

# Introduction

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*Florence Rose Shepard*

**Editors' Note:** *On March 23, 2014, the editors of The Trumpeter received a letter from Florence R. Shepard, Paul Shepard's widow, regarding her discovery of a short, previously unpublished essay of Paul's. To our knowledge, it was written in 1995 before he was overcome by the illness that would take his life on July 16, 1996. We do not know if the essay, entitled "Radical Politics," was intended as an editorial, if it was sent out at the time or rather abandoned or lost, or if it can be found in his archived papers at Yale. While the essay itself does not in any way overturn his body of published work, we thought it provided an excellent opportunity for exploring anew the political implications of his thought. Rather than publish the piece alone in a standard issue of The Trumpeter, we invited a number of scholars familiar with Shepard's work to use the essay as a springboard to engage with any aspect of the essay they found to be provocative. Indeed, we hope that this issue will open the door to further and sustained reflection on the directions Shepard's thought may inspire.*

*Florence Shepard's own brief introduction to the essay is found immediately below, followed thereafter by the complete text of "Radical Politics." This issue of the journal is then completed by five essays, each commenting on different aspects of the essay and the broader outlines of his thought.*

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"Radical Politics" was Paul Shepard's abbreviated manifesto for living, offered at the end of his life on a planet he dearly loved. Although written two decades ago, it carries a relevant message. Our efforts in environmental or ecological activism are often directly related to how we can protect and improve the human condition, without much thought to those "Others" who share this planetary home. Throughout his life, Paul had special concern for nonhuman planetary companions for which he showed deep love and gratitude for their part in our development as modern humans.

As Paul's companion through a few short years, I was privileged to witness the depth of his admiration for non-human creatures and sometime his disdain for fellow humans and their anthropocentric myopia. He felt there was very little difference between political parties or politicians. He was more interested in the personal agenda of individuals, who live their lives each day in conjunction and negotiation with the fellow creatures in their immediate habitats. He proposed that our physicality and psychology, framed out of prehistory living in conjunction with animals, carries us forward into our modern lives. As self-conscious, big-brained omnivores

we are able to choose what we eat, who we love, how we live, and what we leave for future generations. We should pay homage to and protect the nonhuman creatures who from the beginning of life have been our companions and mentors.