Philosophy of the City and Environmental Ethics

During the past several years, environmental ethicists, philosophers of technology, philosophers of race, and several others have presented their research at the Philosophy of the City Research Group's conferences. The environmental philosophers are working to understand specific dimensions of cities, including but not limited to food systems, energy, waste, and water. The significance of these philosophers attending such conferences is that they can inform and learn from colleagues who work in neighboring areas within the discipline. Such exchanges can improve how we think about cities.

For instance, in a recent article, Lewis Gordon's "Cities and Citizenship," *Kettering Review* 34, no. 1 (2017): 36–43, pointing out that philosophy of the city is gaining momentum within the academy, he holds that when people hear of this field, environmental responsibility often comes to mind. Yet, he argues that cities are about much more: they are about power. Gordon is right to argue that the scope of topics in philosophy of the city should go beyond ecological issues. However, it would be of great benefit to apply Gordon's thought to environmental concerns. They are also about power. We have to consider ecological affairs as one area of interest among several others, and learning about them can help us gain insights into the nature of cities' power structures. This point is of paramount importance because they shape urban experience and the quality of people's lives. The unfortunate reality is that most environmental philosophers showed little interest in cities until recently.

For instance, beginning in the 1990s, several environmental ethicists made calls for their contemporaries to focus on cities. Unfortunately, those calls were generally ignored, with few exceptions. In this journal, during 1998, for example, in Alastair S. Gunn's "Rethinking Communities: Environmental Ethics in an Urbanized World," *Environmental Ethics* 20 (1998): 341–60, he showed that environmental philosophers should pay attention to urbanization, providing reasons why cities should be of interest. Also in this journal, Roger J. H. King, in "Environmental Ethics and the Built Environment," *Environmental Ethics* 22 (2000): 115–31, cogently held that the built environment deserves a proper place within environmental ethics. Not long after these articles, Andrew Light, Avner de-Shalit, and Robert Kirkman brought attention to the topic, doing excellent work, revealing that environmental philosophers can make meaningful and insightful contributions to understanding cities and urban affairs. Despite these nudges, however, urban issues remained on the periphery for several years, but this situation has now changed.

Today, there are enough philosophers (of all stripes) researching cities that

their collective efforts show that the city is an intradisciplinary area that now has a proper place within the discipline. Michael Menser and I first saw signs of this reality when we organized the first Philosophy of the City Conference in 2013 at Brooklyn College. This event featured numerous presentations that focused on a wide range of topics, and several papers had roots in environmental ethics, including urban wildlife, sustainability, and urban agriculture. The calls from Gunn, King, Light, de-Shalit, and Kirkman were finally being answered. Since then, many environmental philosophers have found a community at conferences held by the Philosophy of the City Research Group. In turn, urban environmental issues have maintained a presence, with contributions from philosophers such as Paul Thompson, Irene Klaver, and Steven Vogel. Yet, this group has also provided a home for up-and-coming philosophers who are influenced by environmental philosophy, including Taylor Stone's work on urban lighting and Sanna Lehtinen's research on aesthetic sustainability. The articles in this special edition of *Environmental Ethics* are no exception. They exhibit how the field of environmental ethics has valuable contributions to make toward how we understand cities. Considering that cities face challenges such as climate change and political turbulence, the need to have a philosophical analysis of them will increase. Bearing in mind that several cities now have sustainability offices, municipalities are tasked with creating solutions to environmental problems. The articles in this special issue underscore this notion.

For example, Brian Elliott, in "Urban Agriculture, Uneven Development, and Gentrification in Portland, Oregon" argues that although the city receives several environmental accolades for its efforts towards sustainability, there is room to critique its work in urban agriculture. I argue that "cohousing" faces environmental-justice challenges when it brands itself as sustainable. Diane Michelfelder, continuing a debate on useful frameworks for thinking about our moral responsibilities to urban wildlife, employs phenomenology to teach us valuable lessons about these obligations. Approaching a different issue for nonhumans, Samantha Noll examines the city's roles in addressing the complicated topic of nonhuman ecological refugees and wilderness areas affected by climate change. While these issues deal with the present and the future, Jason Matteson reveals that historical societies such as those that existed in Chaco Canyon still offer lessons for today's cities when it comes to environmental decision making. Considered as a collective glimpse into the vast array of issues that would benefit from an environmental-ethics perspective, the philosophers in this special issue reveal that they, along with other researchers versed in this field, can help guide our thinking about several environmental dimensions of cities.

Shane Epting*

* Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Box 455028 Las Vegas, NV 89154–5028; email: shane.epting@gmail.com.