

European dominated global economic system outsources nonlivable wages to “emerging economies,” so it outsources environmental damages. Dirty industries from which we financially benefit pollute elsewhere. Similarly, very tilted international economic agreements allow, or encourage, small (often corrupt) governments to sell water rights or fishing rights to foreign businesses or allow environmental damage by foreign (often U.S.-based) companies, all of which we often benefit from and all of which makes subsistence farming or fishing increasingly difficult in the poor world, thereby exacerbating the need for immigration. Equally damning, it is largely because of the increase in greenhouse gases caused predominantly by the U.S. and other rich nations that we can expect waves of environmental refugees, fleeing areas irreparably damaged by climate change. Evidently we are to turn them away despite our involvement in causing their plights. So it turns out that in vital cases species rights trump international human rights, and indeed requirements of reparations. These are undoubtedly complex issues, but given the gravity of the international human rights concerns involved, they deserve a considerably more serious treatment than they are given here. The omission of such a discussion appears to me to be the one serious problem of the book.

However, the book as a whole, including these controversial pieces, certainly provides thoughtful and important insights. In all, Cafaro and Crist have compiled an excellent and provocative book from which much can be learned. One can hope it is widely read.

Mark Coeckelbergh. *Growing Moral Relations: Critique of Moral Status Ascription.*

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 239 pages. ISBN: 978-1137025951 (hardcover). US\$72.25.

Reviewed by Frank Jankunis, University of Calgary

One might challenge an account of the moral status of non-humans (animals, robots, and others) by arguing that an alternative account better fits the facts, captures intuitive cases, or otherwise has a more persuasive argument going for it. Another strategy is to challenge a way of approaching the issue, to worry not about whether any particular theory of moral status and ascription is satisfactory but whether worrying about moral status and its ascription in the first place is satisfactory.

While most critical literature on moral status and its ascription falls into the first camp, Mark Coeckelbergh's critique falls squarely into the second. He argues for what he calls a deep-relational turn in our moral thinking about non-humans, a turn to the existential

and phenomenological relations constituting the conditions of the possibility of moral status ascription. In taking this turn, he argues, we not only come to understand what simultaneously enables and limits the approach to the issue in terms of moral status and ascription, we also see various ways in which that approach gets into trouble by neglecting the contextuality in which it is necessarily situated. A deep relational turn suggests an alternative understanding of the problem space. “If we take this [deep-relational] approach seriously,” he argues, “the normative question also changes: instead of asking about the moral status of entities, that is, what status we should ‘ascribe’ to them, we should ask what kind of relations we want to have with them” (197). This amounts, in Coeckelbergh's view, to asking whether we should live differently.

The book is divided into two parts. In Part 1, Coeckelbergh is concerned mainly with (a) explicating views belonging to the literature on moral status and ascription, and (b) cataloging some of their problems. He defines three categories of view. On the first, moral status and its ascription are a matter of the objects, not the subject, of analysis. This approach takes objects and their properties to be determinative of their moral status and its proper or improper ascription by subjects. As the “standard approach” (13), it is employed by such seminal contributors to the literature as Tom Regan and Peter Singer. In contradistinction is the second approach, according to which moral status is not a matter of the object and its properties but of the subject ascribing it. Under this heading we find virtue-based approaches to moral status and ascription. On the third, moral status and its ascription is at least partly a matter of the relations between the subject and the object. Under this heading we find the views of Mary Midgley, Mary Anne Warren, Arne Naess, and Ted Benton.

Readers will likely be disappointed with Coeckelbergh's approach to (b) if they expect the critical discussion to take the form of refutation. Coeckelbergh indeed mentions a catalog of problems with the views falling under each of the three categories, emphasizing in particular problems stemming from the modernity of their approaches. The severity of these problems is, however, left unanalyzed. This, along with the general brevity of some of the critical discussion, suggests he introduces the views and their problems not in the interest of a bona-fide assessment, but instead to motivate an alternative (non-modern, but not postmodern) approach to the issue.

In Part 2 of the book, Coeckelbergh is concerned mainly with (c) identifying the conditions of possibility of moral status ascription; (d) explaining how these conditions both enable and limit accounts of moral status and its ascription; (e) how such accounts get into trouble by not paying attention to them; and, (f) the implications of a deep-

relational turn to the ethics of non-humans. Chapters 6 through 11 are concerned mainly with (c) through (e). Relying primarily on work by anthropologist Tim Ingold and philosophers Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein, Coeckelbergh identifies various aspects of our being-in-relation—linguistic, social-cultural, experiential, technological, spiritual, and spatial relations—as the transcendental conditions of moral status and its ascription. In Chapter 7, Coeckelbergh argues linguistic relations provide the semantics and syntactic structure that makes moral status ascription distinct from gibberish, and defines the available moves. In Chapters 8 and 9, these linguistic relations are associated with a Wittgensteinian form of life, which is given social-cultural as well as biological-material and material-technological interpretations. Spiritual and spatial relations are then connected to forms of life in Chapters 10 and 11, respectively. Coeckelbergh argues theories of moral status and ascription get into trouble insofar as they suppose language is something we lay over an uninterpreted world; they theorize moral status and ascription from “a view from nowhere” (123) and presuppose that “there is a real, natural world independent from us” (140); they pretend “[m]oral status is inscribed on a spiritually and morally blank slate” (173); and they are alienated from actual spatial relations with non-human others by mapping moral status from an extra-terrestrial position (191–2).

Coeckelbergh completes his transcendental argument by attending to (f) in Chapter 12. We are left with “neither a *result*,” that is, a theory of moral status and its ascription, nor “a *method*” with which to generate one (196). Instead, and as mentioned above, the relevant issue transforms from a focus on moral status and ascription to a focus on the relations composing our form of life, on how we live and should live. This is not something to be changed by being thought about or conceptualized; rather, it is something to be changed by doing and living. Moral progress, then, can only be carried so far by the written word. What is needed is moral transformation or metamorphosis.

The discussion of Part 2 will be of interest not only to those readers concerned with the issue at hand, but also to readers interested in Heidegger and Wittgenstein scholarship. The depiction of Wittgenstein as a philosopher of life and not only a philosopher of language (especially in Chapter 8) is particularly provocative.

However, I think it is doubtful that theories of moral status and its ascription are as ignorant of the various relations Coeckelbergh identifies as he argues, and especially doubtful that they conceive of moral growth as anything other than altering these relations. When I go back and read Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation*, for example, I do not just see a call to appreciate sentience as morally relevant, as if that were the end of the matter; rather, I see a call to restructure at least our social-

cultural relations with animals, a call, that is, for a different form of life. This both presupposes an awareness of and theoretical concern with the existing form of life as well as an understanding that moral change is not just spoken but lived. In other words, I am not convinced a deep relational turn is as revolutionary as Coeckelbergh presents.

Notwithstanding this complaint, as a philosopher working on a relational understanding of moral status, I found this book stimulating. Coeckelbergh’s effortless movement between the literatures of diverse philosophical traditions is laudable. With regard to his presentation, Coeckelbergh relies heavily on italics to make subtle distinctions—sometimes in lieu of a needed explication—and tends to bounce back and forth between his argument and interpretive scholarship. These stylistic issues do not, however, overshadow an impressive contribution to the literature on moral status.

Alexandra Cook. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Botany: The Salutary Science.*

Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, University of Oxford, 2012. 436 pages. ISBN: 978-0729410557. US\$118.84.

Reviewed by Michael Marder, University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU) and Ikerbasque

We can learn a great deal about the history of Western philosophy from the attitudes of its most prominent representatives toward plants. Although Aristotle’s botanical manuscripts are lost, the extant references to plants in his works define these living beings as defective animals that “seem to live without sharing in locomotion or perception” (*De Anima* 410b, 23–4) and that should be wholly subservient to the purposes of animals and humans. St. Augustine may have wept under a fig tree, as he admits in *Confessions* (VII.xii.28), but he repents for having once shared the Manichean belief that “a fig weeps when it is picked, and that the fig tree, its mother, sheds milky tears” (III.x.18). Immanuel Kant described plants as “matter organized for reproduction though still without sensation” (*The Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 192), and thus grouped them with things undeserving of respect rather than with “persons.” Our understanding of Aristotelian teleology, Augustinian theology, and Kantian ethics is enriched when we follow their shared subterranean vein of devaluing plant life.

Of course, there are notable exceptions to the atrocious treatment plants have received at the hands of Western philosophers. Aristotle’s own student, Theophrastus, devoted much of his attention to the study of botany. My term for such philosophers is “phytophiles”—the lovers not