

Storey, "Naturalizing Heidegger: His Confrontation with Nietzsche, His Contributions to Environmental Philosophy"

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Book Review

Storey, David E. *Naturalizing Heidegger: His Confrontation with Nietzsche, His Contributions to Environmental Philosophy*. State University of New York Press, 2015.

Naturalizing Heidegger: His Confrontation with Nietzsche, His Contributions to Environmental Philosophy is an ambitious and thought-provoking work by environmental philosopher David E. Storey. Deftly navigating between the heterogeneous terrains of environmental ethics and Heidegger scholarship, Storey provides the foundations for the greening of Heidegger. To do so, Storey engages in careful exegesis and philosophical appropriations of Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Nietzsche in an attempt to “build a nonreductive naturalism that can support an environmental ethic” (Storey 2015, 1). Storey develops novel interpretations of underappreciated Heideggerian works with respect to environmental ethics, treading on untouched grounds by drawing primarily upon early Aristotle work as well as the post-*Being and Time* Nietzsche lectures. He argues as to why these texts are not only important from a philosophical standpoint, but also from an existentialist perspective: our nihilistic and technological attitude toward nature affects not only our safety and biodiversity loss, but also the very meaning of our being. Storey thus presents a unique reading of Heidegger, one that is highly relevant in the crisis-laden times of the Anthropocene.

The argument for the naturalized Heidegger unfolds in the following progression: in the first chapter, Storey sketches the development of Heidegger’s thought before *Being and Time*. He then examines and criticizes the contemporary environmental accounts that hinge on the later works. In chapter two, Storey argues as to how the main themes on life and nature from the early lectures on Aristotle and the *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, though ultimately abandoned by Heidegger, establish a more secure foundation for a naturalized ecophenomenology. For they are less anthropocentric and have affinities to a continuum-view of the value of life, where nonhuman entities admit of varying degrees of moral standing. In the next move, Storey criticizes how Heidegger’s moves “toward the transcendental approach in *Being and Time* and toward poeticizing in Heidegger’s later thought constitute a wrong turn in the philosophy of nature” (Storey 2015, 83). Finally, he claims that a supplementation of Nietzsche’s naturalistic philosophy of life and critique of nihilism—as Heidegger himself entertains but abandons in his lectures on Nietzsche—bodes well for demonstrating the environmental significance of Heidegger’s philosophy in sketching a continuum-view of the value of life that avoids the ambiguities of the late works. Though he covers a lot of ground in this book, Storey successfully unifies themes on life for environmental ethics vis-à-vis Heidegger

and Nietzsche by tracing guiding motifs in their works that converge in a non-reductive naturalism.

Regarding its place in the secondary literature, while many prior environmental readings of Heidegger rely on the later, poetic works, Storey takes a different point of departure and draws from the early works and the Nietzschean lectures in his reading. To situate its position in the contemporary debates, we might place Storey's book alongside the biophenomenological works of thinkers like Hans Jonas and Evan Thompson (Storey 2015, 193), as it is particularly sensitive to the importance and relevance of scientific, evolutionary, and biological aspects of phenomenology. By pushing against older environmental interpretations of Heidegger handed down from biocentric or deep ecological traditions, such as is found in the works of Michael E. Zimmerman, Storey's book makes an important contribution to the field of continental approaches to environmental philosophy. Because *Naturalizing Heidegger* is both exegetically sound as well as existentially relevant, this work will undoubtedly be of interest to a variety of readers—simultaneously beckoning eco-conscious citizens, environmentalists, and those interested in the fringes of continental and environmental philosophy beyond the narrow sphere of Heidegger scholarship.

One interesting aspect of *Naturalizing Heidegger* is the way in which it draws upon a family of related views in order to reconstruct a green Heidegger. Storey synthesizes Heidegger's early non-Kantian aspects (Storey 2015, Chapter 2) and Nietzsche's naturalized account of drives, evolution, and animal directionality (Storey 2015, Chapter 7) with influential thinkers like the philosophical biologist Jakob von Uexküll and Charles Darwin in relation to Heidegger's concept of *Umwelt* and Nietzsche's concept of animal (in Chapters 4 and 7, respectively). The ultimate purpose of this synthesis is to present a plausible alternative pathway of Heidegger's intellectual development: had Heidegger taken his early Aristotelian views of life and Nietzsche's evolutionary approach to valuation seriously instead of turning to the history of being and poetic dwelling, his thought would have been much more helpful for a determinate environmental ethic.

The penultimate chapter is a particularly well-executed example of the way in which Storey draws upon other thinkers for the greening of Heidegger. Here, the emphasis is on the relationship between Heidegger's early works apropos elements of Nietzsche's life-affirming naturalism. Specifically, Storey utilizes three aspects of Nietzsche's thought that help him develop a Heideggerian approach to environmental ethics. He sees Nietzsche's view on living beings, his emphasis on evolution, and his value-laden non-reductive naturalism as antidotes to the later Heidegger's so-called anthropocentric mysticism. For example, on Storey's reading, despite late Heidegger's focus on dwelling, *physis*, and earth, his concentration on the history of being creates an insuperable abyss between humanity and nonhuman nature. This schism—

as well as Heidegger's failure to engage in normative endeavors—precludes any possible value-laden hierarchy of being, such as is found in the biocentrism of Paul Taylor's *Respect for Nature*. Nietzsche's life-affirming naturalism, by contrast, "recognizes life as an autonomous kind of being irreducible to physiochemical properties and mechanistic causality. It holds that humanity is continuous with animal life...finally, it rejects the value-free vision of nature found in modern science, holding that all living things value in some sense" (Storey 2015, 173). These Nietzschean views, argues Storey, have affinities to the early Heidegger's emphasis on life and biophenomenology prior to his *Being and Time* distinction of world from nature. Thus, pairing them with Nietzsche points to a vision of a Heideggerian environmental ethic that is much more plausible than the mystical poetic works.

Although it succeeds admirably in synthesizing the environmental insights of the early Heidegger with his reading of Uexküll, Aristotle, and Nietzsche, one aspect in which *Naturalizing Heidegger* falls short pertains to its one-sided reading of the Kantian influence in Heidegger. First, Storey appears to suggest that Heidegger errs as a proto-environmental philosopher with his shift into Kantianism during and after *Being and Time* (see, for example, Storey 2015, 104-05). It is worth noting that many do not consider Heidegger to be Kantian in *Being and Time* in the first place. However, even if we grant the Kantian influence, it need not be conceived as anathema to environmental ethics. Indeed, many scholars such as Toby Svoboda (Svoboda 2016) and Allen Wood (Wood 1998) articulate Kantian duties to non-rational nature. Second, he seems to think Kantianism is problematic because it precludes the ascription of moral standing to non-human animals, though scholars like Christine Korsgaard (Korsgaard 2004) belie this. Thus, Storey seems to conflate Kantianism with anti-environmentalism, the former of which—though commonly assumed—does not necessarily entail the latter.

Additionally, the book accuses environmental interpretations of the late Heidegger—as well as Martin Drenthen's (Drenthen 2002) fusion of an eco-Nietzsche with the late Heidegger works—of inexorably leading to a Kantian sublime view of nature, where nature is thought of as the unfathomable, indeterminate Other (for example, see Storey 2015, 73 and Storey 2015, 78). Storey submits that this trajectory is a deadlock for environmental ethics because it either ends in nihilism or else it remains too mystical for practice. Feeling awe and wonder at nature's majesty, for example, can fail to incite people toward environmental protection. In this regard, though sublimity is helpful for combating the nihilism of scientific (reductive) naturalism, "it cannot help us move forward" (Storey 2015, 222) on Storey's account. The worry of the impasse of sublimity (the supposed entailment of late Heidegger's Kantian inheritance) is, however, unwarranted. Though this is a common complaint in the literature of environmental aesthetics, it is not necessarily true that Kantian sublimity is unhelpful for environmental ethics. To be sure, the account of the sublime from Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is anthropocentric due to Kant's claim of humanity's superiority over nature (Kant 1987, Ak. 5:264). Nonetheless,

because of Kant's explicit connection of sublimity to morality (Kant 1987, Ak. 5:262), the sublime may indeed be helpful for the ethics of climate change. When we experience the sublimity of climate change through hurricanes, for example, we are reminded of our moral capacities to resist our immoral and unsustainable ways that have engendered climate change in the first place. Thus, sublimity may be connected to the ethics of climate change, which is certainly an aspect of environmental ethics. It should be noted, however, that this criticism does not necessarily affect the general argument of the book, which draws upon Aristotelian and Nietzschean influences to offer a naturalized Heidegger for an environmental ethic.

To conclude, Storey's appropriations of Heidegger are timely with regard to our current predicaments vis-à-vis anthropogenic climate change: Heidegger's philosophy has an essential role to play by highlighting our problematic and nihilistic prejudices in the Western metaphysical tradition. Nihilistic values, such as the bifurcation of humanity from nature and our technocratic attitude toward beings, pervade our unsustainable economic, cultural, and ethical horizons, coloring our prejudicial attitudes to humanity and nature. In this regard, Storey's push for the greening of Heidegger is both of interest to readers spanning the spheres of continental and Heideggerian exegesis, and insightful for its significance in showing how a new interpretation of Heidegger has its place in the age of anthropogenic climate change.

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