Social Justice and Measuring a Policy's Environmental Benefit

Benjamin Howe

Many environmental philosophers and activists assume that a policy's consequences for social justice and its ecological benefits ought to be measured separately. Recently, I've challenged this idea in two brief essays: a critique of the philosopher Philip Cafaro that was published in 2011 in the journal *Environmental Ethics* and a review essay, forthcoming in the same journal, on how environmentalists should evaluate family planning policies. In both papers, I argue that a policy that undermines foreign relations by violating a widely-held belief about social justice cannot be considered good for the environment. To address anthropogenic climate change, environmentalists need to forge international agreements whereby countries agree to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Given that such agreements depend on good foreign relations, a public policy that substantially undermines these relations cannot be considered environmentally beneficial, at least over the long run.

My goal is to develop the argument that I've begun to sketch in these papers by including, among other things, a lengthy analysis of the way in which future international environmental agreements are likely to depend on the sort of international cooperation that involves mutual sacrifice. I also plan to expand my critique of Cafaro and several well-known environmental activists.