



The Virtues of Ignorance: Complexity, Sustainability, and the Limits of Knowledge (Clark Lectures)

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Human dependence on technology has increased exponentially over the past several centuries, and so too has the notion that we can fix environmental problems with scientific applications. *The Virtues of Ignorance: Complexity, Sustainability, and the Limits of Knowledge* proposes an alternative to this hubristic, shortsighted, and dangerous worldview. The contributors argue that uncritical faith in scientific knowledge has created many of the problems now threatening the planet and that our wholesale reliance on scientific progress is both untenable and myopic. Bill Vitek, Wes Jackson, and a diverse group of thinkers, including Wendell Berry, Anna Peterson, and Robert Root-Bernstein, offer profound arguments for the advantages of an ignorance-based worldview. Their essays explore this philosophy from numerous perspectives, including its origins, its essence, and how its implementation can preserve vital natural resources for posterity. All conclude that we must simply accept the proposition that our ignorance far exceeds our knowledge and always will. Rejecting the belief that science and technology are benignly at the service of society, the authors argue that recognizing ignorance might be the only path to reliable knowledge. They also uncover an interesting paradox: knowledge and insight accumulate fastest in the minds of those who hold an ignorance-based worldview, for by examining the alternatives to a technology-based culture, they expand their imaginations. Demonstrating that knowledge-based worldviews are more dangerous than useful, *The Virtues of Ignorance* looks closely at the relationship between the land and the future generations who will depend on it. The authors argue that we can never improve upon nature but that we can, by putting this new perspective to work in our professional and personal lives, live sustainably on Earth.

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