From the Editor

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The current number features a special section entitled “Ideas for How to Take Wicked Problems Seriously,” and a section called “Author Meets Critics” in which four authors raise issues concerning Paul Thompson’s book, “Agrarian Vision: Sustainability and Environmental Ethics,” followed by a reply from Paul Thompson.

It also includes four other articles, a discussion article, and two book reviews.

The special section contains a guest editorial and three papers about “wicked problems.” The articles came together in response to a 2009 call for papers that was issued for recent research on wicked problems and the environment. In the previous number of the journal (25/3), we published an article by Matt Ferkany and Kyle Powys Whyte, one of the guest editors of this special section. That article was concerned with improving how we understand “the structure of deliberative activities for addressing problems in natural resources, climate change, and food systems that have wicked dimensions, such as deep value disagreements, high degrees of uncertainty, catastrophic risks, and high costs associated with errors.” In the introduction to the current special section, guest editors Kyle Powys Whyte and Paul B. Thompson trace this idea of wicked environmental problems back to Donald Ludwig, who was referring to a “1973 paper in the urban planning literature by Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber. Wicked problems are not simply complex. According to Rittel and Webber, there are ten aspects to these special challenges that should be respected and grappled with by those who seek to respond to them. They begin by noting that every way of formulating a problem (e.g., as economic, as environmental, as social, etc.) implies some solutions (e.g., carbon trading, regulation, international aid, etc.) and excludes other solutions from being considered. The ontology of problem formulation has implications for the epistemology of problem response. Thus, to describe climate change as an

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economic problem means that one has already limited oneself to particular economic solutions to addressing it. Because proposed solutions are so closely tied to problem formulations, disagreements among stakeholders who foresee themselves as being impacted differently by the solutions can take the form of ontological debates. Unlike problems where there is little disagreement about its basic formulation, *wicked problems* are characterized by deep ambiguity in the ontological assumptions and metaphysical categories used in their articulation.” Whyte and Thompson then go on to identify ten aspects of this type of problem.

The first paper in this special section is by Bryon Norton. In “Ways of Wickedness: Analyzing Messy Problems with Messy Tools,” “Norton presses the question whether there are possibilities for rational discourse leading to cooperative action in the face of wicked problems.” And he argues that the wicked problems framework suggests better ways of pursuing policy analyses using the language of *boundary critique*.

In the second paper (Sustainable Engineering Science for Resolving Wicked Problems), Thomas Seager, Evan Selinger, and Arnim Wiek “take up the challenges of the wickedness of sustainability problems for envisioning reform of current engineering science and technology practices.”

The third paper is by Paul Thompson and Kyle Powys Whyte. In it they “explore whether the wicked problems framework should be taken seriously by environmental philosophers.”

The Author Meets Critics section is introduced by Raymond Anthony, then is followed by four papers raising issues with Paul P. Thompson’s book, *Agrarian Vision: Sustainability and Environmental Ethics*. The critics include Elizabeth Graffy (Agrarian ideals, sustainability ethics, and U.S. policy: a critique for practitioners), Erin McKenna (Feminists and Farming: A Response to Paul Thompson’s *The Agrarian Vision* For Food in Bloom Conference, Bloomington, IN), Lee A. McBride III (Agrarian Ideals and Practices: Comments on Paul B. Thompson’s *The Agrarian Vision*), and Raymond Anthony (The Ethics of Food for Tomorrow: On the Viability of Agrarianism—How Far can it Go? Comments on Paul Thompson’s *Agrarian Vision*). It concludes with Thompson’s reply to these criticisms.

As Raynond Anthony notes in his introduction to this section, “The contributions below are the offspring of an *Author Meets Critics* panel that convened in June 2010 in Bloomington, IN, to discuss Paul B Thompson’s (2010) *The Agrarian Vision: Sustainability and Environmental Ethics*. At the *Agriculture, Food and Human Values: Food in Bloom*, Erin McKenna, Lee McBride, Elisa Graffy and myself, were some of the first people to explore and critically examine publicly with Professor Thompson some of the central tenets of his text. Paul Thompson—one of AFHV’s founding members and past president—sheds light on the ways in which *agrarian philosophies* have significantly influenced discourses around both food and environmental ethics.”

The Author Meets Critics section is followed by two articles on climate change (Anders Nordgren, Ethical Issues in Mitigation of Climate Change: The Option of Reduced Meat Production and Consumption; and Onyekuru, N. A. and Rob Marchant, Nigeria’s Response to the Impacts of Climate Change: Developing

Resilient and Ethical Adaptation Options), an article on the EU DAISIE research project, and an article on a life worth living for livestock. These are followed by a briefer discussion article by Michel Korthals that raises issues with the idea that reducing meat consumption is a way to reduce climate change.

The article by Anders Nordgren, *Ethical Issues in Mitigation of Climate Change: The Option of Reduced Meat Production and Consumption*, discusses the ethical issues relating to climate change and focuses on mitigation to the extent that it is called by livestock production. Nordgren argues that technical solutions in the livestock sector are not adequate so reduced production and consumption are morally required, and this needs to be steered politically, preferably through a tax on meat consumption.

Michiel Korthals, in his discussion article, “Emotions, Truths and Meanings regarding Cattle: Should We Eat Meat?,” takes issue with the claim that meat consumption increases global warming. He describes the FAO report and Seinfeld’s *Livestock’s Long Shadow*, and he reports on Nico Koffeman’s 2009 *Meet the Truth*. In concluding, Korthals favors S. Fairlie’s *Meat. A Benign Extravagance* position that there are many forms of animal and people friendly livestock management styles. Korthals highly recommends “Simon Fairlie’s book to everyone interested in the debate on agriculture and the environment. Here someone is speaking about animals, food, environment, and farmers with respect for his opponents, on the one hand vegetarians and vegans, and on the other hand intensive agriculture prophets, by not moralizing, but by focusing on their arguments.”

Nordgren’s article is followed by an article by N. A Onyekuru and Rob Marchant on Nigeria’s response to the impacts of climate change. They call this response rudimentary and not properly coordinated and they claim that “National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy could help address this situation by guiding the integration of climate change adaptation into government policies, strategies, and programs, with particular focus on the most vulnerable groups and the agricultural sectors. There is an urgent need to adopt abatement strategies that will provide economic incentives to reduce the risk from disasters, such as developing agricultural practices that are more resilient to a changing climate.”

The next article is by M. Zinesis. In “EU DAISIE research project: Wanted—death penalty to keep native species competitive?” The author “discusses the evaluation approach for classifying ‘100 of the Worst’ IAS in Europe by the EU DAISIE research project.” Zinesis concludes that “neobiota evaluations are not comprehensive when they refer mainly to the successful expansion and competition with native species into available ecological niches. A comprehensive assessment of the impacts of neobiota on biodiversity and humans needs to take into account the different values of biodiversity as mentioned in the preamble of the CBD.”

The final article (Quality Time: Temporal and Other Aspects of Ethical Principles Based on a ‘Life Worth Living’) is by James Yeates. It concludes with an endorsement of an overarching principle that that no animal should be unreasonably caused to be, or allowed to remain, in a position of having a prospective life worth avoiding.