

# **On Environmental Philosophy: an interview with Eugene C. Hargrove**

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## **Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*Professor Eugene C. Hargrove, you played a very important role when the 1970s environmental movements started getting the attention of philosophers. But your main field of academic research at the time was Wittgenstein's philosophy. How did your environmental adventure begin?*

## **Eugene C. Hargrove:**

While I was writing my dissertation on Wittgenstein and ethics, I was also trying to protect a cave, Devil's Icebox, from water pollution, which I had been exploring for many years. Some environmentalists I was working with pointed out that I was a philosopher with a specialty in ethics and that therefore I should do something on environmental ethics that environmental activists could use. After a year of postdoctoral research on Wittgenstein in Vienna, Austria, I returned to the United States without a job. I applied for a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship in Environmental Affairs to do research on the history of

ideas behind the arguments that I and my opponents had used during my efforts to protect the cave. While I was doing research at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., I noticed that the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) was supporting curricula development institutes on technology and the humanities. I visited an administrator at the NEH and suggested that the NEH consider doing environmental ethics as well. The administrator told me that I needed to do an interdisciplinary book on environmental ethics as a basis for curricula development. It occurred to me eventually that creating a journal on environmental ethics would be a more effective way to generate material on the subject and, improbably as it may seem, I managed to bring the journal into existence with the assistance of the University of New Mexico and an environmental organization in California. I had enough money to put out one issue. Happily, that issue generated enough subscribers for the journal to continue. It is now in its thirty-sixth year.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*You are referring to Environmental Ethics, the journal you created in 1978 and that became one of the most influential journals in the field and the locus of papers and debates that have shaped the research on Environmental Philosophy over the years. As the Editor of the Journal, what have been your major concerns and challenges over these three decades of activity?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

The idea that there could be a subject called environmental ethics within academic philosophy was difficult to imagine in the 1970s. Part of the reason was that the history of philosophy, which is taught to people who become philosophy professors, is accidentally anti-environmental. According to ancient philosophy, there is a

metaphysical problem: the world as we know it (the world of change) is an illusion and the world as it really exists is permanent, indestructible and unchanging. There is no room in this perspective for nature preservation, for the world doesn't need preserving if it is indestructible and unchanging. In modern philosophy, there is an epistemological problem. A key issue, generated by Descartes, was whether we could know that the world existed. Likewise, it is difficult for concerns about preserving the world to come up and be taken seriously if it is not clear it even exists. Because this anti-environmentalism is tacitly built into the history of philosophy, my teachers from my graduate program had a very hard time imagining that environmental ethics could become a field. At the same time, dealing with these philosophical issues were likely to be considered so esoteric to environmentalists that articles might seem silly. Thus, especially in the early years of the journal, there was always the possibility that the journal would fail because it was too philosophical for environmentalists and had no practical application and was not philosophical enough for philosophers and too practical to be considered real philosophy. There was also the problem of how to make the subject relevant to environmental policy makers, a problem which still continues. Except for biologists who sometimes go into policy making, most policy makers, who come out of economics, public administration, and the social sciences, have no background in philosophy at all and are little inclined to pay attention to the subject. They are heavily influenced by economics, which claims (falsely) to be independent of philosophy and ethics. Actually economics is a naïve blend of utilitarianism, pragmatism, and the emotivism of logical positivism.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*The world is now well aware that, being a global issue, most of the environmental problems need to be solved at a political level. Politicians, for example, know that the Environment is a compulsory subject in any election campaign. How do you see this close relation between Ethics and Politics as far as the Environment is concerned?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

As Aristotle once put it long ago, ethics is from the standpoint of the individual, and politics from the standpoint of the group. Aldo Leopold in his famous essay, "The Land Ethic," concluded similarly that the same moral characteristics that make people moral individuals also make them good citizens. Leopold also thought that there were limits to what government could and should do and he thought that ethics was needed on the part of individuals to fill in the gap between what government could do for them and what needed to be done. Mark Sagoff, in his book *The Economy of the Earth*, in addition, has pointed out that there is a contrast between what we ought to do as citizens and what we ought to do as consumers. Economists typically do surveys to determine public policy on the basis of willingness to pay. However, it usually turns out that our consumer preferences are different from our citizen preferences. According to Sagoff, basing policy on consumer preferences is a category mistake. The best way to decide policy may be the democratic alternative whereby the decision will more likely depend on the good of the group or society (in which ethics via politics may play a more dominant role) rather than the good of the individual (which may be more strongly focused on personal economic self-interest and consumerism).

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*You are also the Director of the Center for Environmental Philosophy (CEP), an important research unit founded in 1989 and now at the University of North Texas. Are CEP's main activities directed toward academic purposes or do you also have other goals, such as the social and political clarification of public opinion on the Environment?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

The journal was originally owned by the University of New Mexico and an environmental nonprofit organization in California. They had a one-year operating agreement. At the end of the year, they were unable to agree as to what the continuing agreement should be. As a result, they informed me that if I created a new nonprofit organization, they would give it to the nonprofit. I therefore created the nonprofit Environmental Philosophy, Inc. which came into existence in the fall of 1980. It became the owner of the journal. The journal moved to the University of Georgia in 1981, and after many years there, it was decided that the nonprofit needed a center, not just a journal office. Funding sources generally consider journals to be bad small businesses that need outside financial handouts to survive. However, a journal that belongs to a center is generally considered a valuable asset. The creation of the center therefore increased the chances that the nonprofit could obtain grants should it decide to apply for any. The center came into existence in 1989. It is essentially the "Center for Environmental Philosophy, Inc." although "Inc." is not included in the name. One year later the center and the journal moved to the University of North Texas and after one more year, the center was recognized as a center of that university as well.

The center's purpose is to serve as the administrator of a variety of activities. The first is to publish the journal. In addition, the center

has established a small book reprint series to keep important books in print in environmental philosophy when mainstream publishing companies no longer consider them economically viable. It occasionally organizes conferences and workshops both on its own and as a co-sponsor, and it serves as a research center with the university for visiting scholars around the world. Most recently the center has begun working with the Sub-Antarctic Biocultural Program of the University of North Texas and the University of Magallanes in Chile to help promote research and educational activities at the southern tip of South America in the UNESCO Cape Horn Biosphere Reserve, including a lot of cooperative work on a number of editorial projects that ultimately are published by university presses and other publishing companies. The center regularly co-sponsors meetings of the International Society for Environmental Ethics in the United States and has been a co-sponsor of conferences in China and Africa.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*Over the last few years, you have welcomed regional approaches to Environmental Philosophy, based on the biocultural perspective, such as the Sub-Antarctic Biocultural Program, a project developed by Ricardo Rozzi and his team from the Omora Foundation and the Omora Ethnobotanical Park, in Chile, that you just mentioned. Do you think that this should be the future for Environmental Philosophy?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

Ricardo Rozzi's grandfather was a pharmacologist who studied the value of indigenous medicine in Chile. Although initially Rozzi was a specialist in music composition, after he was asked to make a presentation on his grandfather's work, he was so intrigued by what his grandfather had done that he began to wonder what the indigenous people of his country knew about traditional ecological

knowledge. As a result, he changed his career course and got a master's degree and a Ph.D. in ecology and a master's degree in environmental philosophy. The focus of his study is the southern tip of South America, the UNESCO Cape Horn Biosphere Reserve, and the tribe that he is most interested in is the Yaghans, with whom Charles Darwin had more contact than any other indigenous group. Rozzi has demonstrated that the Euro-Chileans in his country are not very familiar with the actual ecology of their country. Most can only name plants that are common imports in nearly all Westernized countries around the world, such as apple trees. The indigenous people, in contrast, know a great deal more about the plant and animal life of their country but are not in a position to use that knowledge and are rarely asked about what they know. As a result, their possible impact on environmental policy goes unexplored. This kind of approach is not *the* future of environmental philosophy but it is a part of it. Because indigenous traditional knowledge is likely to be different everywhere around the world, the impact on environmental philosophy will remain local most of the time.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*This brings to mind the concept of "glocal": we know that we have to think globally, but act locally. Do you think that we should strive to build an Environmental Philosophy that would be suitable for every human being... or this would be an impossible (or even undesirable) task? In environmental issues, is it impossible to establish universal normative claims that impose specific duties to all human beings towards nature?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

I am not familiar with the term *glocal*. But the slogan "Think globally, act locally" is a familiar one. For most people, the most that

they may be able to do is act to protect their local and national environment. To go beyond, other than in terms of donations, they would have to be working for an international environmental organization or working in some capacity for their government on international environmental matters. While a universal environmental philosophy or ethic might be desirable, it is probably impossible. To be acceptable, an environmental ethic needs to be in tune with the local culture. If it is not, it will be rejected by the people as colonizing, imperialistic and totalizing. American conceptions of national parks and wilderness, for example, have been rejected in Asia and Africa for these reasons. The best approach, in my view, is to develop an environmental ethic out of traditional cultural elements in each country. It may well be, however, that very similar elements will appear and if they do, they could become part of an international or universal position. To be acceptable throughout the world, all of its parts would have to be justifiable from multiple perspectives. It is, of course, possible that some crosscultural borrowing might occur but such borrowing is unpredictable in advance. For example, Chinese aesthetic perspectives probably influenced European nature or landscape aesthetics in the late Middle Ages. The early informal gardens were often called Chinese gardens. Now, however, nature aesthetics is a fully Western perspective and that borrowing has been forgotten.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*You develop some of these ideas on your 1989s book Foundations of Environmental Ethics. What can we consider to be the philosophical foundations of your environmental philosophy? Who are your main philosophical influences?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

I am most seriously influenced by the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. His philosophical efforts involved untangling philosophical confusions and helping seemingly irreconcilable problems disappear. I have often been accused of being a pragmatist, and there is some justification because Wittgenstein himself was influenced by William James, who was a pragmatist. Environmental pragmatism is, however, primarily influenced by John Dewey, whose work has an ideological influence on economics, the social sciences, and environmental policy with which I am opposed. I do not agree that all value should be regarded as instrumental value or use value.

My book is related closely to arguments that arose in practice when I was trying to protect the cave that I mentioned early. I decided to do historical research on the origins of the various arguments involved. In a Wittgensteinian sense, this research helps to untangle philosophical confusions because many of the arguments are treated as factual statements but are based on assumptions that have been forgotten. By bringing out these assumptions, which often are not consistent with reality today, it may be possible to make seemingly irreconcilable problems disappear. For example, my opponents were arguing from a land ownership view that permitted them to destroy what they owned without consideration of society as a whole. This view, it turned out, came out of ancient Germanic land-use practices already in existence when the Romans first met them around 100 B.C., was spread across northern Europe with Germanic conquest, and taken to North America by the English after 1600. The view was supported by John Locke's theory of property in England and by the writings of Thomas Jefferson in the United States. The problematic assumption is the claim that landowners have the right to own land based on their use of it because no one is disenfranchised since supposedly there is more usable land on this planet than humans can

ever use, an assumption that is not true today and probably has never been true.

My book is also influenced by a fairly standard critique of Western philosophy. My own teachers were initially bewildered when they learned that I was beginning to work in a field I called environmental ethics. Unlike other academic disciplines, professional philosophy remembers its own history and teaches it, and the general features of this Western philosophy have inhibited the ability to think about the environment. As I mentioned, Ancient Greek philosophy considered the world we actually live in to be an illusion and held that anything that really existed (below the level of perception) was permanent, indestructible, and unchanging. In the context of such a philosophy, environmental preservation could not develop. Similarly, modern Western philosophy, thanks to Descartes' efforts to prove that we can know the world exists, produces the same result. Although philosophers accept that nature preservation is necessary, their training in the history of philosophy makes it difficult to formulate philosophical arguments about the environment without considerable rethinking.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*This book has brought important contributions to some debates on Environmental Philosophy. One is the “intrinsic versus instrumental value” debate. Do you think that today this is still an important controversy to be raised or everything as already been said about it?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

I suppose that this is a fundamental debate that I have long been involved in. In the 1970s, environmentalists had generally become convinced that considering all value to be instrumental or use value was an important cause of the environmental crisis. One of the first

efforts in environmental ethics was to resolve this issue. J. Baird Callicott has developed a subjectivist nonanthropocentric conception of intrinsic value, Holmes Rolston, III and Paul Taylor have developed objectivist nonanthropocentric conceptions, and Bryan Norton, as a pragmatist, has developed a view which in some way attempts to make the instrumentalist view work without intrinsic value (he claims he has gone beyond this issue). My position is a weak anthropocentric intrinsic value view, which attempts to reconcile these theories and, following Wittgenstein, make the issue disappear. Although adults are largely inoculated by the pragmatism of current environmental policy against intrinsic valuing, one long-term solution would be to teach elementary school children the word *intrinsic value* so that they do not grow up thinking that their inclinations to value things for their own sake are simply “how they feel” in the sense of the emotivism of logical positivism. If children were not taught tacitly that all value is instrumental, then intrinsic value would not be a problem for them later in life.

It is possible that enough has been said about intrinsic value versus instrumental value in philosophical circles, but it is an issue that will never go away at least in English-speaking countries, for environmentalists and the general public tend not to want to value nature merely in an instrumental way, but they have trouble using the term “intrinsic.” The attempt to substitute “inherent” has not been successful either. They are happy to some degree talking about non-instrumental value and about something being valuable for its own sake, but they still want a term that is not simply “*not* instrumental.” They easily fall into rights talk saying that species or ecosystems or other things ought to have rights. While this rights talk shows how strongly they feel emotively, they usually cannot justify it because it is not possible to figure out what the rights of nature ought to be. Rights are the protection of interests and it is far from clear what the

interests of a species or an ecosystem might be. Simply adding up the interests of the individual members of the species or the ecosystem doesn't work very well. The term "intrinsic" has as long a history as "instrumental." It was not problematic until the pragmatists decided to try to reduce values down to instrumental value alone. There is no good reason that the term *intrinsic value* cannot be returned to beneficial use as it was before the beginning of the twentieth century. I do not know if this problem can be resolved, but if it can, as noted above, it will probably have to be taken care of at the elementary school level by providing children the vocabulary for a balanced value system so that they will not as adults have to vent their frustration with their official value system by lamenting that nature ought to have rights.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*And how do you position your work regarding another controversy in environmental philosophy: the anthropocentrism versus non-anthropocentrism debate?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

There is some confusion about the term *anthropocentrism*. It is sometimes assumed that, especially among the general public at least in English-speaking countries, *anthropocentric* also means "instrumental." *Anthropocentric* can mean, alternatively, "centered on human concerns." When *anthropocentric* is taken to mean "instrumental," it excludes the idea that things in nature can be intrinsically valuable. J. Baird Callicott takes the alternative meaning and claims that we can value things for their own and that therefore we are being nonanthropocentric, not focused only on human concerns in such cases. I hold that we are able to value in this way but that doing so is still an "anthropocentric" or "human" perspective,

which does not have to be narrowly focused on instrumental value. Nearly everything can have some instrumental value, but it can also have intrinsic value. I call this view “weak anthropocentric intrinsic value” in contrast to so-called “strong anthropocentrism,” which only values nature instrumentally.

Things in nature can be instrumentally valuable, intrinsically valuable, or both. A wide variety of insects are instrumentally valuable to birds but not to humans. Since they are not valuable to humans, they can be said to be nonanthropocentrically valuable. Organisms that use the environment instrumentally can be said to be intrinsically valuable (to themselves) and are thus also nonanthropocentrically valuable. Organisms that do things that benefit humans instrumentally (such as songbirds when they eat insects) may be said to be anthropocentrically instrumentally valuable (to humans) and may be said to be anthropocentrically intrinsically valuable (because humans like to listen to songbirds sing). In the second case we are valuing songbirds in much the same way we value works of art.

It is possible to view aesthetic valuing as either intrinsic valuing or instrumental valuing but viewing it instrumentally can lead to unfortunate consequences. If a natural object is considered instrumentally valuable because humans looking at it instrumentally receive pleasure (which is then intrinsically valuable), managers can conclude that increasing the number of visitors will increase the value of the object. Doing so, however, may damage the natural object, gradually reducing its ability to instrumentally produce pleasure. Because this kind of value requires human visitation to be valuable at all, protecting the object from visitation is not considered an option. I call this the “aesthetic consumption of the natural object.” Because art museums consider the art object to be intrinsically valuable rather than instrumentally valuable, they normally remove the object from visitation temporarily or permanently to protect it and they do so

without any reduction in its official aesthetic value. Beautiful things are not aesthetically valuable because they give us pleasure. Rather they give us pleasure because they are beautiful.

A graduate student pointed out to me recently that the concerns about anthropocentrism are somewhat misguided. Feminists are concerned about male domination and speak about androcentrism, but they do not consider androcentrism to be the cause of the problem. Rather they identify the problem as patriarchy. Likewise, as my student noted, the cause of the problem is not anthropocentrism but rather anthroparchy. Focusing on anthroparchy, one could say that it is the cause of strong anthropocentrism, according to which nature is only valuable instrumentally to the degree that it benefits humans. In contrast, (weak) anthropocentrism can be regarded simply as a natural consequence of the fact that we humans are doomed to perceive nature from a human perspective, not knowing how to perceive nature from the perspective of some other creature, except speculatively. Weak anthropocentrism, which is not the result of anthroparchy, need not focus entirely on instrumental human benefit. There is room for intrinsic valuing of nature as well.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*And just how do you bring together the weak anthropocentrism position and the ethical consideration for animals? As we know, at first Environmental Ethics was very close to Animal Welfare Ethics. But, at some point, the later endeavoured to become an autonomous applied ethics. In 1992, you even edited a book called The Animal Rights/Environmental Ethics Debate, from an environmental perspective.*

### **Eugene C. Hargrove:**

When the journal *Environmental Ethics* began publication, it was generally assumed that animal welfare ethics (basically animal liberation following the writings of Peter Singer and animal rights following the writings of Tom Regan) and environmental ethics would be part of the same ethic. There were two primary problems. First, animal welfare ethics is focused on the individual and environmental ethics is holistic, focused on species and ecosystems rather than the individual members of the species and the ecosystems. Second, there were two different groups of animals, which were treated differently: wild animals and domestic animals. The close relationship of animal welfare ethics and environmental ethics came apart with the publication of a paper in the winter 1980 issue of *Environmental Ethics* by J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair". Callicott argued that while animal liberation could be considered an extension of human ethics, environmental ethics, specifically in terms of the land ethic of Aldo Leopold, was conceived in a different way, holistically, and was not therefore an extension of human ethics. In addition, he pointed out that pain, the key to animal liberation, was merely information and was not good or bad in a utilitarian sense, since pain was good when it informed that organism of physical damage to its body. As a result of the paper, a new society and publication were created to focus on animal welfare ethics. Neither the society nor the journal has survived and there continues to be a gap between animal welfare ethics and environmental ethics.

Some reconciliation is possible due to the fact that the animals involved in close relation to humans and those in the wild are different, requiring for the most part separate ethical approaches. Rights of some kind are feasible for domesticated animals since they are usually treated as individuals with names and with human expectations about their behaviour, which the animals themselves

mostly understand. These rights, however, are generally weak rights and would not therefore be a good model for human rights. For the most part, rights do not work for wild animals because attempting to enforce them would lead to impossible conflicts between the individuals in an ecosystem. Because animals eat each other in the wild, a right to life for each individual is unworkable and if achieved would result in unnatural nature.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*In your books and papers you mention both Environmental Ethics and Environmental Philosophy. Do you see any differences between the two?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

There is not a great deal of difference between the terms. When I started the journal, there was no specific name for the field. I named the journal “environmental ethics” and it became the name of the field. I chose *environmental* instead of *ecological* because I wanted to deal with more than environmental science. I chose *ethics* because I wanted the journal to be more narrowly focused on ethics and values issues. However, the name “environmental ethics,” though good for my journal, is not completely accurate for the field since the field includes elements of nearly all of philosophy except perhaps for logic and philosophy of mathematics. In the introduction of my book *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* I noted that the field should have been named “environmental philosophy” to take into account such subfields as aesthetics, philosophy of science, social and political philosophy, and even metaphysics and epistemology. The name “environmental ethics” is nevertheless an important name for the field for certain groups of people. In non-academic circles, this name works best because the general public thinks that ethics is important and

philosophy is boring and esoteric. Among philosophers not working in the field, “environmental ethics” can be perceived as a pop or even cult term, so for professional philosophy contexts “environmental philosophy” is better. A philosophy editor in a publishing company once told me that he could sell anything with the word *ethics* in the title, but it was more difficult with the word *philosophical*.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*What about Moon preservation, another one of your concerns in Environmental Ethics? Do you think that this is something that people should be concerned about? Being an innovative field of expertise, since the environment is usually identified only with the Earth space, do you get strong reactions from the public when you mention this topic in your talks?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

In 1985, I organized a conference on ethical issues on the space program with a National Science Foundation grant. The presentations became a book called *Beyond Spaceship Earth: Environmental Ethics and the Solar System* a year later. I was motivated by the views of an artist/astronomer, William Hartmann, who pointed out in an article I published in the journal that the giant booster organizations such as the Planetary Society and the National Space Society in the United States might turn into environmental activist organizations if the space agencies did things that the members of these organizations did not approve of. The Sierra Club made this transition in the first half of the twentieth century. I held a second NSF conference a few years ago and spoke on how we humans should deal with extraterrestrial life if we find any. Afterward I was asked by NASA to speak on the preservation of non-biological extraterrestrial environments. At that meeting I learned of the plans for establishing a base on the Moon, which

involved strip mining the Moon for hydrogen fuel. A football field size area more than one meter deep will be required for each lift off. I think that there will be a lot of aesthetic interest in the Moon in the future if we establish Moon bases there and strip-mining land that the people of Earth have come to love through photographs and films may create the environmental activism that Hartmann warns about. I think therefore that all space agencies should be careful what they do before they carelessly undermine support for their activities on the Moon. I have recommended that the visible side of the Moon become a UNESCO World Heritage Site and that strip mining take place only on the backside of the Moon. Just about every natural area painted or photographed by a major artist or photographer in the nineteenth century ended up becoming a national park or national monument. I think the situation will be much the same on the Moon and on other celestial bodies in the Solar System. Since the Moon and the rest of the Solar System are currently reasonably safe from intemperate resource exploitation, the general public finds it interesting, like other topics about outer space, but is not yet overly concerned.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*You have also other interests, more of a fictional nature, since you were an expert on J. R. R. Tolkien's writings long before The Lord of the Rings became a blockbuster. Is there any connection between Tolkien's writings and Environmental Philosophy?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

There are connections between Tolkien's writings and nature preservation. The bad or evil people in the books are intent on damaging the environment. It is also possible to enjoy the adventure as a nature excursion. I have known couples who read the books to each other once a year just to reexperience the journey. There are also

two background figures in the story who represent approaches to nature preservation. The first is Tom Bombadil who manages the Old Forest next to the Shire and occasionally harvests water lilies for his lady. He controls the plants by singing to them their special songs. The other is Fangorn, an Ent, a creature who can walk and talk but otherwise looks much like a tree. He manages his forest, which is full of creatures called Huorns, like him but less rational and sentient. The Ents are all male but once had wives called Entwives, who left their husbands to engage in agricultural experimentation and were all killed accidentally during a battle in the Second Age. The Ents spoke to plants to interact with them and enjoy them. When the Entwives spoke to them, they wanted the plants to obey.

My interest in Tolkien's writings, however, is not primarily environmental. Tolkien was originally interested in developing a mythology for England similar to Finland's *Kalevala* which was instrumental in making the Finns realize they were a nation in the nineteenth century. Tolkien's long unpublished manuscript *The Silmarillion* became the background history for his two best-known books, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. This background material is introduced sparingly and without full explanation much as similar material would be introduced into a work of nonfiction. In addition, *The Lord of the Rings* is written as if the main character Frodo wrote an account as he remembered it with the help of his friends, complete with some misunderstandings about what actually happened. As a result, the book is basically an artificial work of nonfiction, open to considerable speculation and interpretation about what really happened, giving it the feel of a story that actually took place and permitting the kind of analysis that sometimes occurs when studying a real work of nonfiction. This kind of scholarship has no real point but it is fun.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*After thinking and writing about all these concepts, either of a fictional or of a non-fictional perspective, what do you think should be the role of Environmental Philosophy when we are facing a real and very serious environmental crisis? In 1971, John Cobb's book was already asking if it was too late... do you think that it is too late now, in 2014, or is there still hope?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

Cobb's book, which I reprinted in a revised edition, shows that not very much progress has taken place. His book could be written today with most of the same points, but with just different, more current examples. Environmental philosophy has not had as much influence as is normally common for other emerging fields. There have been a number of reasons. One is that mainstream philosophy itself was unhappy about the emergence of applied philosophy and has not been very supportive of such fields. Although some Ph.D. programs in philosophy teach environmental philosophy to some degree, it has generally been the result of a few faculty members in those departments. No major mainstream program in philosophy chose to commit itself by establishing a major focus. The most important program over the years has been at whatever university that I happened to be with the journal *Environmental Ethics*. The University of Lancaster in England did compete with the UNT program for a time, but then dropped its focus altogether and most of the environmental specialists dispersed to other universities. In contrast, Ph.D. programs in history quickly picked up environmental history so that within only a few years there were thirty or so programs with such a specialty. A bigger problem has been that, for the most part, only biology has been interdisciplinarily supportive of environmental philosophy. It has always been easy to find biologists writing on the subject, and

departments in biology have often been supportive. To the degree that biologists have taken jobs in environmental policy, environmental philosophy has found a way into that area. However, environmental policy is dominated by graduates of economics, public administration, and the related social sciences who have discouraged their students from taking courses in philosophy generally and environmental philosophy specifically. Economics is a strange blend of utilitarianism, pragmatism, and the emotivism of logical positivism, but it claims to be independent of philosophy and ethics. Milton Friedman, for example, began his book, *Essays in Positive Economics*, with the claim on the first page and first paragraph that if economics attends only to what is and forgets about what ought to be it can then be considered a science. Even at my own university economics, the business school, public administration, and the social sciences discourage their students from studying environmental philosophy. If the people entering environmental policy continue to be almost completely ignorant of the field, it will continue to have little influence.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*And however, despite this not so hopeful scenario, you still defend Beauty as the ultimate environmental value... is beauty mankind's last stronghold?*

**Eugene C. Hargrove:**

Aldo Leopold wrote a book called *Game Management* in 1933 in which he argued that it was possible to isolate variables in the environment and thereby fix problems that developed. However, within only a few years, Leopold became disillusioned with the possibility of such efficient manipulation of the environment. He concluded that whatever someone did often had unforeseen consequences because variables could not be isolated as in physics

and chemistry. I call this environmental therapeutic nihilism, paralleling the pessimistic belief in medicine in the nineteenth century that there were limits to medicine and that the attempts to cure patients often made them worse.

In "The Land Ethic," Leopold wrote that "A thing is right because it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community." He only said that it "tends" because the results of any effort was to him unpredictable. The three factors are helpful but not precise because Leopold thought that we were ignorant about a lot of what is going on in nature and always will be. Although he mentions integrity first, it is unlikely that Leopold knew how to flesh out its application. Only recently has a philosopher, Laura Westra, tried to make the term more precise. Stability is also problematic because of its interconnection with diversity. Early Leopold thought that diversity created instability and he favoured monoculture. Later he switched to the idea that diversity promoted stability. It is likely, however, that the relationship depends on factors specific to each ecosystem, perhaps what might be called "characteristic" diversity. Ecologists in North America generally consider diversity to be promoter of stability. However, those working in tropical systems often claim the diversity of those systems makes them unstable and fragile. In my view, beauty is the strongest of the three. A person familiar with an ecosystem can often tell if an ecosystem is healthy or not on aesthetic grounds even though he or she may not be able to know what the causes of the problem may be just as people can often tell if someone is ill without knowing the nature of the illness.

Beauty is also historically significant with regard to nature preservation. Europeans did not think that nature was beautiful in the Middle Ages. Love of nature was considered to detract from love of God. In the early modern period, the relationship of God and nature changed so that it was possible to love God through nature or love

God as one with nature. People often came to capitalize the “N” in nature to stress this closeness. The aesthetic appreciation of nature developed out of the aesthetic appreciation of landscape painting and photography. This development led directly to nature preservation in the middle to late nineteenth century in the United States. Most natural objects painted by a major artist or photographed by a major photographer in the nineteenth century are now national parks or national monuments, beginning with Yosemite and Yellowstone. Integrity and stability are not part of a similar history of ideas. Moreover, aesthetic appreciation of nature is not just limited to the extension of landscape painting and photography, for scientific information about nature, its scientific interest, also produces aesthetic experience and thereby promotes nature preservation. As we learn more about nature in terms of its natural beauty and its scientific interest, we will come to care about the ever new aspects of nature on this planet and beyond it, and want to protect them.

**Magda Costa Carvalho:**

*Of course! And that is really what Environmental Philosophy is all about. Professor Eugene C. Hargrove, thank you so much for your time and generosity.*