

Elemental Philosophy: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water as Environmental Ideas (Suny Series in Environmental Philosophy and Ethics)

By David MaCauley

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“…Macauley’s immense book *Elemental Philosophy*, is an homage to a different and seemingly unfamiliar sensibility in which earth, air, fire and water … animate human thought and action. It is, at times, a beautiful, informative and transformative meditation on how to interpret and live with the natural world … Macauley lovingly infuses the text with elements beyond and between the four, and provides readers with an opportunity to look anew at the connections among the elements themselves and our own lives intertwined with them. These interstices are gems.” — *Essays in Philosophy*

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“Stimulating and provocative … An inspiring addition to the book is a series of ‘interstices’—shorter meditations on various manifestations of the elements, like

stone, wood, ice, and cloud, among others." — *CHOICE*

"Freighted with erudition yet buoyant with spirited wordplay, Macauley's intellectual history of the four elements is a delightful tour de force of environmental philosophy." — *Seven Pillars House of Wisdom*

"The book is a multidisciplinary achievement which attests to the author's thorough acquaintance with, inter alia, ancient Greek cosmology, contemporary environmental philosophy, and literary and artistic traditions." — *Environmental Values*

"…a very serious book of philosophy. It's also wonderfully comprehensive, impressively resourceful and superbly imaginative—yet down-to-earth—in bringing the loftiest philosophical thoughts about earth, air, fire, and water together with the excrement, breezes, stoves, and water fountains we live with." — Carlin Romano, *Chronicle of Higher Education*

"A stunning piece of grounded philosophy. A perception-changing book that begins with elemental things and grows into a profound meditation on humans in nature." — David W. Orr, author of *Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse*

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Editorial Review

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With his voluminous knowledge and deep understanding of the history of philosophy, David Macauley brings the classical elements to life by showing their renewed relevance to the pressing problems of our age. His knowledge is immense, and his nuance for interconnections is tremendous. This is a great work of philosophy. David Rothenberg, author of *Thousand Mile Song: Whale Music in a Sea of Sound*

This highly original study pursues the migration of philosophical thought on and through the elemental environmental ideas of earth, air, fire, and water across the length of its twenty-five hundred year history, from Empedocles to the present day. But this is no inquiry merely into the history of these ancient ideas, but rather testimony to their continuing fecundity in living experience. They give sensuous specificity to the pallid idea of nature and concretize environmental abstractions. Rich with broad learning and illustrative detail evoking the many kinds of wonder sensuous, poetic, cognitive, scientific, reverential in experiencing the elements, Macauley s writing projects a wide landscape for exploring the many strata of meaning in environmental experience. Arnold Berleant, author of *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World*

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After industrialization, knowledge became fragmented and people lost touch with the material realities of the places in which they lived. David Macauley blends ancient Greek precepts with twenty-first century circumstances: earth, air, fire, and water call upon us from across the millennia to reanimate humanity s connection to our home planet. David Spanagel, Worcester Polytechnic Institute"

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From the Back Cover
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About the Author
David Macauley is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies at Penn State University, Brandywine. He is the editor of *Minding Nature: The Philosophers of Ecology*.

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