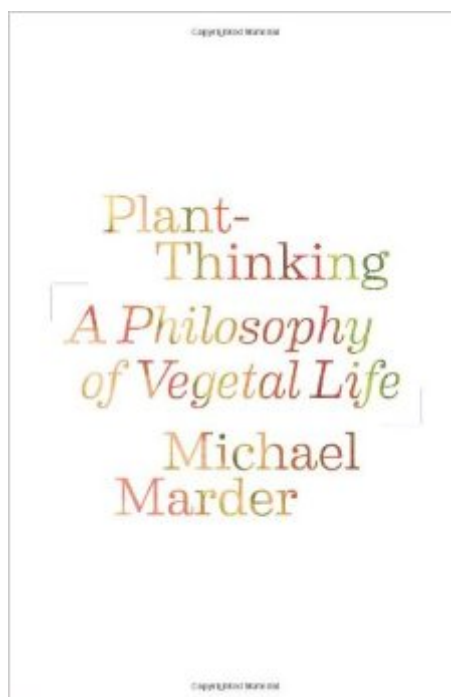


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Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy Of Vegetal Life



Synopsis

The margins of philosophy are populated by non-human, non-animal living beings, including plants. While contemporary philosophers tend to refrain from raising ontological and ethical concerns with vegetal life, Michael Marder puts this life at the forefront of the current deconstruction of metaphysics. He identifies the existential features of plant behavior and the vegetal heritage of human thought so as to affirm the potential of vegetation to resist the logic of totalization and to exceed the narrow confines of instrumentality. Reconstructing the life of plants "after metaphysics," Marder focuses on their unique temporality, freedom, and material knowledge or wisdom. In his formulation, "plant-thinking" is the non-cognitive, non-ideational, and non-imagistic mode of thinking proper to plants, as much as the process of bringing human thought itself back to its roots and rendering it plantlike.

Book Information

Paperback: 248 pages

Publisher: Columbia University Press (February 19, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0231161255

ISBN-13: 978-0231161251

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #299,308 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Movements > Deconstruction #141 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Animal Rights #375 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Botany

Customer Reviews

This is a brilliant piece of academic satire. By employing various popular facets of au courant post-structuralist philosophy (Levinas, Derrida, Deleuze & Guattari, ecocriticism, etc.), Marder has put together a perfectly professional assemblage in favor of extending human and animal rights to plants. Marder has gotten a lot of flak for his views, but whenever he debates others in his field, he wins. Why? Because they have no defense but to fall back into essentialist and hierarchical positions that their tradition has rejected as anathema. One critic said that plants aren't "sentient" and lack "intentionality," but these are not tenable arguments in the post-structuralist argot. So

Marder calls his opponents reactionary and hegemonic, and by their own standards, they are. Marder writes: "First, it seems that the "food chain," at the top of which we, humans, presumably are, is the contemporary reflection of the metaphysical Great Chain of Being. In my view it is not enough to meddle with only one aspect of this structure (the relation between humans and animals), while leaving the rest intact. I would think that we need to question such hierarchical formations in all respects, and I am yet to hear my vegan friends endorse this position." "The other who (or that) bestows upon us our humanity need not be--in keeping with Aristotle's preferred points of comparison in *The Politics*--a god or a beast, the magnificently superhuman or the deplorably subhuman. It may well be the most mundane and unobtrusive instance of alterity, to which we do not dare to compare ourselves: the plant.

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