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Simon Hailwood

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## Alienation and Nature in Environmental Philosophy

Many environmental scientists, scholars and activists characterize our situation as one of alienation from nature, but this notion can easily seem meaningless or irrational. In this book, Simon Hailwood critically analyses the idea of alienation from nature and argues that it can be a useful notion when understood pluralistically. He distinguishes different senses of alienation from nature pertaining to different environmental contexts and concerns, and draws upon a range of philosophical and environmental ideas and themes including pragmatism, eco-phenomenology, climate change, ecological justice, Marxism and critical theory. His novel perspective shows that different environmental concerns – both anthropocentric and nonanthropocentric – can dovetail, rather than compete, with each other, and that our alienation from nature need not be something to be regretted or overcome. His book will interest a broad readership in environmental philosophy and ethics, political philosophy, geography and environmental studies.

SIMON HAILWOOD is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Liverpool. He is the author of *Exploring Nozick: Beyond Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1996) and *How to be a Green Liberal: Nature, Value and Liberal Philosophy* (2004). He is also Managing Editor of the journal *Environmental Values*.

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*For Jan and Verity*

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I owe special thanks to my colleague Professor Gillian Howie, who passed away in 2013 after a long struggle with cancer. Gill was inspirational in many ways. In relation to this book she convinced me to take more seriously than I had been doing the insights of Hegel and Marx. Had she seen the final result I am sure she would still think I fail to take them sufficiently seriously. I deeply regret the end of that discussion and miss her kind and critical presence. I owe special thanks also to Logi Gunnarsson for the discussions we have had since he was a colleague at Liverpool several years ago. A central argument of this book is that, contrary to popular opinion, alienation from nature can be a ‘good thing’, something to be welcomed to some extent in some ways and in some contexts. The initial impetus for this thought was discussion in the light of institutional developments that we could not avoid and could not wholly condemn, yet could not fully identify with either. We thought it not obvious that the resulting state of alienation, if such it was, should



be considered something one *ought* to seek to overcome, insofar as one could. The next thought was that perhaps this notion of a condition of alienation that, while not unqualifiedly positive, is not something one ought to overcome (or maybe something one ought not to overcome) could be generalized to apply to areas of ongoing philosophical interest to us. In terms of my own interests, for example, it might characterize certain conceptions of the relation between citizen and state. And it might bring out aspects of our relation to nature ‘as other’, a topic I had been working on for a while. I am not sure that I would have followed up this line of thought had it not been for Logi’s interest in and encouragement of it.

My thanks also to Hilary Gaskin and Rosemary Crawley at Cambridge University Press for their kind and patient assistance, and to Andrew Dobson and an anonymous reviewer who read and commented helpfully on the highly imperfect draft manuscript. I must also thank my family – especially my wife, Jan – for their loving support during the writing of this book, not least because I think it was an alienating experience for them at times, and not always in a particularly good way.

It is usual at this point to say that none of the above bears any responsibility for what follows. And of course none of them would agree with all of it; some will disagree with most – if not all – of it. So I hereby absolve them. Having said that, they did at least encourage me to some extent. It is for the reader to decide whether they were right to do so.

In various parts of the book I expand upon previously published material. Chapter 2 includes material from ‘Landscape, Nature and Neopragmatism’ published in *Environmental Ethics* (29 February 2007, pp. 131–49), and Chapter 3 includes material from my review of Peter Cannavò’s book *The Working Landscape*, published in *Organization and Environment* (22 February 2009, pp. 262–5). With the permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, Chapter 5 draws upon ‘Disowning the Weather’, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* (14 February 2011, pp. 215–34), and the Introduction and Chapters 2–6 include material from ‘Alienations and Natures’ published in *Environmental Politics* (21 June 2012, pp. 882–900). With the permission of Springer Science + Business Media, Chapters 6 and 7 include material from ‘Nature, Estrangement and “the Flesh”’, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* (17 January 2014, pp. 71–85).