Celia Deane-Drummond is both a scientist and a theologian. She obtained her Ph.D. from Cambridge University in plant physiology before studying theology at the University of Manchester, earning a Ph.D. in systematic theology. She is currently Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame and has research and teaching interests in Roman Catholic theology, and in particular creation and nature, environmental ethics, genetics, and end-of-life questions.

In her work, Deane-Drummond seeks to bring into conversation scientific understandings of nature with Christian ethics, informed by her Roman Catholic tradition, especially virtue ethics (i.e., ethical decisions are based on character and virtue rather than rules or outcomes). She considers the instrumentalist views of nature, arising from Darwin, as serving the interests of scientists and, on this understanding, ‘nature’ is considered an object that is merely useful to humanity and lacking any intrinsic moral worth.

This ‘instrumentalist’ (or means to an end) approach is critiqued, and it is suggested that humanity should understand itself as part of the created order and yet distinct in specific respects. The distinction or difference is informed by Christian theology, especially personhood and virtue ethics, which make suggestions as to how humanity might act responsibly towards its environment of which it is a part.

This virtue approach to the natural world (creation) also offers a critique of the notion of ‘stewardship’, often associated with the theological concept of imago Dei. Humanity as created in the image of God may be interpreted functionally, namely it is focused on the human responsibility to ‘rule over’ the created order. However, this sense of ‘authority over’ can lead to exploitation rather than creation care. For Deane-Drummond, stewardship as a concept is critiqued if it is merely an impersonal approach, whereby nature provides resources to be managed for the benefit of humanity without any intrinsic worth of its own.

Importantly, science has come to realize that the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of its work are embedded in ethical judgments, hence, for Deane-Drummond especially, the domain of ‘bioethics’: how the natural world should be considered within a classical ethical framework. On Deane-Drummond’s account, the ethics of the natural world should take science into account because it needs to be informed by the latest knowledge available. What is required is a rediscovery of the historical resources for thinking ethically in the contemporary world and how these resources might be shaped to address pressing issues of the day.

From Deane-Drummond’s perspective, this means starting with a distinctly Christian framework of thought that has incorporated the cardinal virtues of prudence, rooted in charity, hope and faith, which are in turn placed in the context of justice, fortitude and temperance. It is these virtues, interpreted in a Christian sense, that are pertinent for an ethical response to the natural world. Prudence, otherwise known as practical wisdom, is regarded as the means by which the good may be achieved. Wisdom, properly understood, is about a right judgment about God and
before God (*coram Deo*). In Christian theology a discussion of nature cannot proceed without the category of creation and this category only makes sense in relation to the category of the creator upon which it depends.

This task of locating practical wisdom in relation to the natural world is explored through the lens of environmental issues. What do prudence and justice have to do with environmental concerns? This leads on to a discussion of humanity’s relationship to animals in the light of the goodness of creation and the worth of all creatures. To what extent has the development in biotechnology also shaped the way that we think about the natural world? What is a Christian response using virtue ethics to this important and pressing issue? The issue of an ethical stance towards animals and technology comes together in a discussion of cloning.

It could be questioned whether something should be done simply because the technology available allows it to be done. Is there a distinctly Christian response to these issues using the category of virtue ethics as a framework of thought? Of course, wisdom is an ongoing project: drawing from the past in Scripture and tradition, reflecting on these sources in the light of pressing ethical dilemmas, as well as suggesting action or postures for the present and future. Deane-Drummond understands her contribution to these issues as the beginning of a conversation. New pathways are being opened up that may or may not prove useful or adequate. Nevertheless, it is hoped that insights can be gleaned and it is these insights that provoke new ways of viewing reality in relation to the Christian faith.

**Select Bibliography**


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