

NATURALNESS, WILD-ANIMAL SUFFERING, AND PALMER ON LAISSEZ-FAIRE

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The total amount of suffering per year in the natural world is beyond all decent contemplation. During the minute that it takes me to compose this sentence, thousands of animals are being eaten alive; others are running for their lives, whimpering with fear; others are being slowly devoured from within by rasping parasites; thousands of all kinds are dying of starvation, thirst and disease (Dawkins 1995, 131-32).

Nature no longer runs the Earth. We do. It is our choice what happens from here (Lynas 2011, 8).

ABSTRACT: This essay explores the tension between concern for the suffering of wild animals and concern about massive human influence on nature. It examines Clare Palmer's animal ethics and its attempt to balance a commitment to the laissez-faire policy of nonintervention in nature with our obligations to animals. The paper contrasts her approach with an alternative defence of this laissez-faire intuition based on a significant and increasingly important environmental value: Respect for an Independent Nature (RIN). The paper articulates and defends naturalness value and explores its implications for the laissez-faire intuition and for concern about wild-animal suffering.