Angela Kallhoff, Marcello Di Paola, and Maria Schörgenhumer, eds. *Plant Ethics: Concepts and Applications.* Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge 2018. xiii, 237 pages,

When approaching an environmental book entitled *Plant Ethics*, many of us will immediately start thinking about the "intrinsic value of dandelions," "should a tree fern have moral standing?" and "genetic modification." Questions such as these *are* treated in this book, but there is considerably more to the topic as well. The book is a collection that stems from a research project based at the University of Vienna, led by professor Angela Kallhoff. She is one of a relatively few scholars who have seriously considered the possible need for plant ethics as a distinct undertaking. (Her own contribution in this book approaches plant ethics from a neo-Aristotelian idea of plant flourishing, in which the good of a plant is relative to the particular sphere of human-plant interaction in which it belongs.)

The book is divided into two parts. The first part on concepts and approaches is intended to set the stage, while the second part covers a number of rather different applications. Space does not allow discussion of every chapter, but I mention some that are both representative and interesting.

In the first part of the book, Gianfranco Pellegrino provides a well-structured critical overview of plant axiology with a particular focus on extensionism, that is, the idea that plants have value because they share some property that is known to be value-grounding in some other entity.

Ronald Sandler takes issue with the charge that ascribing inherent worth to plants is absurd. Following Paul Taylor, Sandler holds that a plant having inherent worth amounts to plant having interests or a good of its own and that moral agents ought to care about those interests for plant's sake. In this context, one might wonder how relevant it is to debunk the absurdity of such charges, because even if the ascription of inherent worth to plants is not *absurd*, it may nevertheless be highly *implausible*.

Sabine Odparlik investigates the development of the concept of the dignity of plants in the German-speaking world. She traces the appearance of the idea of the dignity of plants in the German-speaking world to the discussion on the permissibility of genetic engineering (p. 66). (Unsurprisingly, the issue of genetic engineering looms behind quite a few of the book's chapters.) In the current environmental ethics discourse, in particular within academia, English is the *lingua franca*. However, this should not lead us to overlook that discussions are also carried out in other languages and that potentially interesting conceptual differences might be lost in translation—or perhaps even lost due to absence of translations. Therefore, initiatives such as Odparlik's are most welcome.

Maria Schörgenhumer discusses the virtues that are cultivated (pun intended) in caring for plants. There are interesting parallels here to agrarianist ideas that would certainly merit further study.

The second part of the book starts with a chapter by Robin Attfield. Sticking to

the biocentric outlook that he has embraced for decades, he explores forest ethics, moving from individual plants and noting that forests are considerably more than the sum of their parts.

Paul B. Thompson, well known to agricultural and food ethicists, contributes a paper arguing that we should include cultural services among plant risks considered within the framework of risk assessment.

David E. Cooper starts his contribution with an insightful comment: that moral thinking about plants is nothing new, but the way we talk in recent plants ethics is restricted by the use of mainstream philosophical terms and concepts such as "rights," "intrinsic value," and so on. A bit like G. E. M. Anscombe in *Modern Moral Philosophy*, Cooper wants to rephrase the question into something more like "How should a person conduct his or her life with respect to plants?" (p. 178).

In the last chapter of the book, Barbara Mazzolai and Pericle Salvini introduce their exciting experimental "plantoid"—a plant-inspired robot.

Many of the chapters are very readable and would also work well for teaching purposes, for instance, as discussion material on courses in environmental philosophy, even for undergraduates. Sandler's chapter is an excellent example. However, with some variance in length, most of the contributions are still rather short. The obvious benefit of this is that it gives room for many perspectives in the volume—the drawback being that some chapters might be *too* short. Occasionally it is difficult to grasp the arguments and assess them. (An interesting contribution such as Mark Coeckelbergh's exploration of relational ethics involving nonhuman entities, for instance, relies heavily on references to previous work.) This is a pity for a volume attempting to introduce a new field. The drawback is likely to be most problematic for readers who are not already experts in environmental philosophy, such as most undergraduates. The experts, on the other hand, are likely to complain about the chapters' brevity, making some of the arguments appear superficial. This brevity makes one wonder who are the intended readers of the volume. It would perhaps have been a good idea to allow some of the authors to use considerably more space, while keeping other contributions in the shorter format, or perhaps leaving some out altogether. Doing so would also have made for a more dynamic volume.

In the introduction, the editors claim that this book, in contrast to other works in environmental ethics, "presents and explores plant ethics as a field of inquiry that has its own argumentative resources at both a theoretical and a more applied level" (p. 3). Despite a book with several interesting contributions, I must admit that I remain unconvinced whether it is a worthwhile undertaking. What many of the chapters show, instead, is that there are considerable resources that deal also with plant ethics issues already available within "mainstream" environmental ethics.

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