The current issue is at once an opportunity for interdisciplinary conversation and cross-pollination here at the nexus of religion, nature, and culture. Timely and thoughtful investigations come to us this month from as far afield as Japan, Europe, and North America.

In ‘Pursuing Moral Dimensions of the Environment: A Study of Islamic Tradition in Contemporary Iran’, Satoshi Abe addresses a turn to religious authorities in Iran to help confront their environmental challenges. The government of Iran, like many others, has developed scientifically grounded approaches to environmental problems, but now Iranian authorities have begun to ask religious leaders to participate in campaigns to motivate environmental awareness and concern. As we are beginning to see throughout the world, religions are being called upon to influence and persuade people where scientific observation, discovery, and presentation of data have failed. Abe’s work explores a case study from Tehran.

Wendy Mallette contributes a provocative and insightful analysis in ‘Questioning Empathetic Responsiveness to Nonhuman Animal Vulnerability: Noninnocent Relations and Affective Motivations in the Animal Turn in Religious Studies’. Mallette encourages the reader to take a deeper look into current theorizations surrounding ‘appeals to respond to nonhuman animal gazes in religious studies’, those grounded more in empathy than reason. While appeals to empathy and compassion seem to circumvent the difficulties inherent in traditional, Western, rationalist approaches to ethical response, Mallette excavates the underlying presuppositions to problematize these theoretical models and suggest that our epistemic limits must still be taken into account.

From questions of over-theorizing to under-theorizing, ‘Spirituality in Forest Management: A Conceptual Framework for Empirical Research’, from Catharina H. de Pater, Birgit Elends, and Bas Verschuuren begins the work of providing theoretical scaffolding for the ways in which spiritual values have been and can be integrated into forest management. As an under-theorized area of work, the authors hope to provide a possible framework that accommodates ‘the various ontologies and
epistemologies connected to spirituality in forest management’. The discussion includes a consideration of and recommendations regarding the application of their framework in forest management planning and practice.

And finally, Timothy Grieve-Carlson’s ‘The Night Side of Nature: Environmental Meanings of the Modern Paranormal’ investigates the role the category of ‘paranormal’ has played in recent scholarship as ‘an analytic frame and object of study’. Grieve-Carlson provides a kind of historical genealogy suggesting that our current discussions using this category to describe ‘uncanny interrelations between subject and environment’ carry the stamp of Enlightenment era definitions and philosophies of ‘nature’.

This issue concludes with a number of book reviews that represent the scope and diversity of subjects addressed under the nexus of religion, nature, and culture. From Animism to climate skeptics and cosmology to posthumanism, these contributions will be of interest to scholars across a variety of disciplines. We hope you’ll enjoy these stimulating engagements in the ongoing study of religion, nature, and culture.

The Editors