



Is a Little Pollution Good for You?: Incorporating Societal Values in Environmental Research (ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND SCIENCE POLICY SERIES)

Kevin C. Elliott

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Could low-level exposure to polluting chemicals be analogous to exercise -- a beneficial source of stress that strengthens the body? Some scientists studying the phenomenon of hormesis (beneficial or stimulatory effects caused by low-dose exposure to toxic substances) claim that that this may be the case. *Is A Little Pollution Good For You?* critically examines the current evidence for hormesis. In the process, it highlights the range of methodological and interpretive judgments involved in environmental research: choices about what questions to ask and how to study them, decisions about how to categorize and describe new information, judgments about how to interpret and evaluate ambiguous evidence, and questions about how to formulate public policy in response to debated scientific findings. The book also uncovers the ways that interest groups with deep pockets attempt to influence these scientific judgments for their benefit. Several chapters suggest ways to counter these influences and incorporate a broader array of societal values in environmental research: (1) moving beyond conflict-of-interest policies to develop new ways of safeguarding academic research from potential biases; (2) creating deliberative forums in which multiple stakeholders can discuss the judgments involved in policy-relevant research; and (3) developing ethical guidelines that can assist scientific experts in disseminating debated and controversial phenomena to the public. Kevin C. Elliott illustrates these strategies in the hormesis case, as well as in two additional case studies involving contemporary environmental research: endocrine disruption and multiple chemical sensitivity. This book should be of interest to a wide variety of readers, including scientists, philosophers, policy makers, environmental ethicists and activists, research ethicists, industry leaders, and concerned citizens.

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