics and values concerns with scientific research.

Consider secondly the March, 2006 workshop held by UNT Philosophy, as part of its efforts to broaden the range of what counts as philosophic research. The organizing question of the three day meeting “New Orleans, the Mississippi Delta, and Katrina: Lessons from the Past, Lessons for the Future” was, how did one of the greatest knowledge societies in history do such a poor job of planning for and responding to the long-anticipated arrival of a hurricane to New Orleans? The workshop’s working hypothesis was that New Orleans and Katrina illustrate the contemporary breakdown between the production and use of knowledge, and that this breakdown can be addressed by developing self-conscious, interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge. At its widest compass, this workshop was an experiment in developing a new philosophic approach—a case-based ‘philosophy of knowledge integration’ where scientists, engineers, artists, humanists, and decision makers work together to integrate their perspectives into an interrelated whole—something quite different from simply “applying” philosophy (more information about these efforts can be found at http://www.ndsciencehumanitiespolicy.org/katrina/).

Moreover, if knowledge is to be genuinely interdisciplinary it needs to do more than simply reach across campus units. Interdisciplinarity should move beyond the academy and enter into dialogue with the elements of the public sector, the private sector, and community and stakeholder groups. The portfolio of philosophy should include research into how to integrate knowledge effectively within the decision-making context faced by governments, business people, and citizens. Thus part of the UNT model of philosophy is promoting active, ongoing engagement with decision makers in the public and private sectors.

Philosophy in the Field

UNT Philosophy summarizes its approach by the neologism “field philosophy.” Applied philosophy implies that theorizing is prior and complete before the concepts are used; “field philosophy” emphasizes the importance of entering into settings where philosophic claims are tested by real world challenges, and that the insights reached in the field should reflect back upon one’s thinking with regard to the study. The department’s field station on Navarino Island offers perhaps the most prominent example of UNT’s approach to philosophizing (http://www.chile.unt.edu). Created in partnership with the Chilean public-private research-conservation initiative at the Omora Ethnobotanical Park (Rozzi et al. 2006), the UNT field station at Cape Horn serves as a base camp for explorations throughout the Patagonian region.

The Patagonian region of South America is defined as those areas south of 38° latitude, including both the archipelago region of Chile from Puerto Montt (41°S) south to Cape Horn (56°S) and the drier steppe region of southern Argentina. Because of its remoteness and the military tensions over sovereignty between Chile and Argentina, the area has largely escaped extensive development. Since the two nations signed a treaty in 1999 the region has been opened up to development and is now changing quite rapidly. The region is dotted with national parks (the best known of which is Torres del Paine in Chile), and in 2005 UNESCO approved the creation of the 6 million hectare Cape Horn Biosphere Reserve at the extreme southern tip of the continent (see figure 2). The challenge facing Patagonian society is how to manage its development in a sustainable manner both biologically and culturally.
Several factors led to the involvement of UNT’s Philosophy Department in Patagonia. The most central was the hiring of Ricardo Rozzi, whose background includes advanced degrees in philosophy and ecology, and expertise in the Cape Horn region since 1999. His role in the creation of both the Omora Ethnobotanical Park on Navarino Island and the Cape Horn Biosphere Reserve, and his long-standing relationship with local and national decision makers helped orient Rozzi’s research toward producing results relevant to non-academic audiences.

The Patagonian/Cape Horn region faces a daunting range of biological and cultural challenges. These include the introduction of fish farming, the spread of exotic species, a rapidly expanding ecotourist trade, the possibility of resource exploitation (e.g., mining, timber, hydroelectric dams), the loss of the largest extant temperate rainforest in the world, and regional climate change (Armesto et al. 1998; Rozzi et al. 2000; 2004). Coupled to these issues are a large number of environmental justice issues. Native peoples still inhabit the region, and frontier towns such as Puerto Montt increasingly suffer from negative social indicators such as poverty, broken homes, and prostitution.

Topics to be investigated across the Patagonian region include:

- The ecological, ethical, and political questions surrounding the development of salmon farming (Barros & Harcha 2004)
- How best to develop management plans for national parks such as Torres del Paine (Chile) and Los Glaciares National Park (Argentina) that are sensitive to the ethics and values of the park experience (Jax and Rozzi 2004)
• The different expressions that burgeoning ecotourism can take throughout the region, and the effect that these can have on both the natural and cultural environment of the region
• The management issues surrounding the introduction of exotic species (such as beaver) in the region (Anderson, et al. 2006)

The UNT model of philosophy is predicated on the belief that philosophy has two roles to play in society. First, philosophy can provide an account of the generally philosophical (e.g., the ethical, aesthetic, epistemological, ontological, and metaphysical) aspects of social problems. Second, philosophy (and more generally, the humanities) can offer an encompassing narrative of the relations between the various disciplines (e.g., ecology, biology, public policy, economics), knitting together these disparate concerns into a coherent whole.

In the post-war period philosophy has abandoned this second task. The reasons for this abandonment are open to debate. Surely one factor is the explosion of knowledge in the twentieth century, making attempts to gain a sense of the whole seem quixotic. John McCumber has recently suggested a second factor – the baleful influence of the McCarthy era, where philosophers were intimidated into shifting from outward-looking philosophy to inward looking philosophy (McCumber, 2001). Whatever the cause, it has become increasingly evident that what is needed is a countervailing movement to an every-increasing intellectual balkanization, a discipline that is inter- and transdisciplinary in nature. Philosophy is a natural claimant to this role.

The challenges surrounding the preservation and management of Chilean forest ecosystems offer a test of this dual hypothesis. Today, just one fifth of the world’s original forest cover remains in large tracts of relatively undisturbed forest, areas which have been called frontier forests. Only three percent of the world’s frontier forests are found within the temperate zone. The Archipelagoes region of southwestern South America, including the Magellanic sub-Antarctic evergreen rainforest ecoregion (49-56° S), has recently been identified as one of the world’s 37 most pristine ecoregions. The present and future use of this region raises key questions that require not only descriptions and predictions, but also normative accounts that can help people make decisions regarding environmental regulations and economic development policies.

Questions of ethics and values surrounding controversies in Patagonia have not been adequately defined and assessed, much less integrated into management protocols by decision-makers responsible for development. Philosophic accounts of issues such as instrumental and intrinsic value, the relation between aesthetic, symbolic, and scientific values, and criteria for how “natural” something must be to be worth conserving lie just below the surface of the day-to-day life of citizens and government officials.¹

¹ An international workshop, “Integrating Ecological Sciences and Environmental Ethics: Understanding and Conserving Frontier Ecosystems” held in March 2007 included scientists, policy analysts, philosophers, regional decision makers, and graduate students in all these areas. The workshop had two overall goals: to make progress in understanding the challenges of managing frontier forest ecosystems in Chile, and more generally to improve understanding of how to interweave ethics and values concerns with scientific information for improved decision making. Outcomes of this workshop include two edited volumes (one in English, Environmental Ethics, vol fall, 2008 one in Spanish; Refs) which will be shared with (and in part written by) local, regional, and national decision makers.
Philosophy as Interdisciplinarity

As noted at the beginning, there is a growing sense among environmental philosophers that the field needs to become more policy sensitive and policy relevant. But there is an important element that separates the work of Minteer and Collins (as well as others such as Marietta, Norton, and Light) from the work at North Texas. The approach taken by UNT Philosophy sees the goal of achieving policy relevance as being tied to developing new institutional types of knowledge production. To be specific: environmental philosophy must challenge the current institutional definition of what counts as philosophy.

This will require the development of a critical theory of interdisciplinary knowledge, and a self-conscious research program on the relationship between knowledge production and its use. The dual failure of environmental philosophy—where it finds itself largely irrelevant to both the philosophic community and to scientists, policy makers, and the public—is rooted in the fact that the field has framed its work within a disciplinary model of research. Since the founding of the field in the 1970s environmental ethicists have rarely if ever questioned their designation as philosophers. On the contrary, they have zealously sought to earn the title in the eyes of their colleagues. This has meant that they have accepted philosophy’s own uncritical embrace of the disciplinary model of philosophy.

This disciplinary paradigm is built on a concept of expertise that is itself dependent on a theory of external relations where it is possible to study one thing in isolation from the rest of the world. This is ironic, for at least since the time of the anthropologist Gregory Bateson (circa 1972) environmental problems themselves have been thought to demand that thinking cast itself in terms of an “ecological” model of intellectual activity that overcomes disciplinary boundaries. Make no mistake: each of the commentators mentioned above advocate inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches to research and education that unite philosophy and the humanities on the one side to science, engineering, and policy making on the other. But their focus has been on integration at the level of theory and to a lesser extent on case studies. This is all to the good; but these elements need to be matched with critical reflection on the institutional expression of philosophy. This means, among other things: significant time spent in the field (i.e., outside the classroom or library); training in the sciences and policy as well as philosophy; internships within the public and private sectors; and the philosophic interrogation of the limits of expertise and knowledge.

Such an approach runs against the tide of the last 150 years of knowledge production. Today one hears constant declarations of interest in interdisciplinary approaches to research and teaching. Nonetheless, disciplinary modes of knowledge production still dominate within the academy, as expressed in majors, ever-greater specialization, and the belief in an infinite research program. While its origins stretch back to Aristotle, the modern disciplinary framework for knowledge is a creation of the second half of the nineteenth century. In the United States, it was in the post-Civil War period that the college model of higher education was superseded by the research university dedicated to the idea of original research. As the 20th century dawned education became increasingly technical in orientation, as the production of new knowledge came to be seen as the all-purpose solution to personal and societal ills. Collegiate study had been dominated by recitations of Greek and Latin texts and the occasional lecture in natural philosophy and political economy, with no discussion, electives, or lab courses. The overwhelming emphasis was upon the preservation and transmission of established insights rather than upon the creation of new knowledge. The capstone course of a college education was
often an ethics class taught by the college president who placed the student’s college career within a larger context. While often delivered in a stultifying manner, the collegiate approach to education also expressed the belief that knowledge was both holistic and oriented outward toward the world. College graduates were not specialists. Rather, they were seen as having been provided with general skills and education that would help them in their future careers as clergy, lawyers, and politicians.

In 1869 Harvard introduced the elective system for undergraduates, creating an internal educational market where students chose the most popular classes, encouraging curricular innovation and academic specialization. In 1876 Johns Hopkins University opened, promulgating what it described as Germanic notions of specialization and research in the form of the PhD degree. At about the same time natural philosophy branched off into the various natural sciences, while the social sciences (sociology, economics, anthropology, psychology, and political science) were created to take a more empirical and positivistic approach to societal problems. The disciplines that became known as the humanities—philosophy, classical languages, modern languages, history, art, and music—formed a rump of knowledge made up of what was left over after the extraction of the other new specialties.

The beginning of the twentieth century thus marked the abandonment of the belief within academia that the highest type of knowledge is general or integrated knowledge. A few protested the rise of disciplinarity and expertise, but most humanists soon accommodated themselves to the new paradigm of knowledge. Forsaking the traditional goal of achieving a view of the whole, addressing perennial questions on the nature of truth, beauty, or justice, fields such as literature and philosophy now sought to train specialists whose role was to develop new insights in discrete areas of specialization.

At the heart of all this was the scarcely questioned promulgation of a new and ever-rising standard of expertise. Of course, expertise is only possible if a subset of things can be understood in isolation from everything else—a philosophy suited for mechanical phenomena rather than organic wholes. Within politics this philosophy of external relations has contributed to the growth of rule-by-knowledge elites. Representative government, dependent upon the notion of an educated and engaged citizenry, becomes problematic to the degree that decision making requires specialized bodies of knowledge. Within the academy, specialization has led to epistemological myopia, where a powerful understanding of the details of issues comes at the cost of integrating knowledge into a common thread that can be presented to intelligent but non-specialized audiences.

Today, talk of interdisciplinarity steadily increases in recognition of the fact that specialization is becoming increasingly problematic. Within the sciences, irreducibly complex phenomena such as ecosystem functioning or climate change resist partitioning. But scarcely noticed is the fact that this calls into question the assumptions underlying the belief in expert knowledge. The continuing fragmentation of intellectual labor—by one count, there are now more than 4000 academic specialties—further highlights the need for a research area (or “discipline”) explicitly concerned with understanding the relation of knowledge both across the disciplines, and between academia and the world at large.

Philosophy, once the location for such an approach, has over the last 60 years embraced professionalization and expertise. Philosophers now write for a hyper-specialized audience of colleagues in principle no different from the most microscopic of the sciences. This, it is thought, is real philosophy, and real rigor. The irony is that philosophy itself should be asking questions about the epistemology of expertise. Are there natural kinds of knowledge, or are disciplines the
result of artificial boundaries? What are the epistemological and political costs of expertise? Does expertise stymie the productive use of knowledge?\textsuperscript{2} Since the 1960s we have witnessed the development of new fields such as science studies, the sociology of knowledge, and science and technology studies meant to overcome the limitations of disciplinary knowledge. In each case they, too, have been drawn in by the gravitational pull of disciplinarity, spawning majors, journals, and professional societies.

At the same time that epistemological foundations and a philosophy of external relations have become dubious, the structure of knowledge production as well as the process of training, certification, and rewards remains deeply tied to concepts of specialization and depth. Undergraduate majors, the structure of graduate education (with rare exceptions, such as the NSF IGERT program\textsuperscript{3}), and research agendas are judged in terms of their ability to go deeper (that is, narrower) in their examination of a given topic. True, this specialization has stimulated the creation of new interdisciplinary fields such as biogeochemistry and neuroscience. But these border crossings consist of local or narrow interdisciplinarity, rather than the wide and deep interdisciplinarity that crosses the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities, and engages the public from the outset (Frodeman and Mitcham, 2007).

Specialization has been bought at the cost of the lateral connections between a subject and the rest of the universe of thought and action. This highlights the dominance of the laboratory model of knowledge, where it is relatively unproblematic to separate a bench experiment from the world at large. Even fields quite far from science have applied the assumption of external relations to their research. Thus literary scholars presume that it is more central to their field to continue to probe the details of the \textit{Prelude} than it is to examine how Romantic poetry expresses, illuminates, or critiques the experience of hikers or birders in national parks or wilderness areas.

There is no end to the quest for specialization, detail, or expert knowledge. The pursuit of specialization evidently needs no epistemological warrant. No one asks whether there is enough – or too much – knowledge. Rather than the result of a clearly established epistemological imperative, current standards for what counts as expertise reflect political and sociological factors, current intellectual fashions, or how much funding a given field is receiving. In environmental philosophy, there is always another book discussing the intricacies of intrinsic value, and another counter-argument to consider concerning the precautionary principle. Environmental philosophy can carve out still another path, becoming a test case for the nature and possibilities of interdisciplinarity.

The Future of Environmental Philosophy

Since the 1990s environmental philosophers have at regular intervals lamented the state of environmental ethics. Gene Hargrove, founding editor of \textit{Environmental Ethics}, noted in a 1998 editorial that contrary to initial hopes and expectations, environmental ethics had remained a small and insular clan of philosophers engaged in theoretical debates (Hargrove, 1998). In 2003 he raised this question again. In “What’s Wrong? Who’s to Blame?” Hargrove offered a brief account of why environmental ethicists do not play a larger role in decision making.

\textsuperscript{b} A recent edited volume, \textit{The Philosophy of Expertise}, by Robert Crease and Evan Salinger (2006) addresses some of these questions, but not within the context of a crisis of knowledge production.

\textsuperscript{c} NSF’s IGERT (Integrative Graduate Education Research Training) is an eight-year effort at funding graduate programs that overcome disciplinary limits. See http://www.igert.org/.
processes. Hargrove claimed that while environmental ethics has been successful in influencing the curricula of environmental science programs, no such penetration had occurred within environmental policy. Environmental ethics had been stopped cold by the philosophic presumptions of policy analysis, whose view of human beings had been shaped by economics. Understanding humans as self-interested rational calculators (i.e., *Homo economicus*) and assuming that values simply express subjective felt preferences has eliminated the need for ethical reflection (Hargrove 2003). Hargrove does not, however, offer any prescription for addressing this problem.

Hargrove’s comments elicited two brief responses, also printed in *Environmental Ethics*. Jasper Johns emphasized that environmental ethics has neglected the importance of philosophic storytelling (Johns 2003). Narrative constitutes an alternative epistemology much closer to the natural inclinations and understanding of those outside the academy. In a second response, Ralph Brown presses for the development of a more applied and topically based environmental ethics (Brown, 2003). Like Minteer and Collins (though not as well developed), Brown argued that environmental philosophy would be well-served by philosophers working more regularly with scientists and decision makers.

There are two striking aspects of this exchange. First is its occasional character. The debate – such as it was, it constituted a total of four printed pages – was conducted in the margins of the leading journal in the field, rather than being treated as a research area central to environmental philosophy. Second, there was no recognition that if these suggestions were to be more than ineffectual window dressing, their implementation will require challenging the assumptions underlying the institutional expression that philosophy takes.

The UNT Philosophy Department is making these questions central to its research and education. While not limiting its work to exotic locales, its field station in Cape Horn is a prominent site for ongoing research both linking questions of environmental philosophy with the concerns of scientists and decision makers, and investigating questions concerning the future of knowledge production in the age of Google. These two issues are intimately connected. The instantaneous accessibility of knowledge and the radical openness of the Web, where anyone can hold forth on any subject, threaten the traditional status of the academy as the site of knowledge generation. Web-based distance education and for-profit educators such as the University of Phoenix are early signs of an ongoing transformation in knowledge production. These two points – the reconfiguration of environmental philosophy as an interdisciplinary endeavor and the emergence of new forms of knowledge production—play off one another as figure and background: research in integrated environmental philosophy has value both in itself and as a source of case studies in the future of knowledge production and use.

The graduate program at UNT thematizes these questions, as well as others: How can philosophers effectively make philosophic points to non-philosophic audiences? Rather than only relying on the 45 minute lecture, is it possible to become adept at the 30 second, 2 minute, or 10 minute response as part of an ongoing dialogue? Call it “real time philosophic reflection.” Moreover, in terms of curriculum, the department strongly encourages graduate students to devote one chapter of their dissertation to a case study that places their theoretical work within a real-world context. Graduate students also must take at least one course in environmental science in addition to at least one course in environmental philosophy, and graduate courses often focus on scientific and policy perspectives—for instance, through teaching the history of the NSF, or about policy process at the state and federal levels. Finally, the department’s field approach
applies to domestic as well as to exotic locales—finding internships with federal, state, and local agencies, and plans to also reach out to the private sector in the Dallas-Fort Worth region.

These points, it must be emphasized, constitute an experiment. There may be no future to the idea of developing an alternative model of academic philosophy. It is unclear whether UNT Philosophy can attract students who find this approach attractive, whether graduates trained in this way will be able to land positions within and outside of the academy, and whether departmental research will actually be taken up by scientists and decision makers. But it is an experiment that is worth conducting, for both practical and philosophic reasons.

References


