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Articles

Invited paper

UNEARTHING THE PROCESS ROOTS OF ENVIRONMENT ETHICS: WHITEHEAD, LEOPOLD, AND THE LAND ETHIC *

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Abstract:

The aim of this essay is twofold. First, I examine the role of Alfred North Whitehead and process thinkers in bringing about and shaping the field of environmental ethics. As we will see, our job is not so much to *develop* the connections between Whitehead and environmental thought as to *recover* them. Second, given this genealogical work, I invite process scholars to reconsider their generally hostile reception of Aldo Leopold and his land ethic. I suggest that a version of the land ethic grounded in a process axiology could make a significant contribution to contemporary environmental thought.

Key words: Environmental Ethics; Alfred North Whitehead; Aldo Leopold; Process.

I. Whitehead and the Origins of Environmental Ethics

Properly dating the birth of an idea or movement unavoidably involves a degree of arbitrariness. Ideas are “in the air” decades before they become explicitly thematized in the work of a prescient scholar. This is also the case with environmental ethics. One could rightly note that philosophers, mystics, and poets have written on environmental themes for millennia. And it is certainly true that the historical roots of the ecological crisis go very deep indeed. Nevertheless,

the birth of environmental ethics as it is currently understood is seen as taking place in the last third of the twentieth century. According to the Center for Environmental Philosophy’s brief history of the origins of environmental ethics, “the inspiration for environmental ethics was the first Earth Day in 1970 when environmentalists started urging philosophers who were involved with environmental groups to do something about environmental ethics.”¹ As they go on to note, in the late 1960s small groups of scientists, theologians, and historians had begun discussing the growing ecological crisis. Most notable among these is the publishing of historian Lynn White, Jr.’s “The Historical Roots of the Ecologic Crisis” in 1967—an essay which continues to appear in many environmental ethics anthologies—and ecologist Garrett Hardin’s “Tragedy of the Commons” the following year, both in the journal *Science*. Responses and reactions to these essays dominated the discussion in the subsequent years, but philosophers largely “sat on the sidelines.”² Also important was the republishing of Aldo Leopold’s³ “The Land Ethic.” Although the

¹ “A Very Brief History of the Origins of Environmental Ethics for the Novice,” The Center for Environmental Philosophy at the University of North Texas, last modified 15 March 2011, <http://www.cep.unt.edu/novice.html>.

² Ibid.

³ Leopold was an American author, scientist, and conservationist who began his career with the US Forest

* An early version of this essay was presented as the keynote address for the 3rd European Summer School in Process Thought, Dusseldorf, Germany, August 2014.

essay had been published in Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949, it was not widely read or available until it was republished in 1970.

Philosophers did finally get into the game. The first academic conference explicitly focusing on environmental ethics was organized by William Blackstone at the University of Georgia in 1972. The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess began the Deep Ecology Movement in 1973 with the publishing of his seminal essay "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement." And Holmes Rolston III is credited with publishing in 1975 the first mainstream journal article explicitly on environmental ethics, "Is There an Ecological Ethic?," in the journal *Ethics*.⁴ Finally, Eugene Hargrove gave a name and a voice to the fledgling field when he founded the journal *Environmental Ethics* in 1979.⁵ From here the field grew and expanded to take its current shapes. In many ways, the field is still in its adolescence, if not its infancy.

Table 1 – Key dates in the history of environmental ethics

1949	Publishing of Aldo Leopold's <i>A Sand County Almanac</i>
1967	Lynn White, Jr. publishes "The Historical Roots of the Ecologic Crisis" in <i>Science</i>
1968	Garrett Hardin publishes "The Tragedy of the Commons" in <i>Science</i>
1970	First Earth Day is held & Leopold's <i>Almanac</i> becomes widely available in a new issue
1972	William Blackstone organizes first environmental ethics conference
1973	Arne Naess publishes "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement" in <i>Inquiry</i>
1975	Holmes Rolston III publishes "Is There an Ecological Ethic?" in <i>Ethics</i>
1979	Eugene Hargrove founds the journal <i>Environmental Ethics</i>

Unlike many other areas of philosophical thought in which Whitehead scholars sometimes struggle to become relevant, process philosophers were present at and participated in the birth of modern environmental ethics. Indeed, it is possible that Whitehead's work was a chief inspiration for

Leopold, whom J. Baird Callicott describes as the "father" and "founding genius" of environmental ethics.⁶ However, the role of process philosophy in the inception of environmental ethics is often either forgotten or omitted, and Whitehead's thought is largely unknown by mainstream environmental ethicists. The aim of this first section is to unearth these forgotten process roots of environmental ethics.

The first clue regarding the significance of Whitehead is provided by Hargrove, in his 1979 contribution to the inaugural volume of the journal *Environmental Ethics*, "The Historical Foundations of American Environmental Attitudes." Interestingly, he begins by noting, "In large measure, my views are in agreement with many of Whitehead's major themes in *Science and the Modern World*, especially those which deal with a Romantic reaction to science."⁷ Hargrove goes on to employ Whitehead to defend the claim that the historical foundations of American environmental attitudes run far deeper than Passmore and others had recognized. He suggests that some of the roots can be traced back to Whitehead.

In Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* there is an even stronger and more spirited environmentalist-style position than [William] James'. Whitehead's aim is to combat science's and philosophy's "assumption of the bare valuelessness of mere matter [which] led to a lack of reverence in the treatment of natural or artistic beauty" and brought about two evils: "one, the ignorance of the true relation of each organism to its

⁶ "Partly because it is so new to Western philosophy (or at least heretofore only scarcely represented) *environmental ethics* has no precisely fixed conventional definition in glossaries of philosophical terminology. Aldo Leopold, however, is universally recognized as the father or founding genius of recent environmental ethics. His 'land ethic' has become a modern classic and may be treated as the standard example, the paradigm case, as it were, of what an environmental ethic is" (Callicott, "Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair" 311).

⁷ Eugene Hargrove, "The Historical Foundations of American Environmental Attitudes," *Environmental Ethics* 1 (1979): 210. Hargrove continues, "One major difference, however, is that by separating the natural history sciences from the physical sciences—a distinction which Whitehead does not seem to make—I am able to claim that even though the Romantic reaction was most certainly opposed to some aspects of physical science, it was, nonetheless, in tune with the natural history sciences which were strongly value-oriented from the very beginning" (210).

Service and later became a professor at the University of Wisconsin.

⁴ "A Very Brief History of the Origins of Environmental Ethics for the Novice."

⁵ The journal was later moved to the University of North Texas, where it currently resides.

environment; and the other, the habit of ignoring the intrinsic worth of the environment which must be allowed its weight in any consideration of final ends." Indisputably, this aim is also an environmentalist aim.⁸

Given its lapse into obscurity in the middle of the twentieth century, it is easy to forget that Whitehead's work at Harvard in the 1920s was met with great excitement and his *Science and the Modern World* was read widely by the educated general public. Though the concept of environmentalism or environmental ethics would have been utterly foreign to Whitehead, Hargrove is right to note that Whitehead's work anticipates by decades many of the concepts that became central to environmental thought, such as the centrality of constitutive interdependence, the recognition of the intrinsic value of reality, the emphasis on the significance of environment, and the preferencing of the metaphor of organism over mechanism.

Interestingly, Hargrove not only points to Whitehead to illustrate the deep historical roots of American environmental attitudes, he also makes the claim that *Science and the Modern World* may have been a key inspiration for Leopold's land ethic.

Most interesting of all is the similarity of some of Whitehead's comments and those of environmentalist Aldo Leopold. There are long passages in the last chapter of *Science and the Modern World*, for instance, which could easily have served as the source of some of Leopold's ideas, and which suggest that Leopold's notion of community could be derived from Whitehead's theory of organism without much difficulty. In one place especially Whitehead speaks of "associations of different species which mutually cooperate," and he refers to the forest environment as "the triumph of the organization of mutually dependent species." A few lines further on he adds that, "every organism requires an environment of friends, partly to shield it from violent changes, and partly to supply it with its wants." It is a small step from Whitehead's "environment of friends" to Leopold's "biotic community," one that requires no detours into Oriental philosophy or religion.⁹

In addition to noting the similarity between Whitehead's "environment of friends" and Leopold's "biotic community," Hargrove might also have noted the similarity between Leopold's ethical dictum to "preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community"¹⁰ and Whitehead's claims that "Morality is always the aim at that union of harmony, intensity, and vividness which involves the perfection of importance for that occasion"¹¹ and "The real world is good when it is beautiful."¹² I will return to this point in the second part.

For now it is enough to note that, if Hargrove is correct that Leopold may have derived his concept of biotic community from Whitehead, and if Callicott is correct that Leopold is environmental ethics' "father" and "founding genius," then Whitehead may be seen as an intellectual grandfather of and inspiration for the field of environmental ethics. Yet it is important to note also the tentative nature of Hargrove's claims regarding Leopold and Whitehead. He observes the "similarity" of Leopold and Whitehead's ideas and suggests that Whitehead's thought "could easily have served as the source" for Leopold's biotic community. Unfortunately, Hargrove does not cite any evidence to support his claims, though he does repeat them in their entirety in his 1989 book *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*.¹³

To my knowledge, no one has refuted Hargrove's claims. However, Pete A. Y. Gunter—himself an eminent process philosopher and environmental ethicist—does make the parenthetical comment in a 2000 article that "Leopold was unaware of Whitehead."¹⁴ Unfortunately, there does

Whitehead scholars. Unfortunately, as the analysis to follow shows, Hargrove's claims must be significantly qualified.

¹⁰ Aldo Leopold, *The Sand County Almanac*, 224–225.

¹¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1938), 13–14.

¹² Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1933), 268.

¹³ Eugene Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989). On three separate occasions over the span of three years I have tried without success to obtain more information from Professor Hargrove on what evidence he has to support the claim that he makes here in 1979 and repeats again without modification in his 1989 book *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*. I have not received any reply to my inquiries.

¹⁴ Pete A. Y. Gunter, "Whitehead's Contributions to Ecological Thought: Some Unrealized Possibilities," *Interchange* (2000): 217. Gunter explained that the source of his claim, which is not given in the article, was Leopold's brother, Carl Starker Leopold. However, the

⁸ Ibid., 238.

⁹ Hargrove, "Historical Foundations" 238–39. Hargrove's claims about Leopold have been widely repeated by many

not seem to be any definitive evidence by which to adjudicate Hargrove's and Gunter's conflicting claims. Leopold's personal library has been dispersed and a search of the Leopold archives at the University of Wisconsin reveals no reference to Alfred North Whitehead. Further, Curt Meine, Senior Fellow at the Aldo Leopold Foundation, confirms Gunter's assessment, stating that he is "not aware of any documentary evidence that Leopold was aware of Whitehead."¹⁵ This is also the view of the eminent environmental historian Susan Flader, who has written extensively about Aldo Leopold.¹⁶ However, she notes that "Just because I can't recall anything doesn't mean Leopold never encountered Whitehead's thought in his reading, but I rather doubt that he would have sought out Whitehead's work."¹⁷

Overall, there simply is insufficient evidence to make a claim with any high degree of confidence that Leopold was aware of Whitehead's work. Yet the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. In the end, Hargrove's claims remain in their tentative formulation. It is possible that Whitehead's thought was among the ideas "in the air" that affected Leopold's own thought in ways that are not traceable through documentary evidence. Nevertheless, even if there is no direct, traceable genealogical dependence between Whitehead and Leopold, it is clear that, in anticipating the central concepts which came to define environmental ethics, Whitehead is rightly seen as a founding grandparent of and inspiration for environmental ethics. Thus, Hargrove is right to note that the foundations of environmental ethics should be traced at least as far back as Whitehead's philosophy of organism. This claim is further supported by the role of Whitehead scholars, who actively participated in the originary conversations that gave birth to the field of environmental ethics.

As we saw above, Blackstone organized the first academic philosophy conference on environmental ethics—and two years later published the proceedings as the first anthology on the topic¹⁸—in

1972 at the University of Georgia. What is often forgotten is that three eminent process philosophers, Charles Hartshorne, John B. Cobb, Jr., and Gunter participated in that first conference. Furthermore, in that same year (1972) Cobb published *Is it Too Late? A Theology of Ecology*, the first monograph ever written explicitly on environmental ethics.¹⁹ Moreover, although Rolston is very rightly seen as a father of environmental ethics, his 1975 article in the journal *Ethics* is not the first academic essay on environmental ethics in a mainstream journal. That honor arguably goes to Hartshorne, who published "Beyond Enlightened Self-Interest: A Metaphysics of Ethics" in *Ethics* in 1974.

Also often omitted or forgotten in accounts of the history of the origins of environmental ethics is that the first doctoral dissertation on the topic was completed in 1976 at Bryn Mawr College by Susan Armstrong under the direction of the Whitehead and Hegel scholar George R. Kline. Her topic was: *The Rights of Nonhuman Beings: A Whiteheadian Study*. Thus, the first dissertation on environmental ethics was Whiteheadian. Finally, it is important to note that in 1979 the first two issues of the journal that gave the field its name, *Environmental Ethics*, included articles by the process philosophers Hartshorne and Cobb.²⁰ Accordingly, although it is still speculative whether Whitehead directly influenced Leopold, by any reasonable measure, Whitehead scholars were key participants in the conversations that shaped the fledgling field of environmental ethics.

Table 2 – The often-forgotten process roots of environmental ethics

1925	Whitehead's Lowell Lectures are published as <i>Science and the Modern World</i> , potentially serving as inspiration for Leopold's land ethic.
1949	Publishing of Leopold's <i>A Sand County Almanac</i>
1967	White publishes "The Historical Roots of the Ecologic Crisis" in <i>Science</i>
1968	Hardin publishes "The Tragedy of the Commons" in <i>Science</i>
1970	First Earth Day is held & Leopold's <i>Almanac</i> becomes widely available in a new issue

brother admitted that he was not sure what Leopold had studied or was acquainted with in college. Unfortunately, Leopold's library was dispersed and I have not yet been able to locate a single catalog listing its contents. Personal correspondence, 25 March 2015.

¹⁵ Curt Meine, email message to author, 3 March 2015.

¹⁶ Susan Flader, email message to author, 16 March 2015.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ William T. Blackstone, ed. *Philosophy and Environmental Crisis* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1974).

¹⁹ The Center for Environmental Philosophy does recognize this, but diminishes it, saying that "the primary focus of the book was theological and religious." <http://www.cep.unt.edu/novice.html>

²⁰ Charles Hartshorne, "The Rights of the Subhuman World," *Environmental Ethics* 1.1 (1979): 49–60 and John B. Cobb, Jr., "Christian Existence in a World of Limits," *Environmental Ethics* 1.2 (1979): 149–158.

1972	Cobb publishes first monograph on environmental ethics
1972	Blackstone organizes first environmental ethics conference at University of Georgia
	In attendance at the conference are process philosophers Hartshorne, Cobb, and Gunter, all of whom also contributed to the published proceedings of the conference
1973	Naess publishes "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement" in <i>Inquiry</i>
1974	Hartshorne publishes what is arguably the first article on environmental ethics, "Beyond Enlightened Self-Interest: A Metaphysics of Ethics" in <i>Ethics</i>
1975	Rolston publishes what is considered the first journal article on environmental ethics, "Is There an Ecological Ethic?" in <i>Ethics</i>
1976	Armstrong completes the first dissertation on environmental ethics, <i>The Rights of Nonhuman Beings: A Whiteheadian Study</i> , at Bryn Mawr College under the direction of Kline, a Whitehead and Hegel scholar
1979	Hargrove founds the journal <i>Environmental Ethics</i>
	Hartshorne publishes "The Rights of the Subhuman World" in the first issue and Cobb publishes "Christian Existence in a World of Limits" in the second issue of <i>Environmental Ethics</i>

Unfortunately, despite this early influence, the significance of process thought gradually faded into obscurity. There are, no doubt, many reasons for this, many of them having more to do with larger shifting trends within Anglo-American philosophy. Though Hartshorne and Cobb were respected contributors to the first conferences on environmental ethics, their subsequent focus on developing process theology led many within mainstream philosophy to view Whitehead's thought with suspicion, if not outright derision. Further, some process philosophers' penchant for seemingly insular scholastic debates among fellow Whitehead scholars further isolated it. The diminished reputation of and interest in process thought meant that retiring Whitehead scholars at top-tier doctoral granting institutions—such as Emory University, Vanderbilt University, University of Chicago, and Yale University—were replaced with philosophers focusing on more fashionable topics. Without new Whitehead scholars graduating, many previously productive academic wells ran dry.

Trends unique to environmental ethics also cut against Whitehead scholarship. For instance, despite

significant lines of convergence, deep ecologists—perhaps the most metaphysically inclined environmental ethicists—ultimately rejected Whitehead in favor of Spinoza.²¹ Furthermore, environmental ethics increasingly abandoned its initial interest in constructing a more adequate worldview and has embraced instead the "policy" turn and environmental pragmatism.²² Yet most puzzling of all is the failure of second-generation Whitehead scholars such as Armstrong to forcefully make the case for Whitehead and process thought within the scholarship. Though Armstrong wrote an early article advocating for the importance of Whitehead as a foundation for environmental ethics, she never published a monograph systematically developing the project.²³ Furthermore, despite being the editor of one of the most important textbook anthologies on environmental ethics with a major publisher, Armstrong did not include a single essay discussing process thought's significance for environmental thought.²⁴ This is in keeping with a general trend. For too long process scholars have claimed that Whitehead's philosophy *would be* an ideal metaphysical basis for an environmental ethic, but have subsequently failed to develop and defend this claim in a systematic manner. The pattern has been to devote perhaps an article or a chapter in a larger work to the topic, but a systematic, book-length philosophical defense of a Whiteheadian

²¹ "Philosophers such as Charles Hartshorne and John Cobb, Jr., have recently argued its relevance as a bases for the New Philosophy of Nature. But many of these theorists, who also happen to be Christian theists, when applying Whiteheadian metaphysics to problems of environmental ethics, argue that, in their estimation, humans have the greatest degree and highest quality of sentience, or consciousness, hence humans have the highest value and the most rights in Nature. In a manner similar to the attempt to 'extend' humanistic ethical theory to the nonhuman, there is what Rodman points to as a 'pecking order in this moral barnyard.' This attempt to apply Whiteheadian panpsychism, while positing various degrees of intrinsic value to the rest of Nature, nonetheless merely reinforces existing Western anthropocentrism, and thus fails to meet the deep ecology norm of 'ecological egalitarianism in principle'" (Sessions and Devall, *Deep Ecology* 236).

²² See, for instance, Andrew Light and Eric Katz, eds., *Environmental pragmatism* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

²³ Susan Armstrong, "Whitehead's Metaphysical system as a Foundation for Environmental Ethics," *Environmental Ethics*, 8 (1986): 241–257.

²⁴ Susan Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler. *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

environmental ethic has been conspicuous in its absence.²⁵ The nadir of process environmental thought came with the publishing of Clare Palmer's 1998 book *Environmental Ethics and Process Thinking*, which challenges the very premise that Whitehead's thought is a suitable basis for environmental ethics.

In brief, Palmer's claim is that process thought is not in fact a suitable basis for environmental ethics because it amounts to a consequentialist, totalizing form of utilitarianism. She comes to this view because of her interpretation of process axiology. According to Palmer, for process thinkers "Value is contributory; God sums the value generated by actual occasions and within Himself; the system must therefore be consequentialist and totalizing."²⁶ Palmer's entire project depends on this interpretation. Unfortunately, she does not recognize that this view is not so much characteristic of Whitehead's thought as it is Hartshorne's. This view—that all value and meaning derive from an occasion's contribution to the divine life—is Hartshorne's "contributionist" theory of value. Though there are indeed passages in Hartshorne which support Palmer's interpretation,²⁷ Daniel Dombrowski has rightly questioned whether Palmer's assessment is accurate from a Hartshornian perspective.²⁸ While there is some legitimate dispute

over the meaning of Hartshorne's contributionist axiology, even a cursory analysis of Whitehead's axiology conflicts with Palmer's interpretation. For Whitehead, every actual occasion has value for itself and in so doing it comes to have value for others and for the whole of reality.

At the base of existence is the sense of "worth." Now worth essentially presupposes that which is worthy. Here the notion of worth is not to be construed in a purely eulogistic sense. It is the sense of existence for its own sake, of existence which is its own justification, of existence with its own character.²⁹

Everything has some value for itself, for others, and for the whole. This characterizes the meaning of actuality. By reason of this character, constituting reality, the conception of morals arises. We have no right to deface the value experience which is the very essence of the universe. Existence, in its own nature, is the upholding of value intensity. Also no unit can separate itself from the others, and from the whole. And yet each unit exists in its own right. It upholds the value intensity for itself, and this involves sharing value intensity with the universe.³⁰

Though some debate and discussion might be had over whether Hartshorne's thought is guilty of totalizing, Whitehead's axiology is most certainly not. The value of an occasion is not primarily (much less exclusively) dependent on its contribution to the divine life. Again, every actual occasion has value for itself, others, and the whole.

Further, although there are clearly consequentialist elements within Whitehead's thought, there are also deontological and virtue elements as well. As I've argued previously, we will fail to understand Whitehead's possible contributions to ethics if we insist on trying to force it into ethical pigeonholes constructed by metaphysical projects that Whitehead's philosophy of organism was explicitly designed to overcome.³¹ Any genuinely Whiteheadian ethic will ultimately be as novel as the metaphysics on which it is based. Thus, Palmer's conclusion, that Whitehead's work is an unsuitable basis for environmental ethics, rests on a faulty interpretation of his axiology and, therefore, misses

²⁵ Remediating this fact was the focus of my own dissertation, which was subsequently expanded and published as Brian G. Henning, *The Ethics of Creativity: Beauty, Morality, and Nature in a Processive Cosmos* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005).

²⁶ Clare Palmer, *Environmental Ethics and Process Thinking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

²⁷ As Hartshorne characterizes it, the contributionist doctrine states that, "the ultimate value of human life, or anything else, consists *entirely* in the contribution it makes to the divine life. Whatever importance we, and those we can help or harm, have is without residue measured by and consists in the delight God takes in our existence." Hartshorne, "Subhuman World," 49–50, author's emphasis. However, on an essay on "The Ethics of Contributionism," Hartshorne seems to define it more broadly: "If the cosmos has no value, neither, by any rational standard, do animals or persons. The parts are for the whole, the ephemeral for the abiding. And the only aspects of the whole that we can influence or benefit are future aspects. I call this doctrine *contributionism*. It is essentially Whitehead's view, and I regard it as implicit in all the religions" (106). As I've noted, it is not clear that Hartshorne is accurately depicting Whitehead's axiology. For more on this see chapter 7 of my *Ethics of Creativity*.

²⁸ For a response to and criticism of Palmer's position from within the contributionist framework, see Daniel A. Dombrowski, "The Replaceability Argument," *Process*

Studies 30 (2001): 22–35. For more on this see my *Ethics of Creativity*, chapter 7.

²⁹ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 109.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

³¹ See chapter 7 of *Ethics of Creativity*.

its target. Properly understood, Whitehead's philosophy would not support a totalizing, consequentialist form of utilitarianism.

In sum, then, (1) elements of Whitehead's philosophy of organism anticipated the development of environmental ethics by half a century; (2) though no definitive documentary evidence is available, Whitehead's thought may have influenced Leopold, whose land ethic is often credited as the source of environmental ethics; (3) regardless of the actual influence of Whitehead on Leopold, process philosophers were key contributors to the seminal discussions which constituted the field of environmental ethics; and (4) contrary to Palmer's claims, Whitehead's philosophy of organism is likely an ideal metaphysical foundation for environmental ethics. Whitehead and process thinking are rightly to be celebrated as among the chief intellectual grandparents of environmental ethics.

In the spirit of this recovery of the historical origins of environmental ethics, in the remainder of this essay my goal is to invite Whitehead scholars to reconsider their generally hostile reception of Leopold's land ethic. A version of the land ethic grounded in a process metaphysical axiology could make a significant contribution to contemporary environmental thought.

II. The Process Reception and Rejection of Leopold

Leopold opens his essay "The Land Ethic" by noting that over the millennia the scope of human beings' moral concern has gradually expanded. He likens this to a sort of ethical evolution. Whereas once some humans were treated as mere property and were therefore outside the scope of direct moral concern, now most recognize that ethical consideration extends to all humans. Leopold contends that the next stage of ethical evolution must commence, shrinking once again the sphere of those beings treated as mere property and limited only by what is expedient.

There is as yet no ethic dealing with man's [sic] relation to the land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. Land, like Odysseus' slave-girls, is still property. The land-relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations. The extension of ethics to this third element in human environment is, if I read the evidence

correctly, an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity.³²

As in past stages of ethical evolution, the key is in expanding one's concept of community. Though human, Odysseus' slaves were not part of the moral community. They were mere property, to be disposed of as one chooses. For Leopold, a chief impediment to further expanding the moral community beyond the human sphere is an attenuated and inaccurate conception of land. Too often, humans conceive of land as the real estate developer does, perhaps imagining an empty (often previously forested) lot with a "For Sale" sign on a stake. Unused land (what John Locke calls literally "waste land"³³) is there to be developed, to be made productive, valuable. Leopold notes that this view of land as mere property suffers from the same problems as the slave holder who sees his human slaves as mere property.

Biology and ecology have revealed that land is not an inert plot. "Land . . . is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals."³⁴ This is a truly capacious sense of land. The land, for Leopold, includes the soil, yes, but also the animals that roam on it, the plants that grow out of it, the waters that flow over it, and the air circulating above it. "The land" is the process by which energy moves through complex ecological systems of relationship and dependence. For Leopold, "land" is the prolific fountain of life.

Just as human slavery was abolished by recognizing that all people are rightly part of the moral community, Leopold contends that the next stage in ethical evolution must again extend the moral community, but this time to include all of nature or what he calls the "biotic community." (Recall that it is this concept that, Hargrove wonders, may have been derived from Whitehead.) "The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land."³⁵ In a sense, Leopold is inviting his reader to come to terms with what we have known for a century and a half, but have failed to appropriate into our ethics: humans are not separate from the land, but are a part and product of it. "In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-

³² Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 203.

³³ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, edited by C. B. Macpherson, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980 [1690]), sec. 36.

³⁴ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 216.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 204.

community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect of the community as such.”³⁶ As White put it in 1967, “Despite Darwin, we are *not*, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim.”³⁷ Though most intellectually affirm that humans are a part of and intimately dependent on the biotic community, our ethical systems fail to recognize this fact. Leopold invites us to embrace the next stage of ethical evolution.

It is important to note that Leopold is not arguing that we and other animals cannot or should not use the land. Rather, Leopold is calling for a biology-affirming ethic. As Whitehead noted in *Process and Reality*, “life is robbery. . . . [But] the robber requires justification.”³⁸ To live is to take from and give to others. The biotic community is a vibrant exchange of energy. The goal of a land ethic is not to “lock up” nature, but to recognize that “decent land use” is not merely a matter of economic expedience but also a matter of ethical concern. “The ‘key-log’ which must be moved to release the evolutionary process for an ethic is simply this: quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient.”³⁹ Leopold is making use here of a forestry metaphor. Loggers for centuries have cut down trees and floated them downstream to a mill. If too many are put into the river, then a logjam can result. The key-log is that log which, if removed, would clear the logjam, allowing the stream to flow once again. Leopold believes that the shallow anthropocentrism of economic expediency has jammed the evolutionary stream of ethics. We can remove this “key-log” if we “quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem” and also “Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient.”⁴⁰ This will allow the evolution of a land ethic, in which “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends

otherwise.”⁴¹ This relatively enigmatic dictum is the central tenant of the land ethic.

Given the affinities between Leopold and Whitehead, one would think that process philosophers would see in the land ethic an important resource for developing an adequate environmental ethic. Although there are notable exceptions, such as Jay McDaniel (1988) and Gunter (2000), the process reception of Leopold’s land ethic has been largely critical, starting with Armstrong (1986), Dombrowski (1988), and, more recently, Edwards (2014). Armstrong best captures the concern:

Despite its attractiveness . . . the land ethic suffers from three main difficulties: (1) the emphasis on the interdependence of the biotic community deprives individuals any value except insofar as they contribute to the system, giving rise to Regan’s charge of “environmental fascism.” Here Whitehead’s balanced approach is superior. (2) No value is accorded to rationality, moral agency, self-consciousness, religious insight, or artistic creativity except insofar as they might contribute to the community. This is a seriously counterintuitive result, since while such activities do often so contribute, we commonly value them as ends in themselves. (3) No criteria are offered by which the community itself can be assessed, unless we simply appeal to short or long-term human interest. Richard Watson points out that the land ethic places a premium upon an optimal or “climax state” of dynamic equilibrium within a given ecosystem, but this premium cannot be justified by means of the land ethic alone.⁴²

There are good reasons for these concerns, which are shared by both Dombrowski and Edwards.⁴³ As it has often been defended by its chief

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ White, “Historical Roots” 1206, emphasis in original

³⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process & Reality*, corrected edition, eds. Donald Sherburne and David Ray Griffin (New York: Free Press, 1978), 105.

³⁹ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 224.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 224–25.

⁴² Armstrong, “Whitehead’s Metaphysical System as a Foundation for Environmental Ethics” 257–58.

⁴³ The concern, as Dombrowski notes and Edwards repeats, is that “This conception deprives individuals of any value except as they contribute to the biotic community . . . and it grants no additive value to rationality or even to sentience except as they might contribute to the community” (Daniel A. Dombrowski, *Hartshorne and the Metaphysics of Animal Rights*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 47; Edwards repeats this claim, continuing “Land ethics turns unique, conscious, self-valuing individuals into mere means to the ends of a greater biosphere that is not a conscious

proponent, J. Baird Callicott, Leopold's land ethic has been understood to be strongly holistic. The concern, Armstrong notes, is that just as Fascism sanctioned the sacrifice of individuals for the good of the state, ecological holism justifies the sacrifice of individuals for the good of the ecosystem, the biotic community. Further, the concern, shared by Dombrowski and Edwards, is that the holism of the land ethic does not allow for a value hierarchy in which sentience or consciousness are able to be recognized for their greater degree of intrinsic value.

I do not dispute that an ecological holism is open to the concerns raised by Armstrong, Dombrowski, or Edwards. What I question is whether this ecological holism is a necessary aspect of a land ethic. My claim is that it is not. There are several important things to remember. First, Leopold was neither philosopher nor ethicist. His brief essay is more suggestive than systematic. Much like the work of Albert Schweitzer, the value of Leopold's land ethic is in its fecundity and evocativeness, not in its systematicity or analytic adequacy. That it is indeed fecund can be seen in the fact that Leopold's work has been a chief inspiration for environmental projects as diverse and incompatible as Naess's Deep Ecology, Callicott's subjectivist moral sentiments land ethic, and Rolston's objectivist and hierarchical environmental axiological ethics. In short, although some defenders of Leopold's land ethic are ecological holists, the land ethic is not necessarily so.

Given this context, let us return to Armstrong's three claims above. First, the land ethic's emphasis on the interdependence of the biotic community does *not* deprive individuals of value any more than Whitehead's emphasis on interdependence does. Whether a vicious ecological holism emerges will depend on one's more basic axiological and metaphysical commitments. What has intrinsic value and why? Is all value equal or does it differ by degrees? What is the metaphysical relationship between the one and the many, the individual and the community, and how does this affect the value of each? The answers to these questions will also determine the outcome of Armstrong's second concern, that the land ethic accords no value to rationality, moral agency, or self-consciousness. Whether this is the case depends again on whether one embraces a flat axiology (as in some versions of Deep Ecology) or an axiological hierarchy (as in, for

instance, Rolston). As I have argued elsewhere,⁴⁴ Whitehead's thought provides an ideal context in which to pursue the compatibility of holism with an axiological and aesthetic hierarchy. Finally, the third concern, that the land ethic provides no criteria by which the community can be assessed, is a complaint regarding the incompleteness of Leopold's statement of the land ethic. It does not, in other words, refer to an inherent weakness of the system. In a sense, the process critics of Leopold's land ethic are claiming that Leopold's land ethic is totalizing in its holism. However, as we have seen, Leopold provides no axiology. If his land ethic were grounded in an axiology such as Whitehead's, which affirms the intrinsic value of the self, the other and the whole, then the concerns of a totalizing holism subside, as do the concerns regarding ecofascism.

Thus, I hereby invite Whitehead scholars to reconsider Leopold's land ethic. My own work, which defends a kalocentric ethics of creativity, also takes Leopold as a chief inspiration. Yes, the concerns regarding hierarchy and ecofascism are real, but they are not a necessary feature of a land ethic, especially one grounded in a Whiteheadian axiological metaphysics which takes as its aim the creation and production of beauty. Beyond this, I implore Whitehead scholars not merely to *claim* that process thought is an ideal basis for environmental ethics, but to *engage* with Whitehead's system on its own terms (rather than trying to make it conform to existing paradigms) and then to set about the arduous work of *systematically* developing an ethic from the ground up. Whitehead scholars should reclaim their once-prominent role in mainstream environmental ethics' diverse discussions regarding the nature of value and moral responsibility.

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⁴⁴ See, for instance, Brian G. Henning, *The Ethics of Creativity*; "Trusting in the 'Efficacy of Beauty': A Kalocentric Approach to Moral Philosophy," *Ethics & the Environment* 14.1 (2009): 101–28; "Hierarchy without Anthroparchy," in *Beyond the Bifurcation of Nature: A Common World for Animals and the Environment*. Ed. Brianne Donaldson (Cambridge Scholars Press 2014), 106–116; and "Animals, Ethics, and Process Thought: Hierarchy without Anthroparchy (A Response to Combs, Donaldson, and Sinclair)," *Process Studies* 42.2 (2013): 221–239.

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Invited paper

BEYOND BIOCENTRISM: CAVELL, THOREAU, AND TRANSCENDENCE IN THE ORDINARY

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Abstract:

In this paper I aim at questioning L. Buell's politics of the environment, which relies on the assumption of unproblematic coexistence between man and nature. Analyzing Stanley Cavell's reading of Henry D. Thoreau, I try to show that the natural is always already cultural and that a reengagement with nature in itself is the very process of becoming political. In this context, I will examine why Cavell's Thoreau redirects us from biocentrism to humanism and provocatively turns political education away from anodyne aspirations for coexistence and towards a qualified isolation.

Key words: biocentrism, humanism, political education, Stanley Cavell, Henry D. Thoreau.

1. Introduction: Reconsidering the Politics of Environmentalism

Henry D. Thoreau, the 19th century American transcendentalist, is known as a nature writer. The work by which he is best known, *Walden* (1854), is a record of his living in the woods at Walden Pond for nearly two years. It is interpreted typically as a book in the tradition of "American pastoralism" (Leo Marx, 1992, p. 379) and is understood as the revelation of a possible ecology or environmentalism that would resist the plundering and destructive consequences of booming industry and commerce—in other words, of capitalism (Standish and Saito, 2005, p. 222). Lawrence Buell, in his *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writings, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995) presents Thoreau's view on nature from the perspective of

environmentalism and in the light of its implications for nature politics. He points out the historical fact that Thoreau loved to read Darwin's *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of HMS Beagle* (1839) (Buell, 1995, p. 117), and shared with Darwin the idea of the "conflation of natural and human phenomena" (p. 417). Nevertheless, unlike Darwin, Thoreau "undermines the hierarchies of civilization/barbarity" (p. 418). Buell raises three distinctive features of Thoreau's view on nature. First is his "empirical" approach to nature. Second, Thoreau sustains "a deeply personal love and reverence for the nonhuman" (p. 137). Third is the political implication of Thoreau's environmentalism. Thoreau dissented from "nineteenth-century norms" and propounded a "self-conscious politics of environmentalism: a defense of nature against the human invader" (p. 135). In sum, Buell concludes, Thoreau took a "path from *homocentrism* toward *biocentrism*" (p. 138, italics added).

Buell's environmentalist reading of *Walden* may show something of its worth today, in the predicament of the post-modern globalized world—one in which the apparent advances of science and technology have risked the destruction of nature and the alienation of human beings from nature. The politics of environmentalism raises the question of how to (re)connect human beings with nature in such a way as to achieve a harmonious coexistence. Its underlying assumption is of a dichotomous picture between, on the one hand, the natural and the biological, and, on the other, the social, the cultural, and the conventional. As Rousseau's *Emile* illustrates, the former is a purer, more aboriginal state of human nature, while

the latter is a state that has degenerated from its original purity. Hence, a shift from homocentrism to biocentrism is called for.

This paper questions this Buellian politics of the environment and tries to destabilize its assumptions of coexistence between man and nature. In order to show why this is problematic and to present an alternative vision of environmentalism and political education, I shall discuss Stanley Cavell's reading of Thoreau. Centering on Thoreau's idea of transcendence in the ordinary, I shall try to show that the natural is always already cultural and that a reengagement with nature in itself is the very process of becoming political. Cavell's Thoreau will redirect us from biocentrism to humanism and provocatively turn political education away from anodyne aspirations for coexistence and towards a qualified isolation. Political education is learning how to be a "neighbor," with nature and other people, bridging the private and the public—a political education for the perfection of human nature. To be a neighbor in this sense, I shall argue, is something other than mere coexistence.

2. From Biocentrism to Humanism: Cavell's Reading of Thoreau's *Walden*

Buell says that "Thoreau's environmental perception remained energized throughout his life by a sense of natural piety" (p. 129). In this regard he indicates some common traits between Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson's view on nature, according to Buell, is characterized by a relation of unity, intimacy, and sympathy between man and nature (p. 209). To use Emerson's own expressions, the relation is typified by "unison" (Emerson, 1957, p. 29), "il più nell' uno" (the many in the one) (p. 30), and "Unity" (p. 40). Buell says that "the Emersonian correspondence project continued to affect Thoreau's work" (p. 131). While Thoreau, however, took a "scientific," "empirical," and "detranscendentalized" approach to nature, especially after 1850 (pp. 117, 134), Buell demonstrates Thoreau's multiple identities by quoting the following phrase from his journal: "I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot" (Thoreau quoted by Buell, 1995, p. 117). In Thoreau "pastoral aesthetics and romanticist natural piety [are found] interacting with empirical study and scientific interests" (Buell, 1995, p. 138).

It is the notion of continuity that underlies Buell's environmentalism. There is the quest for a "continuum or a monism" beyond any "binary

schism" (p. 211). Thoreau's interest in Native American culture is read as a manifestation of his idea of "kinship between human and nonhuman realms" (p. 211), with nature a "common habitat" (p. 264). Politically it implies "organizing the environment in terms of its points of nonhuman interest instead of in terms of the directions and markers that most human beings depend on" (p. 135). This, Buell claims, epitomizes Thoreau's "ecocentric thinking" (p. 143). By "political," Buell does not mean "the political process as such," but rather an "interest in provoking social reflection and change" (ibid.). In this biocentric picture of a unified relationship between the human and the nonhuman, the human and the civilized are opposed to the natural and the biological, and priority is given to the latter. The political is an overarching realm in the unity of the two.

There are two initial, intuitive questions to be raised concerning Buell's reading of Thoreau and, more generally, his idea of the politics of environmentalism. First, as a way of achieving the unity of the two realms, Buell presents us with a structure in which the human being is absorbed into the totality of nature: the self is relinquished in nature (p. 171) and the "persona" fades into the natural scenery (p. 476), which he refers to as an "aesthetics of relinquishment" (p. 143). Thoreau's view on nature is seen as a kind of vitalism based upon coexistence between man and nature (or the human and the nonhuman). If this is the structure of man's relation to his environment, and if this is what is at the heart of what Buell takes Thoreau to mean by being political, is it not the fate of an individual human being eventually to be assimilated into the totality of nature? A second question is related to the internal structure and the way *Walden* is written. If Thoreau is an anti-homocentric, biocentric/ecocentric environmentalist, why is it that this book is not just about nature but about nature *and language*. The fact that there is a chapter actually called "Reading" is by no means the only reason for saying that *Walden* is a book about reading and writing. These are factors that are seriously underexamined in Buell's account.

In helping us find whether these intuitive questions are adequate or not, Cavell's alternative interpretation, presented in *The Senses of Walden* (1992), sheds light not only on Thoreau's *Walden*, but also on what can be meant by environmentalism and, more broadly, the political. But we need to tread carefully with the terms here. Cavell rereads *Walden* as a book not on nonhuman transcendentalism, but on *transcendence in the ordinary* as the crucial mo-

mentum for becoming political.

Thoreau's view on nature, like Emerson's, is based upon the analogy between man and nature. *Walden* is filled with detailed observations and descriptions of nature and of living creatures as "neighbors" to man. He writes:

. . . if we take the ages into our account, may there not be a civilization going on among brutes as well as men? They seemed to me to be rudimental, burrowing men, still standing on their defense, awaiting their transformation (Thoreau, 1992, p. 182).

This suggests a correspondence between man and nature, and yet at the same time, as Buell points out, it implies the overturning of any received hierarchical relationship between man and nature.

Cavell's reading, however, disturbs interpretations of Thoreau as a proponent of sheer continuity between man and nature.

"Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives. The loon retires to solitary ponds to spend it (I, 36)." This use of "must be" is a key to his position. What the imperative means is that our moulting season, unlike that of the fowls, is not a *natural* crisis. . . So at the heart of this apparent return to nature, it is not haphazard for him to say, "Nature is hard to be overcome, but she must be overcome (XI, 12)." Our nature is to be overcome (Cavell, 1992, p. 43).

The word "must" connotes both the sense of inference and of obligation. The analogy between men and fowls is shown by the former sense, but the latter sense indicates the distinction or, say, discontinuity between them. The double meaning of this "must" signifies that man is both a natural being and a trans-natural being. Cavell's statement that a crisis is not a "natural" accomplishment means that man, as human being, is obligated to undergo a crisis (Saito, 2005a, p. 197). As Cavell says, "nature is not my habitat, but my exemplar, my dream of habitation" (Cavell, 1992, p. 43). Here see a slight but significant difference from Buell's interpretation of nature as a place, a "common habitat." Man must overcome nature, though not necessarily by an aggressive invasion of it. Cavell's distinction between a habitat and a habitation implies that nature is for sure a place for human beings *to live*, and yet to live does not automatically mean to find one's home in nature. This is a paradoxical and dual relationship between

man and nature, to live in intimacy and yet astride a rift.

How, according to Thoreau, can human beings rebuild such a relationship with nature? In response Cavell highlights Thoreau's idea of "neighboring" as our relation to nature "at its best"—"knowing the grandest laws it is executing, while nevertheless 'not wholly involved' in them" (Cavell, 1992, p. 105). The relation of neighboring is neither man's invasion of nature nor his complete immersion in it; not even "a mutual absorption," but "a perpetual nextness, as an act of neighboring or befriending" (p. 108). This is not a relationship of unity, but one of "double-ness," with the dual sense of nearness and distance (or continuity and discontinuity). This, Cavell says, is Thoreau's response to the Kantian project of answering skepticism (p. 64): "*Walden*, in effect, provides a transcendental deduction for the concepts of the-thing-in-itself and for determination – something Kant ought, so to speak, to have done" (p. 95), that is, "[t]he externality of the world is articulated by Thoreau as its nextness to me" (p. 107).

Thoreau's act of living in the woods at Walden Pond is an experiment in displacing and rebuilding the relationship between man and nature: that is, it is a "continuous *activity*" of "*placing* ourselves in the world" (p. 53). In Cavell's reading of Thoreau, language plays a crucial role in this experiment. *Walden* is a book about "the creation of a world by a word" (p. 112). It is only through words (relearned) that we can release nature from the bondage created by human beings, and recover for ourselves the things of this world (p. 64). The writer of *Walden* stands "on tiptoe" (Thoreau, 1992, p. 71), on the border between man and nature. And as Cavell remarks, "Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads" (p. 188; Cavell, 1992, p. 112). Walden Pond is the point of contact at which heaven and earth meet: Thoreau as a human being locates himself between heaven and animal, representing the position of achieving transcendence from within nature, to become human again.

The relationship of neighboring between human beings and nature represented by Cavell's Thoreau contrasts with the picture one gains from Buell, with its emphasis on unity, continuity, and, as we saw, the conflation of natural and human phenomena. Though Buell acknowledges Cavell's idea of "nextness," he fails to pick up the ways that this is different from (or say, more complicated than) the coexistence and "sympathetic intimacy" implied in his own account (Buell, 1995, p. 364). It is this critical

juncture at which language plays its crucial role in Cavell's reading. If *Walden* is the record of the recreation of the world by the word, it cannot be the case that the human being immerses himself in nature as the "nonhuman," hence, as *dehumanized*. Such labor is rather, as Cavell says, the "work of humanization" (Cavell, 1992, p. 76).

3. Leaving Walden and the Art of Walking

Thoreau did not settle down in Walden and came back to civilized life. He says:

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. (Thoreau 1992, p. 215)

In another essay, *Walking* (1862), Thoreau discusses "the art of Walking" (Thoreau 1991, p. 71).

If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friend, and never see them again, – if you have paid your debt, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk. (p. 93)

In order to have "no particular home, but [to be] equally at home everywhere," one must acquire the art of *sauntering*, as a "*Sainte-Terre*," being *sans terre* – that is, without land (Thoreau 1991, pp. 71, 72). Thoreau is "at home" at Walden Pond, but only in the sense that "he learned there how to sojourn, i.e., spend his day" (Cavell 1992, p. 52). He left the woods. In fact, the descriptions of place in *Walden* are suggestive of transitivity and sojourning rather than of settling and owning.

A symbolic image that captures this sense of not settling down in a fixed place is the idea of the sense of *bottomlessness* in Walden Pond.

While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless. (Thoreau 1992, 90)

There is a solid bottom every where. (Thoreau 1992, p. 220; Cavell 1992, p. 76)

In Thoreau's idea of bottomlessness, this is not the complete negation of the ground or fixation. The places you pass through can provide foundation enough in every act of finding. The task of Thoreau as a translator is to respond to the question: "how are

we going to weigh toward [a solid bottom], arrive at confident conclusions from which we can reverse direction, spring an arch, choose our lives, and go about our business?" (Cavell 1992, p. 76). Thoreau's antifoundationalist sense is also illustrated in Cavell's reiteration of the Emersonian idea of finding as founding—"Foundation reaches no farther than each issue of finding" (Cavell 1989, p. 114)—and in his Thoreauvian sense that the "volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement. Their truth is translated; its literal monument alone remains" (Thoreau 1992, p. 217).

Thoreau concludes *Walking* with the following remark:

We walked in so pure and bright a light, gilding the withered grass and leaves, so softly and serenely bright, I thought I had never bathed in such a golden flood, without a ripple or a murmur to it. The west side of every wood and rising ground gleamed like the boundary of Elysium, and the sun on our backs seemed like a gentle herdsman driving us home at evening.

So we saunter toward the holy Land, till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than ever he has done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bankside in autumn. (Thoreau 1991, p. 122)

Such returning as described in the passage is the very meaning of transcendence in the ordinary. Transcendence here does not mean some quasi-religious or mystical experience, or dramatic moment of conversion which takes place in exceptional (say, *extraordinary*) moments. It does not mean some purified movement upward, but rather "transcendence downward" (Standish, 2012, p. 19), to keep finding a solid bottom. It is the continuous activity of undergoing the moment of rebirth from within the ordinary. The act of leaving and the art of walking are the essential elements of the work of humanization, and hence a condition for us to become political beings.

4. Conclusion: Political Education for Isolation

[T]hose capable of the deepest personal confession (Augustine, Luther, Rousseau, Tho-

reau, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Freud) were most convinced they were speaking from the most hidden knowledge of others (Cavell, 1979, p. 109).

In philosophizing, I have to bring my own language and life into imagination. What I require is a convening of my culture's criteria, in order to confront them with my words and life as I pursue them and as I may imagine them; and at the same time to confront my words and life as I pursue them with the life my culture's words may imagine for me: to confront the culture with itself, along the lines in which it meets in me (p. 125).

The discussion of this paper started with initial and intuitive questions concerning Buell's environmental politics, a politics based on the ideas of coexistence and of a dichotomization of the human and the nonhuman. Buell speaks of a conflation, but ironically his understanding of this depends upon an initial dichotomization, one that on Thoreau's view is, as I have tried to show, unwarranted. Cavell's rereading of Thoreau has shown what is missing from Buell's approach, and it offers an alternative possibility for our engagement with the environment, an alternative way of becoming political.

In considering our way of being with and in the environment, Cavell's philosophy of ordinary language transcends the dichotomy of the natural (impulse of the child or instinct) and the conventional (the norms and normality of adults or culture), and brings into the picture the idea of "a natural fact" (p. 125) as a "new (human) nature" (p. 121). The natural here cannot simply be biological (as juxtaposed against the social or conventional). Rather it is already a part of our civilization and culture, and so is broader than what we consider to be conventional in our social lives. The gap between natural instinct and culture is not a dichotomy between abnormality (as unconventional) or dissent (as nonconformist) on the one hand, and normality or conventionality on the other. Cavell says that the skeptic's doubt that there are other minds is tantamount to denial of, or failure to confront, the natural fact of shared forms of life (p. 109), for these inevitably include elements of dissonance and the abnormal (p. 112). The presence of a "lunatic child" in Cavell symbolizes the natural fact of the asymmetry between teaching and learning (*ibid.*). The "I" is the locus in which the natural and the cultural meet each other in the language community, in which the gap (with the sense

of the unknown) must always remain. The unknown, however, is not to be mystified. Rather it is the starting point of our rethinking and rebuilding our conventions from within, and hence reconstructing our political lives.

Cavell claims that *Walden* is "a tract of political education," with the provocative thesis that "education for citizenship is education for isolation" (Cavell, 1992, pp. 85-86). "Self-examination" is at the heart of Cavell's/Thoreau's political education (Cavell, 1979, p. 25). Its implications are diverse. It resists the contemporary communal politics, which is often based upon the natural home as a place to return. It reminds us that we are always at the border of acceding to the closure of politics, in the shadow of inclusion. This is legitimized by the idea that the natural is cultural because it disturbs the romantic purification of nature in spiritual education, or naïve realism (with its concomitant illusion of being in direct commerce with nature). By resisting the taming of voice and aesthetic judgment by the sloganizing of environmental politics, it protects the space of the dissident "I" as member of the polis. Thoreau's philosophy of language, with its idea of the father's tongue—characterized by doubleness, nextness, and transitivity—provides us with the mechanism in which the singularity of an individual is never dissipated in publicity and sharing, while at the same time not falling into the "interiorisation of the spiritual" (Standish, 2009). One's reengagement with the father tongue is a way of sustaining the space of the inner and the sense of rift—what Cavell calls "the daily, insistent split in the self that being human cannot . . . escape" (Cavell, 2004CW, p. 5)—the only means through which transcendence (the moment of converting crisis into hope) takes place: it is through this that the public is energized from within.

Thus the political (the most outward) needs the natural (as the cultural), and the natural awaits transcendence (the most inward): to become political from the inmost, we need education. There is no society before individuation: singularity and eccentricity of the self needs to be acknowledged before and throughout the process of socialization. It is this component of separation and isolation that is missing from the discourse of coexistence. The idea of participation in the language community implies that each self is responsible to her own voice, to be contributed to "her" society (which is a democratic aspect of American transcendentalism.) Hence, the perspective of dissent in Cavell's philosophy of ordinary language is never a proposal for anarchism;

nor is returning language to the ordinary simply as an endorsement of a common society with its averaged, everyday, mundane use of language. Rather it means to rethink our familiar relation to our words, to return ourselves to the ordinary, while returning the ordinary itself.

The following passage from *The Claim of Reason* captures the sense of transcendence that is at the heart of Cavell's idea of the education of human nature:

The anxiety in teaching, in serious communication, is that I myself require education. And for grownups this is not natural growth, but *change*. Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions; so it is symbolized as rebirth (Cavell, 1979, p. 125).

Philosophy as the education of grownups here points to the very moment when we stand on tiptoe, at the limits of language, when I am thrown back to my own nature, to reexamine my relation to my culture. At such critical junctures, it is not that normal adults accept the abnormal child. Neither is this a matter of the celebration of the diverse talents of unique individuals. Philosophy as education begins when we lose our way.

When we think about how the experience of transcendence can find its place in the tide of globalization today, we realize that it must be geared neither towards biocentrism nor spiritualism in any dichotomous scheme of nature and civilization. Instead transcendence in the ordinary seeks to return humans to *human* nature (with the mediation of language, that is, through thinking). Linguistic activity itself is the work of humanization. Hence, political education is in a broad sense language education. Philosophy as the education of grownups is a call for education to regain humanity, for us to become human again, to become more humane.

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Invited paper

RELATIONAL VALUES: A WHITEHEADIAN ALTERNATIVE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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Abstract:

In this paper I develop a framework for environmental philosophy on the ground of what I call a radical relationalism based on Whitehead's thought. Accordingly, relations are ontologically prior to and constitutive of entities rather than being conceived as external link(ing) between them. On this ground an alternative, relational axiology can be developed that challenges the current environmental ethics debate and its dichotomy between intrinsic and instrumental values. In the last section, I show how such an axiology can become an important ally for global environmental justice struggles and help support what the anthropologist Arturo Escobar calls a "decolonial view of nature."

Key words: relational values, Whitehead, axiology, environmental justice, decolonizing nature.

1. Introduction

Although Alfred North Whitehead himself never wrote anything about environmental issues, a large body of literature has been produced in environmental ethics from a Whiteheadian perspective. Whitehead scholars have engaged with classical topics of the environmental ethics debate ranging from axiological consideration to deontological models in an original and challenging way. In the big family of Whiteheadian environmental ethics,

different positions along the established framework of the so-called demarcation problem (which non-human entities are to be considered as members of the moral community) have been articulated (such as for example sentientism or biocentrism), as well as original contributions to ecofeminism or ecotheology.¹

My contribution in this paper sidesteps the debate within Whiteheadian environmental ethics to a certain extent and aims at developing a more detailed analysis of what the consequences are for an environmental philosophy rooted in what I call a *radical relationalism*. In this section I will briefly reconstruct Whitehead's philosophy with respect to a radical relationalism, and in the following section on environmental philosophy and axiology I will outline on this ground an alternative axiology for environmental ethics. In the last section, I will show that a relational axiology inspired by Whitehead can become an important ally for environmental justice struggles and help support a "decolonial view of nature."

By *radical relationalism* I mean that, from a Whiteheadian point of view, relations are ontologically prior to and constitutive of entities rather than being conceived as external link(ing) between them. Understanding relations has been haunting modern science since its very beginning, with its culmination

¹ See for example Dombrowski 1997, McDaniel 1989, Howell 2000. For a detailed presentation of the different positions see Muraca 2008.

in Hume's skeptical critique of causation. As we can learn from Whitehead, if the fundamental structure of reality is conceived in terms of discrete bits of matter *simply located*² in time and space, relations between entities are reduced to external links that cannot be observed, but only inferred on the ground of habit and association, as Hume rightly remarked. Generally, according to this theoretical framework, relations have been considered to be universals that link entities in the medium of thought and language (AI 231). This sounds rather obvious as long as relations are considered to be merely abstract possibilities.³ However, thus conceived, "a relation cannot signify the actual connectedness of the actual individual things which constitute the actual course of history" (AI 231) as Whitehead, by drawing on Bradley, remarks. The problem remains how relations could *actually* relate discrete entities (AI 231). Whitehead agrees here with Bradley that an "inclusive whole" as underlying unity is needed in order to understand the actual connectedness of the world, where relations are not merely external, mechanical, or logical links framed by language. Such an inclusive whole is ultimately given in experience: "the connectedness of things is nothing else than the togetherness of things in occasions of experience" (AI 234). So far Whitehead is moving within the tradition of modern philosophy, from Hume to Kant and, as already mentioned, the Hegelian Bradley. The underlying unity grounding the association or connection between entities is the unification *a parte subjecti* given in experience.⁴ It is with the next sen-

tence that Whitehead marks all the difference from that very tradition and its understanding of experience as limited to human knowledge and language when he writes: "Of course such occasions are only rarely occasions of human experience" (ibidem). Experience as we know it serves as a model to explain how the *actuality* of relations can be conceived, but extends as a mode of unification to the whole ontological realm. In Whitehead's pluralist ontology this is best summarized by his famous phrase "the many become one and are increased by one" (PR 21): the unification process in one particular occasion of experience might virtually comprise the whole universe, but it is still one specific actualization that adds up to innumerable others. Bradley's inclusive whole opens up here into a multiplicity of processes of actualization modeled on experience.

1.1 Radical Relationalism

Let me albeit briefly illustrate the idea of radical relationalism in the following paragraphs. The first and most original grasping of something—the form of experience that Whitehead used to call sense-awareness in *Concept of Nature*—is not the observation of an isolated entity, a *bare individuality* unclothed of its properties and relations by the abstraction of thought, but a complex occurrence embedded in a web of constitutive relations that include the emotional disposition of the act of grasping itself.

² Simple location is a technical term in Process Philosophy and refers to the assumption that entities or objects are simply located in space and time, i.e. that they do not need any relation to other spatiotemporal regions for their constitution. Against this Whitehead writes: "The volumes of space have no independent existence. They are only entities as within the totality; you cannot extract them from their environment without destruction of their very essence" (SMW 65).

³ For Whitehead abstract relations are indeed universals out of time and space (he calls them for this reason *eternal objects*), but only as logical possibilities or as potentialities for actualization. Actualization occurs only by means of the actual combination of real-possible relations within and by a *concrete* occasion of experience, as I will explain later.

⁴ By drawing on Whitehead, Hanna Arendt criticizes this basic assumption of modern philosophy. According to Arendt, the modern tradition of thought is rooted in the rather peculiar idea that the commonality of the world is guaranteed by the structure of our minds. However, as she

writes, "what men now have in common is not the world but the structure of their minds, and this they cannot have in common, strictly speaking; their faculty of reasoning can only happen to be the same in everybody" (Arendt 1958, 283). With reference to Whitehead, Arendt claims that instead it is the common world—the horizon for commonality—to which we have access in common sense. Common sense presupposes a common world previous to the perception and representation of it within the mind. Arendt implies that before modernity, common sense used to precede the other senses, giving them a common root and environment beyond differences of expressions, activities, and experiences. In the post-Cartesian tradition, to the contrary, common sense has become a mere "inner faculty without any world relationship" (ibidem). We could say with Whitehead that the access to the commonality of the world is not primarily given or constructed by abstract thought, but found in the most fundamental and primordial form of experience, one that does not even require consciousness to occur: it is experience as a general "taking into account" and literally "taking in" the influences of all that is—with different degrees of relevance—in the immediate past of an occurrence, an occasion of experience.

Relations constitute experience insofar as they—as casual influences, affections, vectors of feeling etc.—*grow together* (in Latin: *cum-crescere*) into the novel and original form⁵ of an occasion of experience and thus become *concrete*.⁶ As we can infer from our specific and complex mode of experience, grasping is at the same time a process constituted by impressions entering our senses and by the unique mode in which they are taken in and combined into a new, subjective form (indeed a *Gestalt*). This all happens—and here is where Whitehead parts company with Kant—without the guidance of a higher level of abstraction conveyed by thought (intuitions can be blind for Whitehead!). In experience relations are not external links, but constitutive vectors of feeling.

However, for Whitehead experience is not limited to beings endowed with consciousness or self-consciousness, but is a fundamental-ontological mode of relation that explains the very connectedness of the world. He names experience the process by which relations internally constitute a (new) form by flowing into and being taken in by a creative process of actualization: the inclusive whole mentioned by Bradley is not an underlying entity that precedes the process, but it is the process itself and its very outcome.⁷ By understanding our own experience we gain access to the understanding of *actual, constitutive relatedness*. The actual connectedness of the world that neither the materialism of modern science—preoccupied with the adventures of matter in space—nor atomistic logic—reducing relations to external links or abstract universals—can explain,

can be conceived and justified only on the basis of actual occurrences (or occasions) constituted by internal relations that are combined in a concrete togetherness.⁸

2. Relational Axiology

Whitehead's radical relationalism challenges the traditional axiology of environmental ethics, both in terms of the very understanding of the “nature” of values and with regard to the axiological classification commonly used on the ground of the demarcation problem that sets up the criteria for the moral consideration of nonhuman entities (Muraca 2010 and 2011). By following Whitehead, we can move beyond the Western, modern tradition of thought and the canon of environmental ethics rooted in it, thus welcoming alternative axiologies more sensitive to non-Western languages of valuation and different tradition of environmentalism, as I will show in the last section of this paper.

2.1. The relational nature of value

2.1.1 Beyond primary and secondary qualities

Although some scholars in environmental ethics plead for axiological objectivism and claim that values are inherent properties of entities and can (or not) be discovered and acknowledged by humans,⁹ the large majority follow an axiological subjectivism. Such a position holds that the source of values is the valuation by subjects, i.e. beings endowed with the ability to discern or to classify the objects of experience according to better or worse and to attribute a value to them. According to *epistemic anthropocentrism*, only humans can be subjects of

⁵ Although Whitehead did not use it, I would rather use here the German term “Gestalt” to translate what he calls subjective form. Form here is not intended as opposite to content, but it is what Whitehead calls a “conrescence,” literally a growing together of different influences into a coherent, new reality or actual entity (Muraca 2010). Conrescence is a process of *gestalten*.

⁶ A concrete entity is the result of a process of conrescence; it stems from a successful combination of contrasting possibilities into a new, complex unity.

⁷ For the sake of brevity I cannot reconstruct Whitehead's argument for the necessary assumption that experience is the fundamental mode of actualization. Whitehead develops a complex argument based on the thorny question about how to conceive time in non-spatialized terms, which implies the idea of a relation of something with itself, i.e. the concept of internal, constitutive relations. Experience is the mode through which we know how this works. For a detailed analysis of this argument see Muraca 2010 and 2014.

⁸ When discussing the specific mode of living beings to coordinate creativity with relative, temporary stability, we can speak with Whitehead of novelty by combination: the concrete fact is the result of a process in which different, partly contrasting elements are combined into a novel Gestalt.

⁹ Holmes Rolston holds a intermediate position which has some similarities with the Whiteheadian perspective that I am presenting below. He claims that values are not in the eye of the observer, but rely on the objective reality of the generative process, which we call nature. Accordingly, values are “out there” in the world independently from human evaluators, but “coagulate” in the world by means of humans' acknowledgment. Far from being a trivial axiological realism, Rolston's position seeks a bridge between subjectivists and objectivists (Rolston 1988; see for a comparison with a Whiteheadian perspective Muraca 2010).

valuation (Krebs 1997; Norton 1991), and there are no values “out there” independently from humans' attribution.¹⁰ Processes of valuation are conceived as a cognitive activity at the level of the faculty of judgment, something that only self-conscious and rational beings possess. Other scholars have extended the ability to value to beings endowed with consciousness, such as more complex animals.

The main argument against axiological objectivism is based on the famous Lockean distinction between primary qualities, which inherently belong to nature itself and are measurable, and secondary qualities which arise in the percipient subject. In this framework values are considered as supervenient to both other types of qualities and are therefore often called *tertiary qualities*, as Ott remarks: “Tertiary qualities are not to be regarded as objective properties of things but as interpretations of perceptions according to some underlying needs, wants, desires or cultural standards” (Ott 2003, 155). Hence, values follow the perception of objects and attach an emotional tone to it according to the model: a subject *S* evaluates *x* as better or worse than (or as good as) *y* (ibidem). The evaluation is based on a consideration of states of minds that *follows* experience as the perception of something (be it an entity or a situation).

From a Whiteheadian point of view, this argument holds only on the ground of the previous, non-manifested assumption of a strict separation between subject and object in experience and of the understanding of relations as external links. In this framework experience is held to be neutral in its first instance and only in a further step does it ‘color’ the object with an emotional, valuing tone.¹¹ Even call-

ing Locke in as an authority here fails to consider that secondary qualities arise in the relational locus¹² where the encounter between perceived object and perceiver occurs and are not—for sure not for Locke—just in the perceiver. Locke did introduce the category of tertiary qualities, but referred them to the mere powers something has to affect or being affected by something else (with no relation to perception or valuation). It was Samuel Alexander who in 1920, inspired by Locke, suggested using the term *tertiary qualities* to address value, thus stressing precisely their essentially relational nature. Alexander acknowledged at the same time that properly speaking values cannot be considered as qualities because they neither inhere in the object nor in the subject. Rather, they are *subject-object determinations*, a new character of reality, “which arise through the combination of mind with its object” to form a compound whole (Alexander 1920, 244ff.).

If values are neither a *parte subjecti* nor a *parte objecti*, but emerge in their encounter, the longstanding controversy between value objectivism and value subjectivism stays on the wrong footing. This is where value relationalism comes into play.

Let me explain this in two steps. First of all, Whitehead challenges the very distinction between primary and secondary qualities, which is based on what he called the *theories of the bifurcation of nature* (CN 26ff). At the dawn of the Western tradition of thought, modern sciences, driven by the urgent need to rely on “irreducible and stubborn facts” in order to face the threat coming from the ecclesial authority (SMW 3), started stripping nature of all those elements that could not be observed by measuring instruments and did not fit the picture of bits of matter wandering through an empty universe of mechanic relations. The Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities served well that need. While measurable qualities were considered to inhere in nature intrinsically, other aspects like color, smell, and taste had to be excluded from scientific consideration and exported onto the other fundamental (and founding) principle of modern thought, the concept of the knowing subject (Muraca 2007). As Whitehead writes, “primary qualities are the essential qualities of substances whose spatio-

¹⁰ Epistemic anthropocentrism is obviously not the same as moral anthropocentrism. To say that only humans can value does not mean that only humans are morally considerable and therefore the loci of inherent moral value. Humans might consider other entities as being loci of inherent moral value by attributing it to them.

¹¹ Heidegger uses the color metaphor to address this way of understanding the purportedly neutral gawping at the world. For him instead, in our daily way of interaction in and with the world, things are not first present-at-hand—i.e. just there as objects—and then are “subjectively colored” (SZ 71) as something that is added to them afterwards. Interestingly enough, Krebs uses the same metaphor to claim the opposite when she writes with reference to humans' aesthetic valuation of nonhuman beings, that eudaimonistic value “dyes” the objects with a subjective cloth of judgment (Krebs 1997, 371).

¹² More specifically for Locke a causal locus. Secondary qualities are the powers to produce ideas in us. As Hampe remarks, they are *dispositional* qualities, and therefore fundamentally relational (Hampe 1990).

temporal relationships constitute nature. . . . The sensations are projected by the minds so as to clothe appropriate bodies in external nature” (SMW 54). Experience had to be cast out of nature so that natural sciences could only consider “that part of nature that can possibly be an object of sense perception, leaving out the experience itself, in which the object appears” (Hampe 1990, 25; my translation). As a result, as Whitehead with bitter irony remarks, “bodies are perceived as with qualities which in reality do not belong to them, qualities which in fact are purely the offspring of the mind. Thus nature gets credits which should in truth be reserved for ourselves: the rose for its scent: the nightingale for his song: and the sun for his radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves, and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellency of the human mind. Nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless . . .” (SMW 54). What had been excluded from “nature” thus conceived, ended up on a quite different stage, laid out by modern philosophy to the support of the new science: the representational subject. The modern subject thus fulfilled a double task for the new sciences: on the one hand it became a kind of disposal site serving the exclusion needed for the scientific explanations of nature, and on the other it constituted the foundational ground for certainty (if not truth itself) from Descartes on. “Nature” constructed as the object of the natural sciences is the result of a heroic abstraction from anything that was in the way of scientific materialism and its model of explanation.

For Whitehead, “the red glow of the sunset should be as much part of nature as the molecules and electric waves by which men of science would explain the phenomenon” (CN 29). “Nature” cannot be understood, let alone explained, if experience is excluded altogether from it, as I have mentioned in the former section.

The notion of value as a supervenient tertiary quality relies on the artificial bifurcation that separates “objective” matters of fact from “subjective” tonal modes of perception that are added to the mere observation of facts in a secondary instance and within the perceiver. This is a highly abstractive representation of human-nature relations that does not correspond to the way in which most people would probably frame their experience, which is structurally value-laden (or, better, value-oriented).

Normally, we do not first observe the objective qualities of trees and then feel the beauty of the forest (or its hazardousness, for that matter). The abstraction rooted in the bifurcation of nature cannot account for immediate experience and is not even a useful analytical tool when it comes to understand the meaning of values and the complex axiological narrative that frames human-nature relations in environmental ethics.

2.1.2 Radical Relationalism and values

In *Modes of Thought*, Whitehead offers a slightly different, rather phenomenological explanation of what I call radical relationalism with respect to experience and to values.

Our first mode of encountering the world is not that of an observation of details singled out and identified in their specific characteristics. Rather, the original mode of experience is what Whitehead calls “vague totality,” which has then to be vectorially oriented in order to gain *importance*, i.e. focused attention to single aspects or details:

“The whole notion of our massive experience conceived as a reaction to clearly envisaged details is fallacious. The relationship should be inverted. The details are a reaction to the totality. . . . They are interpretive and not originative. What is original is the vague totality.” (MT 109)

The primary mode of grasping reality precedes the distinction between subject and object and does not take the form of detailed observation. It is within that very vague totality of the encounter that, *on a second instance*, distinctions might be articulated, including the first, general discrimination between “The Whole,” “That Other,” and “This-My-Self” (MT 110). Likewise, the primary mode of experience is not neutral, but intrinsically value-soaked, if you allow me the metaphor that signals a vagueness that cannot be dissected in its first appearance. The original relation in which experience is possible is a value relation, not in the sense of a value judgment articulated in cognitive or logical terms, but as a field of fundamental openness and care for whatever might occur. As Whitehead writes: “Our enjoyment of actuality is a realization of worth, good or bad. It is a value experience. Its basic expression is—Have a care, here is something that matters! Yes—that is the best phrase—the primary glimmering of con-

sciousness reveals, something that matters" (MT 116).

I am reminded here of another phenomenological analysis of our most fundamental mode of encountering the world. For Heidegger the ontological mode of Being for *Dasein* is not being within the world, somewhere located in a distinctive spot from which to gawp at (*begaffen*) something merely present-at-hand (SZ 61; § 13). The staring attitude, in which knowledge is rooted, implies already a separation between a staring subject and an object which is stared at and lays somewhere before us (*vorhanden*), with which we might relate according to our inclination (SZ 57; § 12). Instead, *Dasein* is more originally being-in-the-world, embedded in a *concerned* relation—I would say a value-relation—which implies already a kind of having to do with something, producing something, undertaking, accomplishing, and so on (SZ 57; § 12). In other words, concern (*Besorgen*) and care (*Sorge*) are the most original ways in which *Dasein* encounters the world (*Begegnen*). To translate it into more palatable language, our most fundamental way of being is not the mode of observation, but a mode of concerned interaction, a care that does not (yet and per se) imply any ethical conduct, but simply displays involvement and emotional tonality as something that is more around us than within us.¹³ Despite all the differences between Heidegger's and Whitehead's systems of thought that include the detailed meaning of the term "care," on this point there is an important commonality: "have a care, here is something that matters!" is the fundamental-ontological mode of inhabiting the world, the basis that renders further discrimination, focused attention, and distinction between subject and object possible in the first place.

Recapitulating, value is at first a relational *locus*, the vague field of encounter, in which subject and object are not yet clearly distinct. It is the very field in which experience is possible at all and through which further distinctions can take place.

Thus intended, value is not a cognitive process of valuation, but a pre-thematic and vague horizon of relationality. At this fundamental level, value does not have any moral meaning, but essentially expresses the fundamentally ontological-aesthetic

condition of being-in-the-world—not only for *Dasein*, i.e. for humans.

Moreover, for Whitehead value is ultimately the *intrinsic reality of an event* (SMW 95), where intrinsic does not mean solipsistic, but essentially constituted by relations combined in a creative, novel form. Value cannot stand alone, but refers to processes of realization or actualization, in which from innumerable possibilities, *some-thing* comes into existence: "At the base of our existence is the sense of 'worth.' Now worth essentially presupposes that which is worthy. Here the notion of worth is not to be construed in a purely eulogistic sense. It is the sense of existence for its own sake, of existence which is its own justification, of existence with its own character" (MT 109). Given that experience in its fundamental-ontological meaning is the mode in which internal relations flow into and are taken in by a new *Gestalt*, the emergence of a coherent form—not disrupted by the concurrence of incompatibilities—is a result of channeling, excluding, and (we could say with Whitehead) *deciding*.¹⁴

At this very first level, whatever is, results from a process of actualization that implies and realizes value. We encounter it with some kind of primordial and vague awe towards realized complexity and beauty.

Of course, at a second instance and after distinctions, values can be articulated into different expressions of approval or disapproval, be it the mode of feeling exhibited by most animals in a more or less articulated way, or in the logical form of a judgment based on language-like reasoning.

In the conduct of our lives, in our preferences, and in our consciously articulated judgments, we might or might not betray that fundamental, vague sense of care that grounds our very existence as relational beings and our most original mode of encountering the world in experience. This is a different story that is embedded in the process of codification of what matters in societies and that is also significantly influenced by institutional settings, modes of subjectivation, patterns of recognition, and other social norms.

¹³ For a more detailed analysis of Heidegger's position, see Muraca 2010.

¹⁴ Whitehead is aware of the problem of using an anthropomorphic term for something occurring at the fundamental-ontological level: "The word 'decision' does not here imply conscious judgment, though in some 'decisions' consciousness will be a factor. The word is used in its root sense of a 'cutting off'" (PR 43).

2.2 Relational Axiology: From instrumental to relational values

In the axiological debate within environmental ethics, the paramount distinction between intrinsic and instrumental values guides most of the different theoretical positions. While a lot has been written about how to understand the category of intrinsic values, which exhibits an ambiguity between the rather deontological meaning of inherent moral value and the more general connotation of something that is valued for its intrinsic properties or for its own sake, instrumental values do not seem to be a matter of dispute. In this section I will briefly reconstruct the dichotomy and its flaws, and then dedicate some attention to the neglected category of instrumental values that point toward a more general perspective on non-intrinsic, relational values.¹⁵ In a third step, I will develop the concept of relational values on a Whiteheadian footing.

2.2.1 Intrinsic and inherent moral values

In a key contribution to environmental ethics, John O'Neill offers a detailed classification of the complex meaning of intrinsic value. He offers three definitions: non-instrumental value (i.e. referring to ends in themselves and not to means to other ends), non-relational value (i.e. the value that something has in virtue of its nonrelational properties), and objective value (independent from the valuation of valuers) (O'Neill 2008, 131). O'Neill shows that in most environmental ethics contributions these three different definitions have been conflated. I would like to add that one of the main problems in the traditional debate on values in environmental ethics is the conflation between axiology and deontology in one and the same step: scholars often use the term intrinsic value to discuss the moral standing of non-human entities on the ground of their being (or not) members of the moral community. The famous classification offered by Frankena of different positions in environmental ethics refers to the type of entities that are considered as holding value in themselves *and therefore* as being members of the moral community (Frankena 1979), whether this refers to humans only (moral anthropocentrism), or to sentient beings (sentientism or pathocentrism), or to all living entities (biocentrism), and so on. In this use, intrinsic value means at the same time non-

instrumental, because it refers to ends in themselves, and relates to the intrinsic, non-relational properties of the beings considered for their own sake. The reason for this conflation goes back to the Kantian framework of the means-ends relations, on which more or less explicitly the debate about moral consideration relies. Accordingly, full members of the moral community deserve *direct* moral respect, while entities outside it deserve moral consideration only *indirectly* with respect to their meaning and functionality for the members (Muraca 2011).

For Kant, only beings that are ends in themselves are members of the moral community. The ground for this does not rely on any intrinsic property of the beings in question, but depends on the necessary postulate that we are free beings and therefore moral agents. This is a very strong claim that displays a deontological immediacy based on what we could term a *transcendental-pragmatic* argument that bypasses any reference to specific properties for grounding the moral standing of rational beings.¹⁶ As Kant states in a pivotal footnote in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, freedom is the *ratio essendi* of morality, while morality is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom: whenever we act morally and expect others to do so, we necessarily (and implicitly) assume that they are free, and therefore ends-in-themselves. Otherwise morality would not make any sense at all. As I have claimed elsewhere, the “practical” (i.e. moral) recognition of others as (potentially) morally acting beings already implies a direct moral duty towards them qua ends-in-themselves. Kant call this immediate, pragmatic implication a *Postulate of Practical Reason* (Muraca 2011, 377).

In this framework beings do not so much *hold* intrinsic value, but *are* values-in-themselves with immediate deontological implications. A more appropriate phrasing of this axiological category would be “inherent moral value,” as it is independent from intrinsic properties and rooted in deontological moral theory. Within the Kantian dichotomic perspective, what is not an end in itself is a means to another end. This implies that besides inherent moral values there are only instrumental values. This is to say,

¹⁵ Of course, as was argued earlier, for Whitehead even intrinsic values are at least rooted in relations.

¹⁶ Pragmatic here refers not to pragmatism, of course, but to praxis and practices. In our very praxis we constantly enact the transcendental co-implication between morality and freedom. We could not possibly think of ourselves or live in a human community without this factual and enacted presupposition.

entities that are not ends-in-themselves are valuable insofar as they are related to ends-in-themselves as instruments or means for them. Thus we have direct moral obligations *towards* ends-in-themselves *in regard* (*in Ansehung*) to what serves them as a means (Muraca 2011).

I am not sure that all environmental ethics scholars who position themselves according to the standard classification and claim for specific beings the status of members of the moral community intend this claim in the same sense as the Kantian framework.¹⁷ As I have argued elsewhere, extending the Kantian framework in its immediate articulation to include other nonhuman beings is theoretically problematic, and might have deleterious effects on the strength of argument itself (*ibidem*). Without getting into the details of this discussion, I want to point out here that whether the notion of intrinsic value is outlined in Kantian terms or not, the dichotomy between intrinsic and instrumental values is reproduced in most environmental ethics positions.

The second meaning of intrinsic value (non-relational) is even more problematic. Accordingly, something holds intrinsic value on the ground of its intrinsic properties. O'Neill distinguishes here between a strong and a weak version of this meaning: in the strong version intrinsic properties can be characterized without reference to other objects, whereas in the weak sense they persist regardless of the existence of other objects (O'Neill 2008, 134). In both cases it is not clear what is actually meant: is something valuable only if its properties are not related to something else? Especially when talking about ecological processes and living organisms, this seems a rather contradictory statement. In fact, if anything, it is precisely the interrelatedness of beings that makes them invaluable—no pun intended. O'Neill mentions “rarity” or even “being untouched by humans” as example of values that are *per definition* not intrinsic, as they can only be grasped with reference to something or someone else. Of course, from a Whiteheadian point of view, a non-relational property is sheer nonsense, as I have argued in the former section. Properties or qualities are expressions of internal relations: something is what and how it is due to the relations that constitute it and have been included into it.

In most cases, when scholars refer to intrinsic values, they actually mean that something is valued intrinsically, i.e. for being as it is regardless of its *usefulness* or *utility* for others, mainly humans. Again, this has less to do with some intrinsic properties than with a non-instrumental relation. According to Taylor:

“Any such entity is intrinsically valued insofar as some person cherishes it, holds it dear or precious, loves, admires, or appreciates it for what it is in itself, or so places intrinsic value on its existence. This value is independent of whatever instrumental or commercial value it might have. When something is intrinsically valued by someone, it is deemed by that person to be worthy of being preserved and protected because it is the particular thing that it is.” (Taylor quoted by Hargrove 2008, 178)

This kind of valuation is obviously based on a consideration that is not instrumental, but is it also non-relational? Hargrove remarks that “when an aesthetic intrinsic value judgment is converted into instrumental terms, the person having the aesthetic experience is depicted as using natural scenery as a trigger for feelings of pleasure” (Hargrove 2008, 183). However, for Hargrove, framing aesthetic valuation in instrumental terms misrepresents the profound meaning of aesthetic experience altogether. This is the case precisely because, if anything, aesthetic experience is utterly relational both in the fundamental sense of a phenomenological grasping of vague beauty and in a more immediate, mundane way of expressing human-nature relations in terms of specific aesthetic criteria.

Recapitulating this first part, both inherent moral value and intrinsic value are constructed as opposite from instrumental value for different reasons: the first term indicates the fundamental distinction between means and ends-in-themselves, while the second one claims a different form of relation that is not reducible to an instrumental framework. It would therefore be more appropriate to consider intrinsic value in the second meaning as a specific mode of relation, or, as I will show later, as a type of relational value. The term “intrinsic” here is misleading.

Before moving to the next section, which reconstructs in Whiteheadian terms the concept of instrumental values and the distinction between means and

¹⁷ With some notable exceptions, such as Regan's argument for animal rights (Regan 1983).

ends, let me briefly add a comment on the category of inherent moral value from a Whiteheadian perspective.

If inherent moral values refer to ends-in-themselves in the Kantian sense, i.e. beings that set their own ends and act teleologically, Whitehead's philosophy extends teleology to the fundamental-ontological level of the actualization or self-realization of occasions of experience as *loci* of value. As I have shown elsewhere, this becomes "visible" at least at the level of living organisms that act to a certain extent teleologically (Muraca 2014).¹⁸ In this very sense, from a Whiteheadian point of view, all actual entities (and in a more substantial way living organisms) *are* intrinsic values because they result from of a process of self-realization rooted in valuations. However, this fundamental meaning does not have any immediate deontological implications. Rather, it refers to an ontological-aesthetic ground for moral respect based in what Ferré has called a *kalogenic* process (Ferré 1996): each actualization realizes beauty and deserves some kind of respect and attention that does not mean necessarily a direct moral obligation in Kantian terms.

2.2.2 Instrumental values as a reductionist understanding of relations

The value dichotomy based on the Kantian framework has made its way beyond the scholarly debate of environmental ethics into key documents developing the general frame for policy making, institutional action, and research agendas, such as the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (MEA). The MEA clearly refers to Kant in the chapter on value, where it states that "the counter-utilitarian idea that there is a difference between preferences and values and that considerations of individual rights temper calculations of aggregate utility was most clearly and powerfully expressed by Kant, who wrote, 'Everything has either a price or a dignity. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity. But that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end in itself does not have mere relative worth, i.e., a price, but

an intrinsic worth, i.e., a dignity' (Kant 1959 [1785]: 53, italics in original)" (MEA 2003, 142-143). The framework chosen replicates a poor, dichotomic axiology that only knows a distinction between either instrumental values, which are in principle replaceable, compensable, and (in the extreme) can be price-tagged, or inherent moral values, which have intrinsic worth in the sense of dignity.

Unfortunately, the MEA itself is not clear about how to relate these two perspectives in a coherent value system. In the chapter on value and valuation, the two perspectives are simply juxtaposed without a satisfactory synthesis. While in the first part of the chapter economic valuation defined as *Total Economic Value* (encompassing use-values and non-use-values) is defended, the second part addresses other sets of value, such as identity-constituting values and inherent values without relating them to the first set. Documents like the MEA are the outcome of a complex process of negotiation among different perspectives, disciplines, and social actors. It displays—so to say—the scars of the negotiation, and reproduces open tensions.

By accepting such a dichotomy, we are faced on the one hand with the difficulties of attributing dignity to nonhuman entities and processes in a solipsistic way, and on the other with the implication that all beings which cannot be plausibly considered as holding "dignity," are left to a merely instrumental valuation, and are therefore open to quantification, commodification, and replacement.¹⁹ Such a dichotomy is not only theoretically poor, but also pragmatically inappropriate for environmental policies, as it fully misrepresents the intuitions that most people have about their relation to non-human nature and the reasons for preserving it. Oftentimes what counts for them is not so much "nature" in and for itself, but the complex and intertwined relational texture that human-nonhuman interactions can create in the particular context of their lives (Chan et al. 2016).

Moreover, the dichotomic framework adopted by the MEA is rooted in the Western paradigm of a bifurcated nature and made into a term of reference for the conservation of ecosystems worldwide. In the last section I will show how this very framework

¹⁸ With reference to Fox-Keller, I distinguish between agency and intentionality, and claim that for living beings at least agency (*Zwecktätigkeit*) has to be assumed in order to properly understand them.

¹⁹ Money, as we know, is a universal equivalent. Whatever can be in principle price-tagged or commodified is also replaceable by something else with the same monetary value. For a critique of the commodification of ecosystem services, see inter alia Kosoy/Corbera 2010.

embodies an imperialistic model of environmentalism imposed on countries of the Global South, both in terms of the instrumental valuation of ecosystem services and their commodification, and in the name of the idea of “nature” as separated from society, to be valued and preserved for its own sake without human use. I claim that a perspective based on Whitehead's radical relationalism can offer an alternative approach.

The problem with the dichotomic framework is not only that all human-nature relations are reduced to merely instrumental ones, but also that the very understanding of instrumental relations is rooted in a misrepresentation of the self-world relation based on the bifurcation of nature. Let me briefly elaborate on this second aspect. The concept of “instrumental value” refers to a means-ends type of relation. Accordingly, instruments are (mostly passive) means chosen to satisfy one's own ends. The tacit assumption in this mode of relation is that a subject *S* employs a means *M* to accomplish an end *E*, where *S* is independent and precedes *M* (both logically and ontologically), and can in principle dispose of different possible ‘*Ms*’ to reach *E*. *M*'s value is commensurate to the reaching of the goal, which implies that any other means available are as good as the original one.

However, as Kant has already shown, the relation means-ends can be perfectly explained in terms of efficient causation, with the only difference that for reasons of relevance we focus on the effect rather than on the cause. In fact, if we didn't presuppose ends-in-themselves—i.e. for Kant humans as free and independent moral agents that conclude the cause-effect chain—then the very language of means would not make sense at all. Properly speaking, means are only such to subjects, who are not influenced by them, but precede the means and employ them as instruments for their own goals. Otherwise, means can be termed the *most proximate cause* (*nächste Ursache*): “in the series of mutually subordinated links in a connection of purposes, each intermediate link must be regarded as a purpose (though, by the same token, not as a final purpose) and its proximate cause is the means to it” (Kant CJ, §63).

This understanding of instrumentality is rooted in the assumption of the subject as something separated, independent, and preceding any relations,

including instrumental ones. While in many situations this is a pragmatic way of framing our relation to the world, it is in general the outcome of the heroic abstraction based on the bifurcation of nature that does not consider the subject, or self, as embedded in a flow of constitutive relations. By taking seriously Kant's consideration in a Whiteheadian scheme, we have to consider means primarily as causes that somehow affect internally the very subject that employs them. Once we question the idea of a “perfect” subject, which comes before action and is not determined by it, the means-ends-relation takes a different shape. Likewise, if we accept that subjects and selves are in-the-making, what we call means also have an efficacious effect upon the very subject who has employed them as means (Muraca 2010).

The continuity of personal identity is not guaranteed by an enduring subject, whether it be an enduring substance like the Cartesian *res cogitans*, or a transcendental function which allows for the unity of all experiences by preceding them logically without being determined by them, as with Kant.²⁰ A subject for Whitehead is not a pre-existing substrate, but a constant process of becoming. It is a privileged “route” of occasions of experience, of subject-occasions that bear a strong relevance in the narrative-historical path of a person's biography. At each step what we do affects who/what we are or will be in the next process of actualization and self-realization that constitutes our life (hi)story (Muraca 2005).

Relations, bounds, and causal influences are the creativity vectors that support and carry on the process of a becoming self as a series of momentary occasions of experience.²¹ Without the privileged relevance of the past and the continuous anticipation of future possibilities, the self would spread and lose any cohesion. In this sense, human beings are characterized by their being open projects against a background of complex givenness—to frame it in Heideggerian language, their essence is their ex-

²⁰ As Catherine Keller very clearly points out: “A person is not a single, enduring subject that underlies the flux of its experience. A person is more like a series of momentary experiences connected by the transition he (James) calls ‘conjunctive relations’” (Keller 1986, 178).

²¹ Also, the anticipation of the future is a determining factor for this continuity (AI 197) and is intimately constitutive of every process of actualization. It acts in the form of a “lure,” and delivers a certain provisional continuity to the process of realization itself.

istence in the form of a decision that overcomes reality towards possibility at each step of their becoming.

From a Whiteheadian point of view, the subject is the activity of self-creation and coincides with the aim of the process of actualization itself. Whitehead calls it a *subject-superject* because it is projected to the completion of an actualization process and *lures*, i.e. attracts it to its own realization. In a process of actualization, the subject S is at the same time the driving force and the result of the process, it is not before the process and can only come into being through it and its conditions. According to this model, S is not only affected by, but also partly determined by the means that it employs for the achievement of its goals.

In other words, employing an instrument as a means ALREADY acts upon the one who is using it. This is something that we can experience every time we use a tool: by using it we enter a complex relation with it and become *another*. We are changed in a way that is not completely under our control (Latour 2002). In most cases this complexity can be neglected and the tool “simply” employed. However, there are situations in which we are reminded that tools are never mere means, but also factors that determine who we are and what we do. It is a matter of relevance and of attention, whether a means has to be considered as a cause on which we are dependent. The instrumental perspective can be thus conceived as the result of a selective view: whenever the causal efficacy of means can be reasonably neglected or is irrelevant, it is appropriate to speak in terms of “mere means.”

The relations to means and instruments does not only affect individuals, but also the peculiar mode of existence of societies. The way in which a society frames its material, social, and cultural relations to “nature” is constitutive of its very self-understanding and structure. Especially in advanced industrialized society, technology can no longer be considered as a set of tools to be employed as instruments according to an aim-setting external to it. Tools are not only independent from ends, but shape and determine the ends—and, as we know, the subjects employing them. Accordingly, using and interacting with tools modifies us and the way we (collectively) think, behave, and act (Ellul 1989). From an anthropological point of view, technology is a form of relation to the world and to others; it embodies and shapes so-

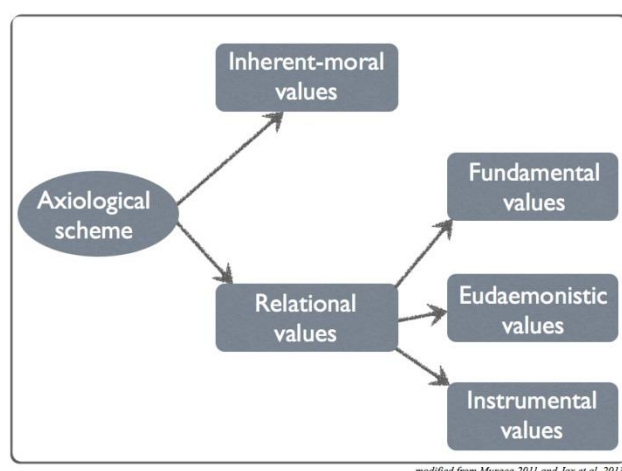
cial relationships. Tools are carriers of meaning, reflect power relations, and enframe the sphere of actions and collective practices. The kind of tools a society chooses to employ and develop determines its political, institutional, and ethical fabric.

Moving back to our discussion on instrumental values, we can hold that a) instrumental relations to “nature” are a specific subcategory of more complex modes of relations, and b) only a few of these modes can be adequately and appropriately framed as merely instrumental when the abstraction from the complexity of causal interdependence can be reasonably justified. We could add to that a further consideration c) that neglecting the constituting character of what we call instrumental relations can be a misleading illusion with detrimental consequences. First, it reinforces the deception of a self-contained subject who relates to a world of objects and means at his disposal while neglecting his ontological and existential dependence on those very “means.” Second, it reproduces what Whitehead called the *fallacy of misplaced concreteness*, i.e. an unjustified switching between abstraction and actuality, in which the process of abstraction is forgotten and what is merely a restricted perspective is taken to mean the whole. Depending on the actual relevance of what has been excluded by the process of abstraction, this can have severe repercussions.

2.2.3 From instrumental to relational values

A different axiological categorization is needed to adequately represent human-nature relations without replicating the bifurcation of nature. In my previous work I have outlined an alternative axiological matrix for environmental ethics (Muraca 2011). This perspective has been further developed in recent interdisciplinary debates about the valuation of ecosystem services (Jax et. al. 2013). Following from that, I suggest we abandon the classic axiological classification of environmental ethics and adopt the category of “relational values” as a more appropriate way of articulating how and why we value what we call “nature.”

In this scheme inherent moral values are kept as a distinct category, although from a Whiteheadian perspective, this does not mean that they are not relational in principle. The reason for having a separate category for inherent moral values is the need to focus on the self-creative, teleological process that



leads to novelty, intensity, and complexity. This category can be framed in a direct moral sense based on Kantian deontology or in an aesthetic/ethical way on the ground of Ferrés *kalogenesis*.

Relational values, on the other hand, encompass different modes of relations and correspond to different languages of valuation and practices. We can at least distinguish between three modes of relational values: fundamental, eudaemonistic, and instrumental.

Fundamental and eudaemonistic values are intrinsic in the sense that the relations that ground them are intrinsically valuable. Following O'Neill, intrinsic here does not mean non-relational, but refers to a) a mode of relation that does not allow for substitution of one of the relata, and, more properly, b) to a relational field that enables the relata to exist and flourish in the first place. The relation itself is constitutive for the relata, as I have illustrated in the former sections of this paper.

Fundamental values refer to the ontological-fundamental system of relations that grounds the very possibility of a subject to occurring in the first place and establishing specific, even instrumental relations to the world it inhabits (Muraca 2011). They refer to relationality both at the ontological level (as the very condition for the *ex-istence* of forms and as the fundamental interdependence of the universe) and at the level of the vague, aesthetic encounter with the world as something that matters. In a more profane sense, this category can also include all processes, networks, and relational structures that constitute the fundamental conditions for our planet to maintain its complex and dynamic balance, thus supporting human and nonhuman life. It is hardly possible to specify fundamental-

relational values with respect to single entities, because this mode of relation refers to complex, all-embracing processes and their conditions of regeneration. In the MEA, the category of so-called supporting services is meant to address these specific functions of ecosystems. Looking at the graphic representation of the different types of ecosystem services in the MEA, supporting services are placed at a different level as the all-sustaining ground for other services. In a proper way, it seems rather difficult to group under the term “ecosystems”—a necessarily plural concept²²—the invaluable function of, for example, photosynthesis. The atomistic framework of modern science runs against its limit when it comes to address systemic complexes and processes that unfold over time and cannot be sliced into single entities or components. Similarly, the creative “(re)productivity” of life cannot be explained in terms of single ecosystems or processes.²³ Fundamental values refer to collectives, processes, and wholes that cannot be reduced to singularities with clearly identifiable boundaries in time and space. Species, for example, cannot be reduced either to historical individuals or to mere logical sets (Mayr 1987). From a Whiteheadian point of view, species are relational, efficacious patterns that embody specific forms of organization and are actualized in and by organisms. Species are the fundamental conditions for their existence, and yet do not exist other than in those very actualizations (Muraca 2010).

Finally, fundamental values refer to the basic conditions for the self-understanding of a community that embodies them in collective practices, rituals, patterns of social relations, and symbolic meaning. Patterns of social, material, and cultural relations

²² Unless we follow the unsteady path of considering planet Earth as “one” ecosystem, which seems rather indefensible.

²³ I borrow here the term (re)productivity from the feminist scholars Adelheid Biesecker and Sabine Hofmeister, who introduced it to challenge the capitalistic-patriarchal distinction between productivity, which refers to what is considered as an economic process, and reproductivity, which is supposed to refer to what is not productive, such as care activities and nature's processes of regeneration. By writing (re)productivity this way, they challenge this dichotomy and claim that so-called reproductive processes are creative, indeed productive, and the most fundamental conditions for any other form of what we might call production. The (re)productivity of life is a perfect example for a fundamental-relational value (Biesecker/Hofmeister 2010).

also determine the specific understanding of the relation to “nature” that characterizes the collective and how this is implemented in practices, institutions, and policies.

The idea of fundamental dependency connected with the idea of human finitude, as it is stated in most spiritual traditions, reveals this vague intuition of fundamental relationality. For example, the connection to the “Land” (especially as it is expressed by many indigenous people) is not a “functional” link to a single entity, which is valued for its supporting services by those who benefit from them. Rather, it represents the overall relational system that constitutes individuals and encompasses their ecological, cultural, and social interdependence (Muraca, forthcoming).

Fundamental values might or might not be acknowledged and articulated in specific languages of valuation. In fact, most of the time they are not even seen, precisely because of their fundamental character. The air we breathe is so essential that we do not even start to value it until it is contaminated. So are the fundamental relations that make us who and what we are, including all the care relations, most of them not even clearly traceable, that constitute(d) our own story and personal identity. This of course does not mean that they are “objective.” As already discussed, their “locus” is the relation itself, which can or cannot be acknowledged, voiced or articulated.

Similarly, eudaemonistic values do not only refer to romantic leisure and aesthetic experiences, but encompass all those relations and processes considered as necessary for living a “good life” as a collective project. They do not articulate merely individual preferences, but include the self-understanding of a community, its social imaginary and the very basis for the common life. Eudaemonistic values can be termed intrinsic—as some scholars choose to do (Hargrove 2008)—in the sense that they cannot simply be reduced to a merely instrumental consideration because they are not substitutable in principle, at least from the point of view of the valuers. They are not valued for delivering a service or as means to reach a goal that goes beyond them. Even if one might say that experiences, processes, or entities which have eudaemonistic value convey pleasure or support a good life, and thus are not valuable in themselves, but for what they deliver, this does not correspond to the experience that most people

have. If I value a particular knife because it belonged to my father, I do not value it instrumentally for it reminding me of my father. I would not accept to replacing it with another knife (that could deliver the same or a better service in cutting things), nor another object that belonged to my father that could remind me of him. This is because it embodies complex, *concrete* relations,²⁴ displayed across space and time, inscribed in its very material structure: the signs of use on the grip, that little scratch from when it fell down at my sister's birthday party, and so on. The knife is neither a tool nor a medium to something else. It IS the relation. It embodies it almost literally. It is—to say this with Heidegger—the relational knot of the *Geviert*, the Fourfold, the intersection point of heaven and earth, the mortals and the immortals (Heidegger 1971), or, in other words: the stuff it is made of that is not simply bare matter, but the outcome of a continuous activity of re-enacting its form and shape; the meanings and records it bears as a condensation of stories and abstract possibilities; the hands that touched it; its history extending over time into the past and the future (anyway this is one way of interpreting the fourfold—others are possible). Nothing can replace it, and even if I were forced to sell it for money, the relation embodied in it would not be represented in the price. It would be reduced to something that it is not, cut off from the relational field that holds it. Indeed, we would not accept a feasible substitute for what we value *intrinsically* in this very sense of the term. Ordinary language confirms this: when we say that something is priceless, we mean precisely that there is no equivalent by which it could be replaced (money is the universal equivalent), and therefore measured or compensated.

This is of course even more dramatic when it comes to collective meanings and relational fields that sustain and support the life—the good life—of a whole community. The idea of human embeddedness, as it is stated in many non-Western traditions, reveals this vague intuition of fundamental and eudaemonistic relationality.

Especially in the Western understanding of human-nature relations, fundamental and eudaemonistic values are framed in terms of instrumental values

²⁴ And not just an abstract means-ends link between knives and cutting. It is concrete because it is the outcome of the growing together of several actualizations. This knife is like no other one.

precisely because our constituting relations are denied or ignored. This might be perfectly appropriate when the relevance of what is ignored is not very strong. For most knives I interact with every day, this whole complexity can be neglected. However, relevance is not something given in absolute terms, but in a contested field in which the asymmetry of power plays a significant and sometimes deleterious role.

As I will mention in the last section, moreover, forcing fundamental-relational or eudaemonistic values into an instrumental language performatively affects material, social, and cultural relations to “nature.” This imposition is in place whenever languages of valuation based on fundamental or eudaemonistic values do not have a voice and are repressed or replaced by the hegemonic language of the dominant paradigm(s), as is the case, for example, with the valuation models based on mainstream economics and market-driven perspectives.

3. From environmental ethics to global environmental justice: Questioning the Western model(s) of environmentalism with Whitehead

One of the consequences of the bifurcation of nature is that our very living body had to be defined as external “qua” natural and turned for us into external nature rather than being ‘the’ nature that we ultimately are to ourselves (Böhme 1989, 32). As Böhme writes, what has been constructed as “external nature”—the other of reason and culture—could easily be kept at a distance as an object of scientific observation, use, and exploitation. As a reaction to this objectifying and instrumentalizing view of “nature” based on modern science, a new aesthetic of “nature” developed in the wake of the Romantic movement in Europe and in the US. Kant’s concept of the sublime, as well as Wordsworth’s poetry and the transcendentalist movement inspired by Emerson and Thoreau, contributed to what Böhme calls “the Romantic invention of nature.” This is the time of landscape paintings and of the discovery of hiking²⁵ as a recreational activity away from civilization and urban settings. “Nature” is framed as the other of reason, as the naive, unreflected, wild, primitive, non-civilized, innocent other that can be observed,

contemplated, and enjoyed at a distance from the point of view of those who are not engaged in a working relation to and with it.

According to Böhme, this corresponds to the aesthetics of the bourgeois intellectual who encounters nature in her leisure time; he calls it a “bourgeois aesthetics of nature.” As he further observes, such an aesthetic relation to Romantic “nature” does not mark a real opposition to modern natural science and the attitude of exploitation of natural resources. Rather, externalization and instrumentalization of nature and the aesthetic relation of contemplation and wonder are two sides of the same coin. Both stem from the bifurcation and frame “nature” as the separate other.

While Whitehead is inspired by Wordsworth in his critique of the modern bifurcation, his philosophy of organism does not simply fall in the easy trap of the Romantic bourgeois aesthetics. In fact, by challenging the bifurcation, Whitehead does not simply reproduce the opposition on a different footing. The Romantic subject—eminently represented in Caspar David Friedrich’s paintings as the observer at a distance of the sublime scenery displayed by natural landscapes—does not escape the Whiteheadian critique. Whitehead’s radical relationalism questions its very steady foundation and re-opens the frame in which human-nature relations are depicted.

In the next section, I want to elaborate on this point in order to show how a Whiteheadian radical relationalism can offer an alternative path to two hegemonic currents of Western environmentalism that have emerged and proliferated all over the world along a rather imperialistic path. To borrow a classification that the political ecologist Martinez-Alier suggests, we can call them the Cult of Wilderness and the Gospel of Ecoefficiency (Martinez-Alier 2002).

3.1 Western Environmentalism

The cult of wilderness is rooted in the idea of “nature” as something separated, distinct, and independent from humans. By definition, wilderness is an untouched area in which humans are only visitors who do not remain, as the Wilderness Act says. Manipulation and management, albeit necessary to keep wilderness areas wild, have to be hidden and kept invisible to the spectator or the visitor. The cult of wilderness is constructed around the idea of pristine nature, a condition that corresponds to specific ex-

²⁵ The English Thesaurus explains the term “hiking” inter alia as “walking for recreation.” The very idea of hiking was alien to the people before the Romantic movement. Walking in general was rather associated with poverty.

pectations and narratives of a place without humans, wherein the humans meant in this narrative are the European settlers. First Nation people were considered as part of the wild. The “pristine” condition that the cult of wilderness strives to recreate is thus the status of ecosystems of pre-Columbian America, from which the original inhabitants had been literally annihilated (Callicott and Nelson 1998). This story, however, does not just belong to the past. This idea of wilderness still plays a major role in the activity of several NGOs all over the world. Contemporary nature conservation paradigms centered in this Western tradition advocate the necessity of preserving wilderness areas that exclude human use and exploitation. As Ramachandra Guha has shown, this form of environmentalism is ultimately rooted in a consumeristic attitude towards “nature” elsewhere, defined as wilderness and as “untouched” by humans. In the name of this paradigm, locals, peasants, and indigenous people—those who have indeed a “working” relation to “nature”—have been evicted from their land or forced into a scheme that heavily jeopardizes their livelihoods (Guha 2000). A poisonous alliance has formed between environmental organizations based in the Global North and the upper classes of countries of the Global South (like India), an alliance interested in preserving “nature” for its own pleasure. In this framework the value of “nature” is constructed along the same lines as the wilderness conservation narrative that is so powerful in the Global North. It is the necessary other to society, a place that contrasts with the urban rhythms of life and is essential for the regeneration and spiritual integrity of busy business people. Guha is very clear in pointing out that ultimately such an approach to “nature” and wilderness as something to be protected and preserved for its own sake independently of human transformation reproduces implicitly an instrumental consideration. Wilderness is a necessary component of the self-understanding of modern societies, something that can be consumed in the form of contemplation, inspiration, and research. This materializes in tourism, documentary films, exclusive journeys, photographs, different forms of active engagement that often lead to the exclusion of those people who do not share this conception of “nature” as the other, but are used to inhabiting, transforming, interacting with, and sharing a territory with other inhabitants, both human and non-human: “tribal people in the Madagascar or Amazon

forest are expected to move out only so that residents of London or New York can have the comfort of knowing that the lemur or toucan has been saved for posterity—evidence of which is then provided for them by way of the wildlife documentary they can watch on their television screens” (Guha 2000, 369). Wilderness areas are preserved for the pleasure of the new upper and middle classes in the Global South and for the joy of Western nature lovers. The bourgeois aesthetic of nature embodies not only a racist, but also a classist form of discrimination and oppression: Romantic ‘nature’ is encountered in a recreational mood freed from material or cultural necessities and dependencies. Guha’s brilliant provocation bears an important lesson from a Whiteheadian perspective: the language of intrinsic value is not the opposite of instrumental language, but shares a kinship relationship with it. Both are rooted in the concept of a bifurcated nature and the myth of an independent, separate subject, and in the neglect of the fundamental relationality that constitutes it.

The Gospel of eco-efficiency is based on a clearly instrumental consideration of “nature” in terms of capital, resources, and sinks that have to be efficiently managed in order to guarantee the continuous reproduction of the established model of Western development in the long run. This is currently the worldwide hegemonic paradigm when environmental issues are addressed. Inspired by a rather narrow understanding of sustainable development in terms of sustained economic growth, it has more recently been reformulated during the Rio+20 summit in 2012 as a path to the Green Economy. According to the different approaches that embody the gospel of eco-efficiency,²⁶ technological and institutional innovation combined with some forms of regulation are the key drivers for a successful path towards sustainable development. Through an *efficient* and/or *consistent* management of resources,²⁷ biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and climate

²⁶ Not only the green economy, but also other approaches such as ecological modernization populate the heterogeneous and multifaceted universe of the gospel of eco-efficiency. For the sake of brevity, I will not address them here in detail.

²⁷ Efficiency refers only to the relation between means and ends, while consistency is a criterion that considers the qualitative modes of regeneration of natural processes and frames economic development in accordance with them.

change can be at least slowed down. The current, controversial debate about ecosystem services and their monetization is part of this approach. While the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment—as we have seen—did not reduce the assessment of ecosystem to a merely economic valuation, more recent documents, such as TEEB (*The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity*), tend to focus almost exclusively on economic language (Kumar 2012). Interestingly enough, however, within TEEB itself different economic schools have argued about the scope and the dangers attached to market instruments, commodification, and monetization of ecosystem services. Scholars from so-called heterodox economic traditions have stressed the importance of not reducing the heterogeneity of languages of valuation to a merely instrumental frame (Martinez-Alier 2009) and question the feasibility and appropriateness of monetization (Vatn 2005; O'Connor and Frame 2011).

In so doing, they invoke the incommensurability of languages of valuation that express human-nature relations and the cultural, social, and ecological complexity of processes that cannot be sliced into single units. In their critique of the instrumentalization language used to address ecosystem services, these scholars neither appeal to the narrative of wilderness nor to the intrinsic value of “nature” that cannot be price-tagged. Instead of reproducing the dualism between price and dignity articulated in the MEA, they clearly advocate a different way of framing relations and processes. The very term “nature” looses its grip as the objective of environmental policies and actions.

Such a perspective voices an alternative current of environmentalism that challenges both the cult of wilderness and the gospel of eco-efficiency and radically questions the Western dominant language of environmentalism altogether. As we have shown, both traditions share a common root in the concept of a bifurcated nature and of an independent and separate subject facing it.

3.2 Environmentalism of the Poor

Martinez-Alier and Guha call this third current that is at work in many parts of the world, but more specifically in the Global South, *environmentalism of livelihoods* or *environmentalism of the poor* (Guha & Martinez-Alier 1997). Accordingly, environmentalist movements in the Global South are

mostly led by an immediate struggle for their collective livelihoods rather than—as it is in the Global North—for ecological reasons (Martinez-Alier 2002). From the point of view of the environmentalism of livelihoods, what is at stake is not very much “nature,” but the creative processes and cycles that sustain life in general and secure its reproduction for the community inhabiting the land and interacting with it. In the name of both Western currents of environmentalism, local people who have lived for centuries in a reciprocal and complex relation with their territory—where forests, mountains, and waters have ever been the livelihood and the basis for the social imaginary of their communities—all of a sudden are kicked out of their ancestral places to make room for nature conservation areas, in which no use or human interaction is allowed, or forced to give way to large so-called development projects, such as the Special Economic Zones in India. As the Indian sociologist Nivedita Menon pointedly remarks, in India “Environment trumps People, Development trumps Environment (<http://himalmag.com/judging-judiciary/#sthash.RVJ47NSa.dpuf>).

The environmentalism of the poor refers to the daily struggles of indigenous people, small farmers, and women from the so-called Global South not only against eviction, but also and more specifically for preserving the conditions of their common life, which includes material and cultural-symbolic dimensions. They resist in order to protect what anthropologist Arturo Escobar calls a *proyecto de vida* (Escobar 2008), their collective vision for a self-determined and sustainable life in the community. The *Land*—not so much “nature”—is the space that sustains the life project of the community and requires shared, social control of the modes of appropriation of, use of, and relation to natural processes as the basis for food security, self-subsistence, and autonomy. The term “nature” makes no sense for them, as it does not express the complex frame of relations that support their lives and in which they are embedded. If anything, value is not attached to single entities, but to processes and relations. The different languages and narratives in which these relational frames are articulated refer to the land, the place, or the territory, inhabited by different beings (what we would call human and nonhuman, natural and supernatural) that are classified according to different geographies and relational schemes. This framework challenges the Western idea of “nature”

as something external to society to be—depending on the dominant paradigm—preserved (nature & wilderness conservation), exploited (eco-efficiency, green economy, weak sustainability), or managed (strong sustainability, wise use). It shifts attention to a radically different understanding of the relation to the “territory,” with all its inhabitants included in what can be best called a *cosmo-anthropo-vision*, in which interconnection among different levels of the real (biophysical, human, and supernatural) leads to specific society-nature relations and nature-culture regimes.

Such a view lays the ground for what Escobar provocatively calls a *decolonial view on nature* that “calls for seeing the interrelatedness of ecological, economic, and cultural processes that come to produce what humans call nature” (Escobar 2008, 154). Accordingly, the Western, modern concept of “nature” has delivered the monolithic world of objective relations and the never-changing background for different cultural expressions: vis-à-vis a unifying nature, the multiplicity of cultures could find its common ground as “nature,” delivered as a no-longer-questionable horizon of truth beyond all cultural differences (Descola 2011). Western ontology has imposed a colonial “nature” as the framework for reading other ways of understanding “human-nature relationships” whenever the premise was taken for granted that what is being articulated in the ontologies of nonmodern people is equivalent to our nature, and therefore reproduces a dualistic cosmology. As Descola writes: “Rather than viewing the cosmologies of non-modern peoples as false beliefs and anthropocentric projections, geared more or less convincingly to chunks of positive knowledge, it is preferable to treat them, like all our actions in the world, as a way of patterning our relations with all kinds of entities in which we discern specific qualities, entities that require in return forms of behaviour and mediation that are adequate to the nature we ascribe to them” (Descola 2011, 18). Non-Western people develop different ontologies to reflexively frame the fundamental system of relation that is the world in which they dwell (Muraca, forthcoming).

Are there any similarities in the modes of human-nature relation we can refer to within the Western tradition? Can we start reconsidering the modern ontology of nature as one ontology among others and possibly challenge and shift it in more promis-

ing patterns that can guide alternative environmental practices?

Böhme's analysis offers a feasible alternative path to the bourgeois aesthetic of nature: the model of an *ecological aesthetics of nature* that is rooted in the living body (*Leib*) as the primary mode of our being-in-the-world as *Befindlichkeit*, in its double sense of being affected by our environment and occupying or creating a space or—in Böhme's terms—effusing an atmosphere in it. Accordingly, the living body is the closest nature, the nature that ultimately we are. The ongoing processes of self-world co-constitution mediated by the body as *Leib* might then not so much be represented by touristic trekking tours in the woods with breath-taking landscape views, or whale-watching experiences. Rather, they would occur in the less romantic mode of interrelation and interaction, transforming and being transformed, like the experience of the gardener in the English gardens, the organic farmer, or the urban bee-keeper. In Böhme's words, we enter a partnership relation in which human creativity interacts with nature's own productivity, spontaneity, regeneration capacity, and—yes—also renitence (Böhme 1989). However, the term “nature” seems to be out of place here: what Böhme is talking about is no longer a general object, a totality concept. Rather and more properly, it is what he calls an *ecological fabric* (*ökologisches Gefüge*) in which—to use a Whiteheadian expression—a *buzzing world* of activities, interactions, communication, voices, forms, colors is at work. Ecological fabrics are communication fields in which the self-world relation is disassembled in a complex relational field encompassing multiple voices. As Whitehead writes: “All modern philosophy hinges round the difficulty of describing the world in terms of subject and predicate, substance and quality, particular and universal. The result does violence to the immediate experience which we express in our actions, our hopes, our sympathies, our purposes, and which we enjoy in spite of our lack of phrases for its verbal analysis. We find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures; whereas, under some disguise or other, orthodox philosophy can only introduce us to solitary substances, each enjoying an illusory experience.” (PR 49-50).

4. Conclusion

Can a radical relationalism based on Whitehead's philosophy help us develop a different model of environmentalism that frees itself from its imperialistic ontology and enters a fruitful dialogue with practices, visions, and languages rooted in a different framework? I think that indeed Whitehead's critique, articulated from within the very Western tradition of thought and with its instruments, can serve as a bridge for a modest conversation in which we stop exporting some allegedly superior body of thought and step back as learners and listeners. Whitehead's philosophy gives us tools to conceive and translate languages that seem at first incommensurable with our representation of the world in terms of subjects and objects, discrete entities, and self-sustaining substances that enter functional, external relation.

A different axiological scheme is not just a conceptual tool for scholarly disputes in environmental ethics. Rather, it can turn into a powerful set that hosts different languages of valuation in their own right and form. As Martinez-Alier has poignantly stressed, environmental conflicts are ultimately value conflicts, whereby not only different value attributions (which entities entails which value) are contested, but also the whole axiological topography is challenged, albeit with different abilities to reframe it due to asymmetries of power. Changing the axiological scheme, as I claim, is a political act that might—hopefully—help renegotiate the terms of reference for environmental action. This would mark an alternative understanding of our relation to “nature,” and thus a different way of addressing the ecological crisis: rather than following the (romantic) myth of wilderness and the tradition of nature conservation for its own sake (and for our need for nature as a mirror), a different kind of environmentalism would assemble around the idea of cooperation, *Gestaltung*, interaction, co-creation, transformation, and ultimately inhabitation of a common, shared world.

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Invited paper

RECLAIMING NATURE BY RECLAIMING THE BODY

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Abstract:

A number of recent environmental philosophers (Vogel, Morton, Latour) have proclaimed the end of nature. They oppose what they consider to be an outdated view of nature as a basis for environmental philosophy and political ecology. Instead of “thinking like a mountain” (Leopold), we should begin “thinking like a mall” (Vogel). These end-of-nature thinkers claim that the concept of nature in environmental discourses is bound to be something that is outside of us because man is understood as doing something to nature. Without putting forth a clearly defined concept of “nature,” we argue that proclaiming the end of nature is misguided. This proclamation means forgetting the body. If we really want to get beyond understanding nature as something outside of us, and truly sense and understand ourselves as natural or environmental beings who are a part of the earth’s ecosystem, we should direct our attention to how nature as the biotic, inner/outer environment is experienced and sensed in and through our bodies. We thus suggest that environmental philosophy should encourage sensing like embodied beings before introducing notions like thinking like a mountain, mall, water, or a plant for that matter. This approach is among other things based on the phenomenology of the body (Merleau-Ponty) and phenomenology of the real (Conrad-Martius).¹

Key words: Nature, environment, body, embodiment, living organism, phenomenology of the body and nature.

1. Introduction

Aldo Leopold, one of the pioneers of environmental philosophy, encouraged us once to think like a mountain in order to truly take an ecological understanding of nature to heart (Leopold 1949). The world has changed much since Leopold presented his Land Ethic in the mid 20th century, and our understanding of nature—both the concept and the physical reality it refers to—have changed as well. This change manifests in the fact that today many environmental philosophers encourage us to think like a (shopping) mall rather than like a mountain (Vogel 2015). Bruno Latour argues in a similar vein that political ecology should have nothing to do with nature. It is good that nature, the great Pan, is dead (Latour 2004).

Leopold’s ideas about dwelling in nature were indebted to Thoreau’s famous quote that in wildness there is salvation of the world (Leopold 1949, 133).¹ The environmentalist agenda inspired by Leopold’s environmental ethics is to protect nature from human influence, both to save the ecosystem and to hold on to the possibility of engaging with wild nature. Rachel Carson, the author of *Silent Spring* (1962)—the book that spurred the first great wave of environmental thought—once said in an interview that the reason she wrote that book was that she was afraid that the next generation would not be able to engage with the natural world in the same way she had. She

¹ Leopold misquotes Thoreau by talking about “salvation” rather than “preservation.”

wanted to reveal the interconnectedness of the ecosystem to help us understand how our actions threaten the natural world and our possibilities of relating to it. In the wake of the nascent environmental movement, Carolyn Merchant—a philosopher of nature and historian of science—analyzed how the industrial and the scientific revolution led to the death of nature (Merchant 1980). During the Enlightenment period science began to atomize, undermining a vitalistic notion of nature as a living whole. Merchant thus continued in Carson’s spirit to help us understand how our itemizing and atomizing of the world prevents us from seeing nature as an interconnected ecosystem of which we are a part. In *The End of Nature* (1989), one of the first books on global warming, Bill McKibben discussed the destructive power of nature as altered by the power of man, and warned us of the enormous influence we are having on the ecosystem. So at the root of the environmental movement is (1) the idea that nature must be protected from human exploitative power, (2) that in order to protect nature we have to learn to see it as a whole, as an interconnected ecosystem, and (3) that in order to see nature as a whole, we need to re-connect with it. Thus a recurring theme throughout environmental thought since Leopold and Carson has been the idea that in order to develop a truly ecological consciousness and an ethical relation to nature, we need to be able to engage with nature in areas that are “untouched” by humans.

A very different idea of the end or death of nature has resurfaced among a certain vanguard of present-day philosophers of the environment. They call for the end of nature as an idea of a refuge or sanctuary that they interpret as a turn away from technological civilization. Such a concept of nature is seen as troublesome for dealing with environmental issues. These end-of-nature thinkers should therefore not be confused with Merchant, McKibben, and Carson’s concepts of the end of nature as destruction of nature. Thinkers that call for the end of nature oppose strongly what they consider to be a romantic view of nature as a basis for environmental philosophy and political ecology. Stephen Vogel (2015) and Timothy Morton (2007) explain this disenchantment more closely. They argue that behind the agenda of the environmental movement inspired by thinkers such as Leopold is the idea of nature as something out there, separated from human society, and that this is an idea that we need to abandon. In *Ecology Without Nature*, Morton argues that the idea of nature has to “wither away” if human society is to

become ecological. His claim is that “the idea of nature is getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics, and art” (Morton 2007, 1). Vogel similarly argues in *Thinking like a Mall* that we should acknowledge the end of nature. Giving up the concept of nature, he argues, “might actually mean an improvement in the quality and rigor of our thinking about the human relationship to the environment we inhabit” (Vogel 2015, 9). Echoing this view, Slavoj Žižek, when interviewed in a film documentary, poses in front of a dumpsite, and claims that environmental thinking needs to begin here, right where the garbage is being processed.²

Behind the position of Morton and Vogel lies the idea that our cultural conceptions of nature shape our understanding and relationship with the natural world. They argue that it is impossible to distinguish sharply between what is nature and what is man-made in human life, and increasingly so in the technology- and informatics-driven culture of the anthropocene.³ For end-of-nature thinkers, adjectives such as “unspoiled,” “pure,” “untouched,” and “wild” that are associated with “nature” uphold a separation between nature and the workings of man. The natural world is so affected by the doings and workings of the human species that a major force of life on earth—the climate—is to some degree man made. In environmentalism and environmental philosophy, the concept of nature thus creates a gap between humans and the natural world that is not there. For Vogel, Morton, and Latour, getting rid of nature means acknowledging the fact that nature is never (or at least hardly ever) pure, unspoiled, or wild. A polar bear is always in some surroundings that are affected by technological culture, the water, the air, etc.

We believe these thinkers that call for the end of nature throw out the baby with the bathwater. Giving up the concept of pure nature should in our view not be replaced by the idea that nature or the natural environment is *exclusively* a product of social and material construction in the broad sense. Therefore we are hesitant of letting the idea of nature wither

²See the film documentary *The Examined Life* (Astra Taylor, 2004),

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGCfiv1xtoU>.

³ Thinkers that write about the Anthropocene often refer to this age as an age “after nature.” See for example Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

away altogether by claiming that nature is nothing more than the meanings given to it in the highly technologized matrix of the global world. This is counterintuitive, and not only because nature still surprises us, catches us off guard, overwhelms us in different ways, and exposes itself to us in new ways. There are parts to nature (as both our inner and external environment) that are still concealed and unknown to us. We are continually in the process of discovering nature, either with the help of science or through our own lived experiences. The end-of-nature discourse is based on the idea that nature is mirrored, represented, and interpreted in science or pragmatic forms of knowledge. This same discourse in our view does not adequately acknowledge lived and embodied experiences of nature; it does not account for our experience of being nature ourselves, of being bodies, of connecting to the core of what it means to be a breathing, pulsating, sexuate human being.⁴ Can such experiences yield something more than a subjective or narcissistic sense of ourselves and tell us something about “nature” in general? Why is it at all important to hold on to such an idea of nature?

The idea of nature as a place outside of us, a place that we go to on Sundays to “re-connect,” is indeed outgrown and limited. In the context of environmental debates nature is an interactive term, a point of contestation, and a liminal phenomenon as a reference point for environmental ethics and politics. It is necessary to think about how nature is being processed and recycled in the material involved in the mall and the dumpsite. But rather than letting the idea of nature “with away,” we suggest that we should engage with the concept of nature from a different perspective. Perhaps the only way for us to stop seeing nature as something outside of us and truly sense and understand ourselves as natural beings that are a part of the earth’s ecosystem is to start focusing more on nature as experiences in our bodies. We are so lost in our ideas of nature (and the idea of getting rid of them) that we neglect the fact that we *are* something before we start thinking and having ideas. We thus suggest that we should stop *thinking* like a mountain or a mall, and rather start *sensing and experiencing* like embodied beings.

⁴ The term sexuate “refers to the fact that there are two main sexes and in-between or non-binary sexuate types. Sexuate is to be distinguished from ‘sexual’ as referring to sexual orientation.” For this distinction see Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

The End of Nature?

Rachel Carson worried that there would be no Nature with a capital N for the next generation to relate to as she did in her lifetime. Are we already living in the dystopian condition that Carson feared? In a world where two thirds of the human population live in urban areas, and fewer and fewer people have access to “wild” nature, are we raising a generation that will never set foot on “earth”? Even in Nordic countries where people are fortunate enough to still have large areas that seem to fit our idea of nature as independent from us, the traditional hiking in the wilderness or *friluftsliv* way of engaging with nature has been transformed by technology. So even in places where city dwellers still have the opportunity of experiencing nature, we seem to be losing the ability to truly connect with it, since “genuine *friluftsliv*” has transformed into “post-modern *friluftsliv*,” in which technological equipment is used to travel to exotic places, conquer nature, and boost the ego instead of truly engaging with nature (Gelter 2000). The experience of *friluftsliv* that gave birth to Arne Næss’ deep ecology as a way of sensing nature in a deep and profound way seems a mere romantic idea of the past (Næss 1973). Is there a way of rendering such ideas non-obsolete in a posthumanist situation in which the human, the natural, and the technological are bound to be hybrid, and an experience of pure or unspoiled nature is almost or altogether impossible (Braidotti 2013)? In this situation we surely must find other ways of developing an ecological consciousness besides engaging with wilderness.

The problem is not only that there is an increasing lack of wilderness to engage with, but also that in our technologically-mediated world even engaging with wilderness has become just another form of alienation from nature. The idea of connecting with nature by being outdoors, in the open wild, in *friluftsliv*, is diminished because it relies on the idea of being active and letting that action influence your intellectual ideas about your relationship with nature “out there,” rather than being passive and open to perceiving your relationship with nature through your body. It relies on this idea of outside and inside—being on the outside, breathing nature in from the outside. Sadly, post-modern *friluftsliv* and nature-tourism are often about projecting one’s ideas on nature and objectifying it as a playground, exercise place, or selfie-partner, rather than opening up, listening, and receiving meaning. And this is why Morton and Vogel want to get rid of the concept of

nature—because this idea of re-connecting with nature will not let us escape a dualistic conception of reality.

We suggest that instead of getting rid of nature, we should stop thinking about nature as a concept and as a physical reality *outside* of us, and rather focus on sensing and experiencing nature from within our bodies. What does this turn to the body really mean? Why is it not enough to have a hybrid phenomenon like a dumpsite or a mall to evoke and inform our ecological awareness, as Vogel and Žižek claim? The theoretical affirmation of the end of nature raises some questions: Do we lose our ability to connect with nature in a world where we have lost the opportunity to engage with the “wild” nature that we think of as being independent from us humans? Is there no room for a deep ecology in a dark ecological world? Can we connect to nature in a world where nature does not exist? Do we need to experience “wild nature” without any technological mediations to be able to get a deep enough sense of our place in the natural world to be able to reject the “man-in-environment image” for the “relational total field image” of the world (Næss 1973, 95)? Or is the delicate flower that grows out of the concrete crack in the street enough? Is it enough to see and watch this flower wrestle towards the sunlight? Is it enough to become aware of the cycle of material things, from being planted as seeds, being processed as food, being consumed, and being disposed of as leftovers at the dumpsite? Surely a plant in a concrete setting teaches us about vital forces of nature. But there is more to experiencing nature than merely understanding natural processes and how everything is interconnected.

Much research has been done on the health benefits of public parks and gardens, having plants in the work/home environment, and gardening. It is obvious that the mere sight of green plants reminds us of nature and gives a sense of wellbeing. In cities like Tokyo, where there is little left of earth amongst all the concrete, this is surely the case. In Tokyo, as in many other concrete jungles, more and more emphasis is being put on creating green spaces with plants and trees. It is a way to show that even though people live in cities, they do not have to be disconnected from nature. The green area in the city is in no way any more natural than the plants in the open spaces of the mall or in the resting areas of busy airports. Yet the sense of wellbeing that can be generated when surrounded by plants, be it in an urban setting of the street, the mall, or the airport, indicates

that there is a bodily sense involved in this experience. There can also be a bodily sense involved when being faced with a dumpsite. The look of the dumpsite and its smells may evoke a bodily sense of revulsion and nausea. The mall, however, can hardly evoke such a sense, although crowds may at times make us feel bodily discomfort, as though the mall environment is draining the energy out of us. Registering sensations of wellbeing, discomfort, or revulsion means acknowledging how we are affected by nature in and through our bodies. We become aware of nature in our bodies when such bodily sensations are evoked and triggered in us, be it in a comforting or an unpleasant manner.

Drawing attention to such a sense of embodiment in the urban setting, in the mall, at the dumpsite, and how we become aware of nature in our bodies gives us reason to oppose the idea of the end or death of nature and argue that this discourse is limited. We do not propose a clearly defined philosophical concept of nature or of environment. Both concepts have many meanings. At this point, we merely suggest taking our embodied sense as living organisms as a sign that it is premature to proclaim the end of nature. The idea of the end of nature makes sense to the degree that it can draw attention to the fact that there is no such thing as “pure” or “unspoiled” nature—for most everything in the world is directly or indirectly affected by the human hand—and that all claims about nature are scientific, pragmatic, or poetic/artistic constructions. We can agree with both these assumptions. There is no original, pure nature, for nature has always developed in interaction with human life and continues to do so. Secondly, claims about nature are based on human efforts and methods of understanding, dealing with, and mastering the natural world we live in and engage with.

Yet this approach of the end of nature-thinkers cannot account for how we experience nature apart from the idea of representation in different types of interpretations of nature. Vogel acknowledges this when he asserts that there is always an element of the wild in human constructions that necessarily entails destruction: “...if thinking about the artifactuality of what we call nature and then about the nature of our artifacts leads us to see that nature and the artificial aren’t so easily distinguished, and that our environment is always already something we have had a hand in creating—and yet something that nonetheless or for that very reason always remains wild—then thinking like a mountain might turn out

not to be so different from thinking like a city” (Vogel 2015, 131). For this reason an earthquake has the same element of the wild as the human destruction of environments. The forces of nature in an earthquake are seen as being the same forces that are at work in human acts of destruction. The wild is reduced to the forces at work in life, reminiscent of psychoanalytical or Nietzschean theories of life as a continuous process of becoming of constructive and destructive forces. The “wild” is in Vogel’s rendering a kind of force, an apersonal force operating in human endeavors and actions. On the basis of this, he assumes that we have come to look at our social world as nature, “a frightening world we can only observe but can never finally alter” (Vogel 2015, 93). For this reason, Vogel comes to the conclusion that we should drop the concept of “nature” altogether, and rather refer to the notion of “environment.” For Vogel there are therefore different types of ecologies beyond the biotic, such as ecologies of the market or of commerce (Vogel 2015, 157).

The body as a physical and as a natural entity is—from the point of view of this approach—a certain environment that is moreover in a constant interaction with other environments. What is missing in this assumption is the lived experience of the body. If Vogel would account for that, he would not so easily be able to assume that we have no experience that enables us to distinguish between the social world and biotic environment. As is so often the case in Western philosophy, the body is the missing link in philosophical theories of the environment that call for the end of nature.

The Body as the Missing Link

Environmental philosophy is a radical field within the humanities because it has a broader understanding of “man” than most other subdisciplines within Western philosophy. The epistemic, the moral, and political subjects within philosophy have traditionally been conceived as disembodied subjects. The cognitive features of these subjects have been underscored at the cost of affective and physical features. Environmental philosophy, however, has always understood the human subject as embedded in the natural world. Yet even in environmental philosophy it is not sufficiently acknowledged that the body is the link that connects the human subject with the natural world. We are part of nature because we are embodied. As bodies we are material beings. As bodies we are relational, temporal, con-

textual, conditional beings who are subjected to forces beyond our control.

One of the reasons that end-of-nature thinkers oppose the use of the term “nature” is that they consider it to be a metaphysical term. Vogel claims, for example, that nature or the physical world is seen as “outside” the human mind insofar as the mind is seen as doing things to nature (Vogel 2015, 21). An acknowledgement of the bodily constitution of the human being cannot subscribe to such an idea, for embodied beings are always part of nature. Nature can therefore not be an outside. Nature and culture, the human and the non-human, and the natural and the artificial are intertwined in a multitude of ways.

Vogel’s idea about how we conceive the social world as “natural” complies with philosophies of biopolitics and governmentality, according to which physical and natural environments are governed, controlled, and repressed. We see this in the theories of the body discussed by different thinkers of biopolitics, from Michel Foucault to Judith Butler (Foucault 1978; Butler 1993 and 1997). The discovery/rediscovery of the body in contemporary philosophy as evidenced in the works of Foucault and Butler dates at least back to Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy of the body that has a point of departure in Arthur Schopenhauer’s naturalization of metaphysics. In his opposition to German idealism, Schopenhauer presented the will to life, the life force that is apparent in all life, and the body as a kind of a missing link that connects us with this will to life. For this reason Schopenhauer claimed that the body was the philosophical truth *par excellence*. As bodies we experience ourselves subjectively as a living will and objectively as a bodily object among other objects. Nietzsche shared the same attempt of resituating man in nature as a living body. These developments of 19th century philosophy are supported by Darwin’s and Lamarck’s theories of the evolution of men as a natural species, and later on by Freud’s psychanalysis, which modified the enlightenment belief in the idea of the rational, autonomous individual. The body is therefore one of the grand discoveries in 19th century philosophy, not least because the theory of Nietzsche explicitly undermined dualistic oppositions of body and mind, reason and emotion, nature and culture.

What is, however, of greatest importance for our argument is the insight that Schopenhauer had about how the body is experienced and perceivable to us in a twofold manner. First, our bodies are objects, and objectifiable through scientific methods of

measuring, analyzing, dissecting, etc. Second, our bodies are the site of our subjective experiences; we experience ourselves and the world in and through our bodies (Schopenhauer 2014, 2. Book of Vol 1). The body is the point of departure for our grasp of the world of which we are a part as natural beings. With Schopenhauer's idea of the body as part of living nature that he termed the "will to life," a naturalization of metaphysics was instantiated. Schopenhauer's and later Nietzsche's philosophies opposed the traditional dualistic conceptions of mind and body. Nietzsche did not overturn the dualities, but undermined them. The end-of-nature thinkers stand in this tradition, but their prime efforts have consisted in denaturalizing and historicizing nature by emphasizing the intertwining of nature and technologies. Even though they account for how the human body is a conundrum and a hybrid being, the end-of-nature thinkers neglect the nature we experience as living organisms. From thinking like a mountain to thinking like a mall, there is a forgetfulness of thinking and sensing like a human body, for the body is the medium between the natural environment and the artificial environment. The body is an organism that is in constant interaction with its different environments. The body is the place where different environments are experienced and where different environments meet. The body is in itself an environment. The borders of the inner and outer are unclear, as is apparent in basic phenomena like breathing air, drinking water, and feeling sounds vibrate through your body at a concert, or near a waterfall or racetrack. Practical and abstract knowledge is acquired through the interaction of the human bodily environment with other environments. The body as a living organism is an intricate, ordered interaction with the environment, and therefore a form of sensual knowing prior to more abstract forms of knowing (Gendlin 1992). Meanings are socially constructed, as the end-of-nature thinkers argue. Socially constructed meanings affect and direct embodied experiences, but do not determine them fully, for there is always an interaction in play.

Butler in her philosophy of the body is aware of how the internal and the external interact when she emphasizes two features, the performativity of the body and individual bodily desires and expressions (Butler 1997). The body is socially and culturally constructed in the ways it performs, enacts, and reiterates socially constructed meanings of it. Each individual person also yearns to express her or his own desire for being and acting in the world. This is

the aspect of the body that Vogel would describe as the wild element. He does not explicate it in terms of the human body, but we suggest interpreting it as the capacity of the human body for individual creative and destructive expression. So even if culture and language determine us as human beings, we have the capacity within us to resist and subvert both internal and external forces of determination. There are pre-discursive levels to our embodied cognition, which are prior to emotions and thinking. These levels are our bodily natural environment as a living organism.

The fact that embodied human beings are living organisms makes impossible the idea of nature as an outside that the end-of-nature thinkers discuss. The natural environment is accessible to us as bodies in space and time. The spaces and places are our cultural, social, and environmental settings, and temporality determines our bodies through growth and decay. There are also aspects to the natural environment that are not accessible to us because they do not have a parallel in the mode of being defined and conceptualized phenomena. In this respect, the internal and external environment is not accessible to us, but can become accessible through new and different forms of embodied cognition. The sciences are constantly revising and extending our concepts and ideas about the natural environment. Yet empirical and natural sciences reach limits. Quantum physics has displayed the limits of the material understanding of the world, and has undermined traditional notions about the succession of time. Phenomenological research into embodied human sensing of time is therefore needed to better understand time and temporality as a lived, embodied human experience. Why do finite beings sometimes experience a sense of eternal time? We can have such experiences in nature, music, and art, and we call them metaphysical or cosmic experiences. We need a philosophy of embodied experience to grasp such experiences.

Sensing Nature through the Body

Hedwig Conrad-Martius, one of the early phenomenologists of the 20th century, was especially interested in ontology. She felt that her teacher Edmund Husserl, the founder of modern phenomenology, had made pure consciousness onesidedly the point of origin of knowledge and experience, and subsequently neglected the ontology of the real. Conrad-Martius was aware of the fact that criticism of positivistic natural sciences could lead to highly speculative visions about the natural world. She was

therefore interested in the elaboration of a phenomenological method that described the access we have to the world as both factually real and as factually possible (Conrad-Martius 1964, 381). Having an experience of something as eternal may be seen as having an experience of something that Conrad-Martius terms “factually possible.” With her idea of the factually possible she comes close to our concept of the expressivity of the body in terms of embodied sensing as a basis of creative, cognitive activity. Things in nature that are not visible to us, the non-transparent dimension of nature, was for Conrad-Martius the source of creative sensing and thinking. She therefore considered it to be the goal of phenomenology to go further than the natural sciences by analyzing the modes of being and meanings of our natural reality. The phenomenological method offers means to describe invisible dimensions of nature that are not seen, but felt and sensed, for example, in plant and animal bodies. In a passage of one of her works titled “The ‘Soul’ of the Plant,” Conrad-Martius claims that the phenomenological method can describe plants in a scientifically meaningful way that steers clear of scientific materialist understanding on the one hand, and a poetic, mystical approach that consists of an attempt to grasp the “soul” of the plant on the other hand (Conrad-Martius 1963, 276-376). The plant cannot be understood as a machine in line with a mere materialist, scientific approach. The plant’s behavior, its way of being in the environment, its striving towards the light, shows the plant to be sensing, living being. With this knowledge, Conrad-Martius concludes that the traditional distinctions between plants and human and non-human animals are less than had been assumed. There is a common basis in these different forms of organic life that is a form of an active subjectivity as a capacity to sense (“Empfindungsfähigkeit”) (Conrad-Martius 1963, 3000).⁵

With her phenomenology of the real, Conrad-Martius takes the lived experience and observations of embodied human beings of plants, non-human animals, and the earth seriously as a source of greater knowledge of what it means to be human in the natural world. Underlying her approach is the idea that there is a transphysical common source of all living beings as a kind of vital energy, an eternal

energy that manifests itself differently under different living conditions. The source of this energy is sex in the very broad sense of the vital energy that has its source in a dynamics of difference that makes life an eternal creation. Stephen Harrod Buhner can be seen to take up the thread of Conrad-Martius with his idea that plants and other life forms possess such vital, sensory capacity as their own form of intelligence (Buhner 2014).⁶ Both Buhner and Conrad-Martius claim that through our perception these forms of sensing can become accessible to us, for this is a pattern that we share as living beings. All living beings are “sexual to the core of our being” (Buhner 2014, 160). Buhner writes that if you “refuse to see the presence of sex every place and in every thing of the Earth, you can never understand Earth, never truly act for the Earth” (Buhner 2014, 160).

Conclusion

The hikers engaged in *friluftsliv* are neither “genuine” deep ecologists experiencing nature in an extatic way, nor posthuman cyborgs alienated from nature. Both descriptions focus on extreme cases and disregard a third possibility. The hiker does not have to be either a romantic nature enthusiast or a high tech, end-of-nature type in terms of her gear. She can rather be seen as a kind of hybrid of these two types who has an embodied experience of nature, the surroundings, and herself in the environment that gives her a richer understanding of herself in the context of the larger environment. We may sense kindredness with other living environments, even sense animalic and vegetal levels through our own embodied sensing. We realize this kindredness through acknowledging that all organic life forms on earth (including ourselves) that are made of living and vibrating cells have three basic capacities in common that have generally been ascribed only to humans: self-awareness, intelligence, and the search for meaning (Buhner 2014, 28). Ascribing these capacities only to humans in the western context of mind-body dualism has led us to see them as capacities of reason that is detached from the body. We have forgotten that all living organisms are a perceptual organ we call a body (plant body/animal body/human body); it is the body that allows the organism to develop self-awareness, intelligence and the ability to search for meaning, and thus ascribing these capacities only to a human mind separated

⁵ For a detailed interpretation of this aspect of Conrad-Martius’ phenomenology of nature, see Susanne Sachs, *Biophilie als didaktische Orientierungsmetapher für den Bildungsauftrag in Schule und Hochschule*, München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2014, 117-137.

⁶ Thanks to Ram Eisenberg for this suggestion.

from the body is too limited. Once we realize and acknowledge this, we can come to understand that nature is indeed not an object out there, nor is it an idea or a representation of an idea that we can decide to get rid of. Rather nature is this form of all living beings: being aware of, searching for meaning in, and responding to the “relational total field” that we are constantly touching and being touched by. As organic living bodies, we search for meaning and respond to the world on a pre-discursive level that we have lost sight of because we have been taught to ignore our bodies and exclusively think of (externally directed or object-directed) senses as active in the pursuit and production of knowledge. Merleau-Ponty used the word “flesh” to describe this pre-discursive level, and it was no co-incidence that he chose a word that has such a strong connotation with the body as nature – as flesh that comes to be, decays, dies and comes to be again in an endless circle of life. In the beginning of his lecture notes on nature, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that he is “looking for the primordial, nonlexical meaning always intended by people who speak of ‘nature’” (Merleau-Ponty 2003, 3). He goes back to the etymologies of the word in Greek and Latin, where the roots of the word are the vegetative and to be born, to live.

There is nature wherever there is life that has meaning, but where, however, there is no thought; hence the kinship with the vegetative. Nature is what has a meaning, without this meaning being posited by thought; it is the autoproduction of a meaning. Nature is thus different from a simple thing. It has an interior, is determined from within; hence the opposition of “natural” and “accidental.” Yet nature is different from man: it is not instituted by him and is opposed to custom, to discourse. Nature is the primordial—that is, the nonconstructed, the noninstituted; hence the idea of an eternity of nature (the eternal return), of a solidity. Nature is an enigmatic object, an object that is not an object at all; it is not really set out in front of us. It is our soil—not what is in front of us, facing us, but rather, that which carries us (Merleau-Ponty 2003, 3).

Nature is what carries us because it is the organic life form that our human body is, just like the other plant and animal bodies on this earth. Like plant and animal bodies, we as human bodies auto-produce meaning that is pre-discursive, nonconstructed, noninstituted. When human beings experience a genuine *friluftsliv* and live in the “wild,” they are perhaps more attuned to the pre-discursive sensuous knowledge of the world that lies in their felt

bodily sense, because like other animals and plants, they need to survive. The hunch that Leopold, Carson, Næss and others were probably acting on was that losing this felt sense would mean losing touch with an important aspect of what it means to be human. In today’s technologized world, we don’t need the same high alertness to our environment for our survival as we did before; more often we need to tune down our alertness to the environment to survive in a world that is prone to overstimulate us (Schroeder 2012, Berleant 2010). And since we do not depend on this bodily alertness for survival anymore, we cannot reconnect to it simply by engaging with “wild” nature in a *friluftsliv* style on Sundays. In order to reconnect with our bodily felt sense, we need to first become aware of ourselves as bodies again in a conscious and directed way, and this we can do by (among other things) paying attention to our aesthetic mode of perceiving the world.

In a note to the readers of his book *Plant Intelligence and the Imaginal Realm*, Buhner says that the book is “specifically meant for those who understand what it means to look with glittering, i.e. luminous eyes. For that is the understanding that binds us together, that lies at the heart of thinking differently” (Buhner 2014, xii). To look with glittering or luminous eyes is to look aesthetically. In our aesthetic mode of perceiving the world, we open up to our bodily being in the world because all our focus is in our senses. In the aesthetic moment we are not pre-occupied with thinking and conceptualizing the world, but rather with sensing the world. The aesthetic is thus what remains as a model for us to reconnect with ourselves as natural beings,⁷ not in the sense that we need to have aesthetic experiences of “wild” nature in order to relate to nature ethically (although in many cases such experiences do have a positive effect on people’s ethical relation to the non-human world), but rather in the sense that we have to pay more attention to the character of the aesthetic moment and bring that character more into how we pay attention to the world in general and

⁷ Speaking of ourselves as natural beings does not entail essentialism about some natural order in which we are organized. We are what we are as individuals not because of some natural essence, but rather because of all of our experiences and relations and environments and the whole mesh of things, because as natural organisms we are built—like any other cell—to perceive and respond to everything around us. So being a natural being means only that we are beings that respond to and are shaped by the world.

how we study it and our relationship to it. Merleau-Ponty was on to something very important when he discussed how the artist has much better access to the world, and is much better able to describe the world directly as she perceives it through her embodied expression than the philosopher is through her verbal and conceptual expression (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993).

What we refer to here as aesthetic perception goes beyond what Morton is referring to in his environmental aesthetics (2007). In his approach, aesthetic perception refers to how artworks and environments influence our ideas and ways of thinking and relating to the world. This is certainly true; the sensuous knowledge that we gain through our experiences of art and environments is a very important part of shaping our ideas and values. But as before, the missing link is the body. There is a level beneath our conscious reflection on the ideas that our experiences of art and the environment awaken in us, a level of receiving meaning in an embodied way that we are not aware of in daily life, but that we can become aware of if we truly start connecting to ourselves as nature, as bodies.

What posthuman and dark ecological thought has taught us is that we are truly relational beings; we live in a world of hyperobjects where there are no boundaries. But we are also relational natural beings on a deeper level, in the same way that cells are. We are living, breathing, pulsating beings in the same way as plants and other animals are. Just as plants and animals know the world through their senses, we gain a pre-discursive knowledge through our intertwining with the world that we can tap into if we start paying attention to our embodied sensing and start listening to our bodies. This type of understanding will not only help us to find a truly ecological way of being in the world as dark ecological thought does, but will also help us to find a totally different way of thinking about how we know the world, not only through our socially constructed ideas, but through our bodies as organic life forms. We are on our way towards a radically different understanding of the human being as a relational being, and dark-ecological thought takes an important step in that direction by revealing the complexity of the relations we are a part of, revealing the world as full of hyperobjects (Morton 2013). However, we need to go a step further by not only changing the way we think about our relations to the world, but also changing the way we think about thinking and knowing in general. When Leopold

talked about thinking like a mountain, he was encouraging us to think from a different perspective—thinking from the perspective of being the mountain and witnessing what the mountain witnesses. Now it is time to not only think from a different perspective, but also to think differently. Like Buhner we think it is time to listen to the advice of Albert Einstein: *We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them* (Buhner 2014, ix). Thinking like a mountain or a mall is thinking like we have been taught to think, as rational detached minds—looking closely, from a distance, and analyzing what we see. When we look and analyze from the perspective of the mountain, we understand nature as an ecological system. We suggest that we should try to think like water and sense like plants—sense closely and feel how we touch and shape and are shaped by the riverbank we are flowing in, and allow our thoughts to flow from our bodies rather than restricting them to what can be squeezed through the workings of the analytical mind. If we listen to our bodies and shut down the analytical mind for a while, we can start thinking and knowing differently, and perhaps then we will be better able to solve the ecological problems we have created with our old analytical ways of thinking.

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ANIMAL AND HUMAN “UMWELT” (MEANINGFUL ENVIRONMENT)— CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES

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Abstract:

Cassirer's philosophy of symbols is applied to Uexküll's concept of "Umwelt" (meaningful environment). I argue that the vast domain of human symbolism extends the human Umwelt far beyond the Umwelts of animal species. We humans live and act in many intersecting symbolic worlds, one of the most important of which is our ethical Umwelt. I claim that against the background of ecological disaster and the uncontrolled accelerating incursion of our financial institutions and biotechnological industry into planetary ecology, the term "Umwelt" can no longer simply mean the part of our surroundings that is meaningful to us. Given the current severe ecological crisis, Cassirer's idea of an "ethical Umwelt" must also be expanded, and an ethical imperative must be integrated into our understanding of "environment." In other words, for us today the meaning of the term "Umwelt" or "meaningful environment" should be synonymous with "the living world to be saved" or "sacred environment."

Key words: Umwelt, environment, meaningful environment, sacred environment, subject, signs, symbols, animal symbolicum, Uexküll, Cassirer, Whitehead.

1. Uexküll's concept of *Umwelt*

In his *Theoretical Biology*, first published in 1920, Jakob von Uexküll provided a highly developed worldview that might be described as "biological Kantianism." Starting from Immanuel Kant's intuitions about the subjectivity of space, time, causality, and apperception, he suggested a unique approach to elementary biological concepts such as

"organism," "perception," "environment," "evolution," and "adaptation" which radically differed from Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism, as well as from the work of all influential theoretical biologists up to the present time. The concept of "Umwelt" was introduced in Uexküll's famous book *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere* (Umwelt and Inner World of Animals) in 1909. There he makes a clear distinction between "Umgebung," which I translate as "surroundings," and Umwelt (1909, 117, 196, 249, 252; 1973, 320). Those relevant features of the physical surroundings that are represented in the organism with respect to its self-preservation and reproduction constitute its Umwelt. An organism implicitly incorporates within its organization information about those aspects of its surroundings that are specifically relevant, i.e. meaningful, to its self-preservation.

Uexküll considers animals as *subjects*, which in virtue of their structure select stimuli of their Umgebung and respond to each in a specific way. These responses have certain effects on the Umgebung, and these again influence the stimuli. In this way "a self contained periodic circle" arises, which Uexküll calls "the function-circle of the animal" (1926, 126). The sum of the stimuli affecting an animal's sense organs builds "a world in itself" (ibid.). The stimuli build "certain indications, which enable the animal to guide its movements, much as the signs at sea enable the sailor to steer his ship" (ibid.). Uexküll calls "the sum of the indications the *world-as-sensed*" (ibid.). The animal itself is a world for itself—the *inner world* (ibid.). The inner world is built up by the processes in the animal's nervous system. The third world, the *world of action*, consists of the actions of the animal towards a part of its

Umwelt (ibid. 127). *The Umwelt of the animal consists of its world-as-sensed and its world of action*, which “together make a comprehensive whole” (ibid. 127).

The indications of which the world-as-sensed consists are not mere copies of features of external entities. Rather they are constructed in a non-trivial process as spatially, temporally, and spatiotemporally localized features of the perceived world.

Many indications are combined into a *thing*. A thing is a coherent unit of indications that occupies a moment and a place or a direction in space. Animal and human subjects synthesize things unconsciously (ibid. 93). Things do not occupy extended groups of moments—they do not endure. They are events rather than persistent entities. The unconscious creative process also creates another kind of entities—*objects*. An object is an enduring thing, a thing extended in time. Objects constitute higher unities than things (ibid. 98). Objects can be involved in lawful causal relations. Uexküll calls those objects that possess a *framework* (Gefüge) which merges their parts into an organized whole *implements*. Implements are objects in which “the parts stand in the same relation to the whole as the individual sounds to the melody” (ibid. 103). Implements are organized wholes. They might be artificial or natural entities. The only natural implements that Uexküll knows are organisms, parts of organisms (cells, tissues, organs), and groups of organisms.

Things, objects, and implements are the three kinds of entities that constitute the world-as-sensed and the world of action of both humans and most animals. According to Uexküll, things, objects, and implements are differently complex products of one and the same unifying process, the so-called *apperception process* (ibid. 78). The apperception process lies at the root of all perception (ibid. 15):

Whatever the perception, the activity is of the same kind; different qualities are constantly being associated into unities. The power of the subject (Gemüt) that exercises this apperceptive activity is forever creating new structures; in its very nature, it is a formative force (Bildungskraft). (ibid. 16)

Uexküll created a biology of subjects. He claimed that the laws forming our attention and thus creating the Umwelt of our own subjectivity can also be recognized in animal subjects. Uexküll makes clear that the apperception process, although lawful, cannot be mathematically described. Thus biology

cannot be reduced to physics. Following Kant, Uexküll considers the subject to be the non-localizable unity of apperception. The apperception process unfolds lawfully, governed by *a-priori* forms that determine the synthetic process of perception. For that reason the apperception process can be considered the central category of subjectivity. In this sense it is comparable to the striving of actual occasions to complete themselves as subjects in Whitehead’s metaphysics. Both Whiteheadian actual occasions and Uexküllian apperception processes are synthetic activities, or, more aptly, *agents of concretion*.

From a process philosophical point of view, however, an essential question arises: Is there *creativity* in Uexküll’s apperception processes? In his *Theoretical Biology*, the terms “creativity,” “spontaneity,” and “freedom”—so basic in Whitehead’s thought (1979)—do not appear. Of course, one may object that Uexküll’s intellectual closeness to Kant suggests that he implicitly thinks of the apperception process as a spontaneous activity. For Kant spontaneity is a cognitive faculty. It is the autonomous ability of the subject to form concepts, which makes thinking possible. As a self-determined factor of cognition, spontaneity makes human freedom possible. Freedom is a faculty of practical reason, which means that it can be assigned only to subjects, which are able to make moral judgments.

To conclude, from a Kantian perspective it is impossible to assign spontaneity and freedom to subjects that lack the ability to operate with symbols, and thus to create and use concepts. The activity of an Uexküllian subject is entirely predetermined by *a priori* constitutive factors of experience, and is therefore totally restricted. For this reason, Uexküll’s biology cannot account for creativity in the common meaning of the term.

2. Cassirer’s understanding of the human as *animal symbolicum*

In his book *An Essay on Man*, published in 1944, Ernst Cassirer considers Uexküll to be “a defender of the principle of the autonomy of life” (1944, 41): “Life is an ultimate and self-dependent reality. It cannot be described or explained in terms of physics or chemistry” (ibid.). Uexküll’s primarily epistemological approach to biology, according to which animals and humans are subjects that build “a world in itself,” emphasizes the *mediatedness of cognition* (1926, 126). This idea, together with the introduction of the apperception process as a syn-

thetic activity governed by *a priori* forms, was bound to attract Cassirer's attention, since he was strongly influenced by the mathematically-scientifically oriented Neo-Kantian "Marburg School."

However, with respect to human cognition, Cassirer expands Uexküll's function-circle by a component, "which appears to be the distinctive mark of human life" (1944, 42). In humans, between the "world-as-sensed" and the "world of action" we find a "third link," which is the world of symbols (ibid. 43). The human lives "in a new *dimension* of reality," in a "symbolic universe," parts of which are language, myth, art, and religion (ibid.). He "cannot see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium" (ibid.). Thus "instead of defining man as *animal rationale* we should define him as an *animal symbolicum*" (ibid. 44).

Non-human animals understand and use signs. Nevertheless, from Cassirer's perspective we must make a distinction between signs and symbols. Animals with highly developed nervous systems are able to express emotions such as rage, terror, desire, playfulness, and pleasure by means of gesture. But *animal communication lacks symbols, which are signs with an objective reference or meaning* (ibid. 48). According to Cassirer, "(t)he difference between *propositional language* and *emotional language* is the real landmark between the human and the animal world" (ibid.).

This difference, which makes humans the only "symbolic species" (Deacon 1997) on earth, also characterizes the specific difference between human and animal intelligence. As Cassirer argues, animals possess "a practical imagination and intelligence, whereas man alone has developed a new form: a symbolic imagination and intelligence" (ibid. 52).

Cassirer highlights three crucial differences between human language and animal usage of signs. *Firstly*, symbolization is "a principle of *universal applicability*," since everything can be denoted (ibid. 54). Other than signs used or interpreted by animals, which represent specific entities, situations, or emotions, symbols are not restricted to particular cases. *Secondly*, a symbol is "extremely variable, ... (whereas) a sign or signal is related to the thing to which it refers in a fixed and unique way" (Cassirer 1944, 56). Whereas any one individual sign or signal refers to a certain individual entity or process, a specific idea or thought may be expressed by using quite different symbols or combinations of symbols. *Thirdly*, human language is able "to isolate rela-

tions—to consider them in their abstract meaning" (ibid. 59). By using an adequate symbolism, humans are able to abstract from particular entities and to study their spatial and other relations to a degree, which is far beyond animal intelligence. Geometry and algebra are the classical examples of humans' ability to study universal relations in abstraction from related entities. Without the preliminary step of human language, mathematics would not be possible.

A direct result of the ability of humans to focus on abstract spatial relations is the abstract perception of space. Unlike animals, which live in their individual concrete "perceptual space," humans are able to conceive the idea of "abstract space" or "symbolic space" by a very complex process of thought (ibid. 64f.). Since Newton, physics has been based on the idea of abstract or mathematical space, which should not be confused with the space of our sensual experience. Abstract space is an entirely homogeneous extension that is a fiction of the human mind: it does not represent any physical or psychological reality. Cassirer considers the "points and lines of the geometer ... (to be) nothing but symbols for abstract relation" (ibid. 66).

Besides the experience of space, human symbolisms radically influence our experience of time as well. "When dealing with the problem of organic life," says Cassirer, "we have, first and foremost, to free ourselves from what Whitehead has called the prejudice of 'simple location.' The organism is never located in a single instant" (ibid. 72). The momentary state of an organism cannot be described without taking that organism's history into consideration and without referring to its future. Cassirer understands memory to be a general function of all living beings, meaning that the organism preserves in its body material traces of past events, and that these traces influence its future reactions. He makes clear, however, that human memory is something quite different. Unlike memory in animals, human recollection cannot be described as an ideational return of past events as a faint copy of former experiences. It is rather "a rebirth of the past; it implies a creative and constructive process" (ibid. 74). Human memory is a *symbolic memory*, which is "the process by which man not only repeats his past experience but also reconstructs this experience. Imagination becomes a necessary element of true recollection" (ibid. 75).

For an appropriate understanding of human relation to time, the dimension of the future is even

more crucial than the dimension of the past. Anticipation of future events and even preparation for future actions is an important factor in the life of animals with highly developed nervous systems. In humans, however, “(t)he future is not only an image; it becomes an ‘ideal’” (ibid. 78). Only humans are able to conceive of a *theoretical* idea of the future. Our symbolic forms enable us not only to expect the future, but to upgrade it to an “*imperative* of human life” (ibid.). Cassirer calls our *symbolic future* a “prophetic future” because it is best expressed in the life of the great religious prophets (ibid.). These religious teachers did not simply foresee future events or warn of future evils. *Their prophecies were the exact opposite of auguries:*

“The future of which they spoke was not an empirical fact but an ethical and religious task. ... Prophecy does not simply mean foretelling; it means a promise. ... Here too man’s symbolic power ventures beyond all the limits of his finite existence. But this negation implies a new and great act of integration; it marks a decisive phase in man’s ethical and religious life” (ibid. 78f.).

3. Human Umwelt—an ethical imperative

The human Umwelt does not merely have a threefold structure—“world-as-sensed,” “world of symbols,” and “world of action”—but rather these three dimensions indissolubly interpenetrate one another. Kant’s famous slogan “intuitions without concepts are blind” anticipates Cassirer’s insight that we cannot even see anything except by the interposition of symbols. Our conceptual denotation of objects essentially influences our perceptual experience of them. To be an animal symbolicum means to perceive the world through abstract “organs” formed by millennia-old cultures. This symbolic mediatedness necessarily increases the distance of human intellect from what Uexküll calls the “world-as-sensed” and the “world of action.” Our highly entangled symbolic forms not only allow for understanding our world, *they also restrict our comprehension of what we perceive and how we affect our Umwelt.* Paradoxically, this distance from our Umwelt has made possible for us the extreme extension of both our world-as-sensed and our world of action through the aid of artificial devices, such as telescopes, microscopes, and particle accelerators. The development of these material devices is based on

our most powerful, because most universal, instruments—our concepts¹—which can be invented only within advanced symbolic structures.

The vast variance of our world of symbols extends the human Umwelt far beyond the Umwelts of animal species, which are limited by their sensual perceptions. All theoretical and technical disciplines, all forms of art, and all political discourses constitute a meaningful world, and hence an Umwelt. Thus we all live and act in many intersecting symbolic Umwelts, each of which is inhabited by a huge number of abstract concepts. One of the most important symbolic worlds is our *ethical Umwelt*.

Our symbolic Umwelts of physics, chemistry, and biology have made the infinity of space and time objects of our scientific research. They have made it possible for us to think systematically about the vastness of space, the past and origin of the universe, and the evolution and origins of life. However, our abstract, purely symbolic access to these areas of physical actuality does not guarantee that we *understand* the symbolized entities and processes. It was not by chance that German Neo-Kantian philosopher Heinrich Rickert introduced a distinction between *understanding* (Verstehen) and *explaining* (Erklären). Experience of value and meaning is the *conditio sine qua non* for understanding. Hence, entities and processes that do not have any value or significance for us cannot be understood, but merely described or explained (Rickert 1929). From the perspective of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology, we may say that we understand only beings and processes which are part of our *life-world* (Lebenswelt), or the realm of our experiences and intuitions (1970, 123-135). From Rickert’s and Husserl’s point of view, we *cannot* say that we understand physical and biological entities and processes, which we can explain by applying our abstract symbolisms if they do not belong to our life-world. Understanding the explanations of scientists is not the same as understanding the beings that the explanations are about.

Uexküll divides our visual area into the “visual space” and the “remotest plane” (1973, 21). Within the visual space we are able to see objects stereoscopically, and thus to have depth perception of them. In other words, we only perceive our spatial distance from objects if they are within our visual space. The outer limit of our visual space is the remotest plane. If objects are beyond our remotest plane, we are not able to estimate which of them is

¹ I owe this idea to my student René Pikarski.

closer to us and which is further. We perceive such objects as though they were placed on the inner side of the same spherical surface, the so-called "celestial sphere." All celestial bodies appear to move on that sphere. In direct analogy to Uexküll's distinction between visual space and space beyond our remotest plane, we may also separate our symbolic processes into those inhabiting our "space of understanding" and those operating beyond our "remotest plane of understanding," that which marks the beginning of a vast area of knowledge that may be called the "area of mere explaining." Only in the former case can we be confident that we understand the beings and processes upon which we base our symbolisms, whereas in the latter case we should say that we can only explain them. Viewed in this light, we should not think that we understand the essence of entities which we denote by scientific symbols such as "electrons," "quarks," "quantum processes," "gravitational waves," "dark energy," "black holes," "genes," and "proteins" without them being a part of our embodied, experiential world, as is the case with trees, humans, rocks, mountains, oceans, storms, feelings, thoughts, and many of our own organic processes.

The entirely abstract concepts of contemporary physics, life sciences, technology, and especially biotechnology are clearly outside of what I have called our "space of understanding." The fact that we successfully operate with abstract symbols in our scientific languages proves only that we have learned the abstract rules of their application; it by no means shows that we understand the nature of the represented entities, let alone the complex relations between them. The symbolic systems of contemporary nano- and biotechnology, to most inventors of which the concept of life-world doesn't mean anything, allow for the manipulation of natural beings without having even the faintest idea of the tremendous distance between their nature and our explanations of them, since those entirely abstract concepts are clearly outside of what I have called the "remotest plane of understanding."

Unfortunately, this negative aspect of symbolization—which haunts not only science and technology, but also politics, mainstream Anglo-American philosophy, and neoliberal economics—seems to escape Cassirer's attention. Of course, in 1944 it was not nearly so obvious as it is today that our ignorance of the distance between our abstract symbolisms and the nature of the symbolized entities and processes—the basis of what Whitehead so accurate-

ly described as the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (1979, 7)—can be so destructive. Today we have to understand that explaining should not be confused with understanding, and that the horizon of our life-world grows incomparably more slowly than our ability to act outside of our "space of understanding."

4. Conclusion: Sacred environment—a Whiteheadian perspective

Against the background of ecological disaster and the uncontrolled accelerating interpenetration between financial institutes and biotechnological industry, the term "Umwelt" cannot have the same meaning that Uexküll gave to it over a hundred years ago. Today "Umwelt" can no longer simply mean the part of our surroundings that is meaningful to us. In today's German language, "Umwelt" means "environment." However, in different discourses "environment" has different meanings. From the scientific point of view of theoretical ecology, both the rainforests of Earth and the dunes of Mars are environments. But *what is at stake today is the rescue and preservation of the living Umwelt of the earth* and not the "terraforming" of Mars that is propagated by technocratic transhumanists. Given the current severe ecological crisis and against the background of Cassirer's idea of an "ethical Umwelt," an ethical imperative must be integrated into the term "environment." In other words, for us today the meaning of the term "Umwelt" or "environment" *should* be equal to "the living world to be saved." This world has spatiotemporal extension. Its spatial extension coincides with the terrestrial biosphere. Its temporal extension entails the past and, most notably, the future of the biosphere, which includes the future of humanity. The emphasis, however, must lie on the next decades, because in that short period of time it will be decided whether our biosphere survives. The term "the living world to be saved" is an intrinsically political concept laden with strong ethical intentions. *What this term refers to is symbolized only in order to be saved and preserved because it is indispensable and at the same time is in severe danger.* From this point of view, the concept of Umwelt/environment should not be applied to other planets or space colonies. In our extremely critical present age it is important to outline the concept of "Umwelt" as an *earth-centered* or *geocentric concept*, because what is at stake is the rescue of *this* world, in which we live *now*. We have to get rid of the technocratic temptation to think of possible ter-

raformed “biospheres” on other planets as if this would be just a matter of scientific knowledge, power, and time.

The concept of Umwelt/environment, as I understand it, has to be reinterpreted in the light of Cassirer’s pioneering concept of the “prophetic future.” As said above, prophecies are not about future events, but are about *promises, the fulfilling of which is an ethical task*. This, however, I quote again, “implies a new and great act of integration.” What else should this integration be today than the integration of science, technology, economy, and ethics? Cassirer’s concept of *prophetic future* implies the reconciliation of the symbolic Umwelts of science, industry, and the financial sector with what I have called above an “ethical Umwelt.”

This integration requires a view of nature formed by a *new mental closeness or intimacy of understanding* as a counterbalance to the emotional distance of scientific explanations. *Understanding*, as Rickert said, *evolves out of the experience of value*. In order to understand living nature and not just explain it, we have to ascribe to living beings intrinsic value; that is, they should not be valued for the sake of their contribution to some desired end, but for their own sake. The term “ethical Umwelt” refers also (but not only) to future living beings, including humans, as having intrinsic value. Whitehead’s metaphysics provides the best philosophical foundation for this unprovable but nevertheless healing presupposition (Whitehead 1979). In stark contrast to process thought, the current mainstream scientific worldview supports the implicit reduction of natural beings and processes to passive worthless elementary entities devoid of any kind of striving and feeling. This is the ideal foundation of neoclassical economics, which considers the economy to be an isolated *perpetuum mobile* (Muraca 2010, 42) and operates based on the abstraction that different forms of capital—for example natural resources, financial capital, human capital, and know-how—are quantifiable, and therefore convertible, and thus interchangeable (ibid. 37-39, 46). The “moral community” of current mainstream western science, politics, and economics—this means the community for which interests should be protected, values are important, knowledge is taken seriously—is restricted to a continuously shrinking “elite” of western individuals living in the present. In diametrical opposition to this ideology, Whiteheadian, Bergsonian, and other process philosophical worldviews provide the

intellectual foundation for a new economics that is based on the principles of non-convertability of different forms of capital (Daly 1996, 51; Muraca 2010, 45-52), and the extension of moral community in order to include future generations, indigenous people with local knowledge, animals, plants, and landscapes of the present and the future (Muraca 2010, 173-181, 243-247).

Process-philosophical economic and scientific theories embed economy and science in the biosphere. They consider the extended moral community to be a part of an ethical Umwelt. The inclusion of morality in the idea of Umwelt transforms the latter to a *sacred Umwelt* or *sacred environment*. Whiteheadian metaphysics makes obvious that the value of future living beings is not a future value, but a present value: the future has its value now.

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THE EXTENSION OF MORAL COMMUNITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: INCLUSION AND HIERARCHY

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Abstract:

Environmental ethics is based on the extension of the morality sphere as a consequence of an enlarged moral community beyond the limits of human community. I argue in this paper that the turning point in this extension is the notion of intrinsic value. But the process of extension produces some theoretical puzzles. One of them is the essential tension between the aim to include more and more entities into the moral community and the need for a hierarchy in order to preserve the interests of a good life for more complex living beings. My suggestion is that if the suppositions of traditional anthropocentrism are dislodged, the theoretical conflict is balanced or even dissolved at a managerial level. Biocentrism is the theory that could assume this task.

Key words: environmental ethics, sphere of morality, moral community, moral inclusion, moral hierarchy.

The sphere of morality, the moral community, and environmental ethics

One of the major challenges in moral philosophy arising from the current configuration of environmental ethics is the task of redrawing the boundaries of the morality sphere. We can do this either on the ground of some principles or rules, or by starting from moral values, or by beginning with an understanding of moral virtues, or with the help of an analysis of moral language, or in another way. I do not examine these methods of analysis in this paper. My aim is limited to investigating the relation between the sphere of morality and the moral community in environmental ethics and revealing an essential tension between inclusion and hierarchy which is intrinsic to this relationship.

The sphere of morality is usually defined through the notion of a moral community. Therefore, the extension of the morality sphere can be done traditionally by taking into account some individuals who in fact belong to the moral community, but have previously been excluded from it by some arbitrary reason. The modern emancipation of society through the gradual recognition of equal civil rights for all citizens, regardless their social status, could be considered such an extension. Following this line of thought, it is obvious that we have strong reasons to conclude that the sphere of morality and the moral community are coextensive with the human community. Traditional ethics is based on this supposition. The moral subject is a human person who is able to use her or his reason to have a conscious and sensible life, to use language in order to make moral judgments, and so on.

I should note that even this extension of the moral community to include the entirety of the human community faces theoretical difficulties with regard to limit cases such as babies, dotards, and persons in a coma. Our moral intuitions urge us to keep these limit cases within the realm of morality, even though they may not fulfill all the criteria. To strictly apply the strong criteria mentioned above means to exclude some members of human community from the moral community, and to respect our moral intuitions means to weaken the criteria by which we recognize the moral person. Which is the best theoretical solution to this dilemma?

The same dilemma is multiplied in environmental ethics whenever we try to enlarge the sphere of morality to different kinds of entities which are outside the human community. The objection that to extend the sphere of morality in order to include all the limit cases which belong to the human community is a matter of *degree*, while to extend the sphere

of morality beyond the borders of human community is a matter of *nature*, is easily neutralized if we focus our attention on the weakening of criteria. To extend the sphere of morality such that it includes all the members of the human community is logically and in principle equivalent to its extension *beyond* the borders of the human community. I will return to this “slippery slope” argument later.

First, I will follow a descriptive strategy. I will describe a sequence of extensions of moral community status, beginning with cases which are similar to human limit cases, then moving to cases which are increasingly more distant and less similar to human limit cases. From these cases I will then derive some normative moral values.

Environmental ethics extends the moral community beyond the limits of the human community so that the first becomes more inclusive: living beings other than humans and even non-living beings become members of moral community. The extension of the moral community to include animals is based on the fact that animals are able to suffer and to feel the difference between bad and good environmental conditions.¹ This extension of morality is based on a so-called “naturalizing morality process,” through which the basis and the limits of morality are drawn according to certain biological properties. The boundaries between species cease to be relevant for the domain of morality because the properties by which we grant moral status do not belong only to humans; in fact, they do not even belong to *all* humans. Moreover, we can establish a natural limit of morality up to that level at which we can’t find a particular property (in this case, a capacity for suffering). Therefore, the moral duty to avoid suffering will be extended to animals at least.

Like humans, beings endowed with sensibility wish to avoid suffering, and it would be arbitrary to draw a line between humans and all the other living beings which feel pain. Moreover, traditional theories may be revised from this enlarged environmentalist view. Scanlon revised contractualist theory and accepted living beings that could be prejudiced as parts with a moral status in a contract. To be able to be prejudiced means to be able to feel pain, to feel a

frustration, or to feel something similar in some circumstances.²

Environmentalists go even further and try to include different kinds of entities in the sphere of morality, beings which are incapable of suffering. The extension of the morality sphere from the living beings endowed with sensibility to all living beings is philosophically justified by the thesis that every creature has its own good and tends in its own way to its own welfare.³

Goodpaster and Attfield have proposed a similar argument, and Attfield has developed an imaginary experiment.⁴ Suppose that only one person survives on Earth, and that person cuts down the last tree from a species. Although the person did not produce any prejudice in another person, we are tempted to say that on the basis of our common moral intuitions we must condemn this act as an immoral one. The tree could save its own species from extinction. Moreover, Attfield assigned some interests to that tree. Generally speaking, environmentalists assert that all forms of organic life have moral status or are morally considerable, regardless of their psychological capacities. This means that to cut down a tree is to kill that tree, and that this fact is morally significant.

Therefore, from an environmentalist standpoint we have the right and the grounds to rethink the concept of moral community starting from the idea of biotic community. Brennan proposed an argument in six steps:⁵

1. The biotic community consists of animals and plants in mutual relations.
2. Any biotic community is inevitably in relationship with other communities, so we can extend the notion of community up to the entire biosphere.
3. Every community tends to get to a final state of equilibrium and diversity.
4. No biotic community can stand without abiotic resources because it needs to process some inorganic resources into organic components.
5. The global ecosystem can be conceived as a system composed of all biotic communities and the abiotic environment.
6. The biosphere as a whole tends to stability, equilibrium, and diversity.

Other environmentalists claim that the extension has to go much further to include all natural entities,

¹ Peter Singer was the first to champion the animal liberation movement, taking Jeremy Bentham’s interrogative statement about the criterion of our moral judgment as his starting point: the question is not whether animals can reason or talk, but whether they can suffer. Singer claimed that the liberation movement also demands an expansion of our moral horizons and an extension of our basic moral principles. See Singer, 1974, 2009.

² See Scanlon, 1977.

³ For this reasoning see von Wright, 1963, p. 50.

⁴ See Goodpaster, 1978, Attfield, 1981.

⁵ Brennan, 1986.

such as forests, landscapes, islands, caves, rivers, rocks, and so on in order to be truly complete. The basis of this radical extension consists in the replacement of biological criteria with naturalist criteria. Every entity has its own good, and to recognize this is to assign moral significance to them, regardless of the aims and moral judgment claimed by human beings.⁶

A different kind of extension is focused on collective entities and wholes, such as species, ecosystems, and the biosphere as a whole.⁷ We recognize that the human groups may assume certain responsibilities and may claim certain rights which aren't reducible to individual responsibilities and rights. Environmentalists extend these properties from human groups to biological wholes or collective entities like ecosystems and species. Therefore, the extinction of a species becomes not only an issue of protecting biological diversity, but also an ethical issue regarding the growing values of the species which is in danger. We will also discuss the duty to protect these species, about justice between species, and the responsibility to assure biological diversity. Finally, the biosphere as a whole can be considered a living organism with its own good, and would therefore be morally considerable.⁸

The turning point: the notion of intrinsic value

The notion of value was traditionally understood as a relational property between a subject who evaluates and the object which is evaluated. The notion of intrinsic value assumes that an entity has value independent of an evaluator. Environmental ethics bases its approach on the notion of intrinsic value.

Traditional ethics used an instrumental theory of value. These are defined in relation to evaluator's preferences and interests. The detachment of value from evaluators was interpreted as a theoretically insurmountable difficulty because the possibility of identifying some rational ground to justify some preferences and choices against others is lost.⁹

But it is possible to argue that the dichotomy between an instrumental theory of value and an in-

trinsic theory of value is unjustified or false.¹⁰ An instrumental theory reduces value to an instrumental property which is described according to an aim which is defined in terms of the interests, advantages, and preferences of a class of evaluators. Intrinsic values are detachable from the evaluators because they may be specified by themselves and not only as means to an end. Therefore, the difference between an instrumental theory of value and a theory of intrinsic value consists in the difference between values as means to an end and values as aims. But intrinsic values can't be aims by themselves, so we do not have in the end an alternative to the instrumental theory of value.

The main problem has to do with the possibility of comparing intrinsic values. If we cannot compare them, then we cannot create hierarchies or prioritize them, which leads to difficulties in our choices and decisions. If any intrinsic value is equal to any other intrinsic value and the possibility of a hierarchy is dissolved, then we do not have any grounds or reason to justify our value choices and preferences. Therefore, we recognize the need for a hierarchy. But how can we conciliate this need with the theory of intrinsic value?

I propose to understand the distinction between instrumental value and intrinsic value through an understanding of the relation between the human beings and nature.¹¹ We can conceive three situations:

1. If natural processes are independent from human beings, then we can accept that nature has an intrinsic value. Humans are not in a position to evaluate and to assign values to an independent nature.
2. If mankind is a part of nature, but different from it, then we can also accept that nature has an intrinsic value that is recognized by human beings without making it subservient through this recognition.
3. If mankind and nature are dependent on each other, and if the human beings have intrinsic value as ends for themselves and not merely as means to an end, then nature will have the same value. Two entities which are similar cannot differ radically from one point of view.

All these three situations have in common the fact that the intrinsic value is conceived as an objec-

⁶ For the first phase of the debate regarding the moral standing of natural objects, see Hunt, 1980, and Brennan, 1984.

⁷ This problem was stated by Attfield, 1971.

⁸ The so-called *Gaia hypothesis* is based on such a holistic interpretation. See Lovelock, 1974.

⁹ Some critics have gone further and asserted that the notion of intrinsic value opens the way to mysticism and irrationalism. See Passmore, 1974, chapter 7.

¹⁰ Routley, Routley, 1979.

¹¹ I will follow Katz, 1991.

tive property.¹² We can conceive three kinds of objections to this thesis: a metaphysical one, an epistemological one, and a motivational one.¹³

The metaphysical objection consists in doubting regarding the existence of a property which is independent from any conscious creature. The intrinsic value would be a strange entity, different from any other entity in the universe. The answer would be that intrinsic values are the irreducible grounds of our actions. Although intrinsic values are conceived independently from any consciousness, they are impersonal reasons which justify our actions. The model is that of a system of beliefs in which some beliefs justify others.

The epistemological objection consists in doubting the ability to know that an entity has an intrinsic value. We do not have a standard procedure to validate our intuitions, so the best way is to follow our reason and to reveal the moral presuppositions which guide our behavior. Attfield mentioned an example taken from Parfit, namely the case of a mother who decides to keep her baby or to have an abortion according to some presuppositions regarding the quality of life as an intrinsic value.

The motivational objection is related to the practical consequences of a behavior based on intrinsic values. But the main problem concerns the possibility of generating or causing actions based on intrinsic values. The best answer is that the intrinsic values are the starting point for any chain of decisions which justify our actions. Therefore intrinsic values ultimately guide our actions, even if we cannot identify them as grounds at first glance.

It seems that the best theoretical standpoint in environmental ethics is to suppose that intrinsic values are the ultimate grounds of human actions in an interdependent world conceived as a whole. However, acceptance of this conception generates new questions and difficulties. I will briefly list the most salient of them.

If nature as a whole has intrinsic value, and if humans are a part of nature, then all natural phenomena are good, like pain or death, because they are natural. Similarly, if life as such is an intrinsic value, then all the forms of life, including germs or rotting trees, will have intrinsic value.

Another dilemma repeats the debate between individualism and holism in the social sciences. The key question is if intrinsic value is assigned only to

individuals or also to collective entities like species, or to “wholes” like ecosystems. Moreover, if intrinsic values are incommensurable with each other, then all entities will have equal intrinsic value. But this conclusion contradicts our common moral intuitions because we commonly regard the life of a human being as more valuable than the life of a fly and base our moral choices on hierarchies. It seems that an ambiguity was created by the double status of human beings as equal parts of biotic community without any special privilege on the one hand, and as entities which are separate from the nature because they are the only ones with moral obligations and duties and do not depend entirely on nature on the other hand.

An essential tension: inclusion and hierarchy

It is easy to see that there is a tension between inclusion and hierarchy. Inclusion is based on the so-called principle of impartiality, which means that all the members of the moral community are equal to each other. They must have the same advantages and equally bear the costs. Inclusion in the moral community or the extension of the moral community may not grant any special privileges or create the conditions for somebody to have a privileged status. Moreover, different costs or prejudices have to be supported equally, and the extension must not create opportunities for someone to have benefits while the associated price prejudices others. At the same time, freedom has to be universalized within the moral community. This means that different members of the moral community will be free to act according to their capacities in order to develop themselves and to create their own biological niches. Therefore, differences between the members of an enlarged moral community are inevitable, and these differences will cause different effects in the field of interests and needs. As a result, a hierarchy will become a structural function of moral community.

The principle of inclusiveness, formulated by Ralph Barton Perry, is formalized by Gary Varner as follows: “it is always better to satisfy all the interests in a given set rather than any proper subset of that same set.”¹⁴ If we add two assumptions to this, then it becomes entirely unobjectionable:

“1. The satisfaction of any interest is considered in and of itself, a good thing (and the dissatisfaction of any interest is, in and of itself, a bad thing), and

2. Only the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of interests matters from the moral point of view.”¹⁵

¹² Callicott adds that this objective property is independent from any mind or conscience. See Callicott, 1985, p. 262.

¹³ See Attfield, 1987.

¹⁴ Varner, 1998, p. 84.

¹⁵ Varner, 1998, p. 84.

I think that these requests for inclusiveness are well-fulfilled in the theoretical framework of biocentrism.¹⁶ If all living beings are morally considerable, this means that every living being has an inherent worth. Therefore, the whole community of living beings is unified by this criterion: an entity has an inherent worth if and only if his or her welfare is realized independently from the attribution of value to that entity or the utility of that entity for any other living being.

We can derive from biocentrism these four theses which express the principle of inclusion:

1. All human beings, like all the other living beings, belong to the community of terrestrial life.
2. The human species, like all the other species of living beings, is integrated in a system of interdependences in which the survival of every living being depends on the environment and its relations with all the other members of the community.
3. All organisms are teleological centers following their own good, each in their own way.
4. Human beings are not superior to other living beings, neither in their merits nor their intrinsic value.

From these theses—which express the basic principle of inclusion in the moral community of all beings who are able to pursue their own good—we can derive some moral rules to govern the human behavior:

1. We have a duty to not harm living beings.
 2. We have a duty to not interfere in the lives of living beings. We must let nature to follow its course.
 3. The rule of loyalty: Moral agents have a duty to be loyal to nature.
 4. The rule of distributive justice: We must assure equal justice in the extended moral community.
- The first rule has priority over the other three.

But how is biocentrism able to solve conflicts between different interests? If the liberty of a living being consists in its ability to act for its own best interests, it is easy to imagine situations in which different living beings have divergent interests. For example, the bacteria *Neisseria meningococcus* fulfills its own good by invading the meningeal brain, and this process can cause the death. Are we acting

impartially if we side with human beings? How can we judge correctly in these situations? If the inherent worth has no grades, then we cannot make any distinction between the welfare of different living beings. Taylor's answer is that we have to act in such a way as to minimize the infringement of our duties.¹⁷ This means that in some conditions we can accept following the rule of the lesser evil, that some interests are more important than others. For example, we can accept the necessity of building a road between two cities near a forest if and only if the damages will be as low as possible and the advantages as large as possible.

If we accept these consequences of biocentrism, then we can assume the task of proposing an acceptable hierarchy which is compatible with the acceptance of the inclusion principle. It is obvious that children's interests and the interests of rats can sometimes be in intense conflict, and that we cannot argue without moral unacceptable consequences that the interests of the two parties are equal.

Therefore, we must propose a hierarchical order based on acceptable principles which do not conflict with the inclusion principle.

Varner asserts that an elementary hierarchical principle is consistent with a principle which expresses the so-called "priority of desires" view:

P1: "Generally speaking, the death of an entity that has desires is a worse thing than the death of an entity that does not."¹⁸

But if we accept this principle which gives priority to entities that have desires, then we are able to derive another principle which gives priority to the human interests:

P2: "The satisfaction of the desires of humans is more important than the satisfaction of the desires of animals."¹⁹

And the theoretical "slippery slope" may continue if we make some distinctions between some categories of interests.²⁰ For the sake of this argument, I will not take into account the practical diffi-

¹⁷ Taylor, 1986, p. 238.

¹⁸ Varner, 1998, p. 78.

¹⁹ Varner, 1998, p. 79.

²⁰ For example, following Bernard Williams, we can make a distinction between human ground projects and noncategorical desires, and derive a weak version of the principle P2: "Generally speaking, the satisfaction of ground projects is more important than the satisfaction of noncategorical desires." (See Varner, 1998, p. 79, and Williams, 1973, pp. 85-86, 1981, pp. 12-13).

¹⁶ I will use in this comment about biocentrism some of the ideas stated by Paul Taylor in his book, *Respect for Nature. A Theory of Environmental Ethics*. See Taylor, 1986.

culties regarding the application of these principles. A less oversimplified theory will take into account only the main categories of interests, starting from a reasonable balance between inclusion and hierarchy.

Robin Attfield proposed a simplified theory of priorities. I think that its hard theoretical core is this:²¹

1. The satisfaction of basic human needs takes priority over the satisfaction of all the other human needs.

2. The satisfaction of human needs takes priority over the satisfaction of all the other human preferences.

3. The lives of all creatures, actual and possible, are of equal value.

4. When the needs of a more complex creature are in conflict with the needs of a less complex creature, the more complex have priority.

5. When the needs of a sentient creature are in conflict with the secondary preferences of a more complex creature, the sentient creature has priority.

6. The good of insentient animals and plants has a slight moral significance if their welfare is not in conflict with the basic needs of other more complex beings.

In conclusion, I think that it is possible to find a theoretical balance between inclusion and hierarchy within the extended moral community. But I think that at the practical level, especially in the case of managerial decisions, the convergence between inclusion and hierarchy is solved implicitly or dissolved methodologically. This means that the theoretical divergence between the aim of environmentalists to extend the limits of the moral community and the aim of traditional ethics to preserve the priority of human interests is only apparent if the suppositions of traditional anthropocentrism are maintained. If not, as in the case of biocentrism, a new approach to the relation between inclusion and hierarchy is opened.

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²¹ Attfield, 1987, pp. 88–89.

WHOSE MOUNTAINEERING? WHICH RATIONALITY? THE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY OF CLIMBING IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF 20TH-CENTURY NORWEGIAN ECOPHILOSOPHIES

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Abstract:

The article discusses the genealogy of 20th-century Norwegian ecophilosophies as deriving from a specific philosophy of climbing, one which is irreducible to philosophy of alpinism so far as it is based on the principle of cooperation and on the intrinsic value of interacting with the mountain rather than on competition, which makes the mountain an arena for sport activities. In this context, the expression to think like a mountain will be analyzed as something more than an impressive metaphor, and examined as a new way of thinking that avoids the extremes of both radical anthropocentrism and biocentrism.

Key words: Norwegian climbing philosophy, applied ethics, imaginative rationality, ontological ethics.

1. The Long Way of the Norwegian Philosophy of Climbing

The aim of this article is to support the thesis that the establishment of 20th-century Norwegian environmental philosophies is closely tied to the justification of one specific philosophy of climbing which cannot be reduced to alpinism as a sport. In this context, Norwegian climbing philosophy can be examined by tracing the philosophical ideas behind the formation of two climbing clubs, namely the Norwegian Alpine Club (NTK) and Kolsås Climbing Club (Kolsås Klatreklubb) (KKK).

KKK (1967), consisting of 37 climbers led by Reidar Eriksen, Egil Myhre, and Per Gaarder, functioned as a local climbing club which countered the elitism of NTK (Olsen 1992: 67). In turn, NTK was considered to be “perhaps the most exclusive of a myriad of outdoor recreation societies,” whose slo-

gan was formulated by the prominent Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer, Peter Wessel Zapffe: “Climbing to other sports is like champagne to bock beer,” displaying the spirit of “this upper crust fraternity” (Anker 2007: 458). In the late 1920s, Arne Naess met Zapffe for the first time in Kolsås, which was called a “center for advanced friluftsliv” (outdoor life) (Kolsrud 1992: 119); a meeting that became one of the most crucial prerequisites for the further development of 20th-century Norwegian ecophilosophies. According to Bruskeland and Støren, both Naess and Zapffe had been climbing Kolsås for over 30 years before the KKK was founded, and thus their climbing ethics was formulated as a matter of a “live” practical philosophy (Bruskeland and Støren 1992: 79).

Regarding climbing techniques, bolt climbing was promoted by Naess against the principles of NTK and the British influence in 1930s, while so-called clean climbing (Kolsrud 1992: 116) was imposed by the “father” of the Norwegian philosophy of outdoor life (friluftsliv), Nils Faarlund, and some other supporters in the late 1960s. During his stay in Austria (1954-1955), Naess was struck by the idea that the climbers in Norway should become as crafty as the Austrian ones, but by sharing another philosophy of climbing (Naess 1978: 125). He was one of the first climbers to argue that the aim of climbing is not the experience of the climbers themselves, nor the mountain’s formations or routes, but rather the realization of the pilgrim meeting with the mountain (Ibid).

The anticipation of bolt climbing techniques had much to do with the fact that Kolsås and some other cliffs around it became “arenas” for climbing (Kolsrud 1992: 122). At first sight, it appears that

bolts were recognized as aiding the process of conquering the mountain, so far as they made the most difficult ways accessible for the climber. Accessibility itself turned into a key prerequisite for justifying the environment as an arena for conquering difficult or inaccessible peaks. However, rejecting the idea that peaks should be named after the people who have climbed them was a significant element of the new philosophy of climbing.¹

On a practical level, the use of bolts showed an increasing tendency to expand dependence on external factors to overcome the difficulties the climbers faced, but it happened against the background of understanding man's responsibility toward both others and nature. Otherwise, the problem of interacting with nature would have been reduced to how to approach the peak of a mountain fast and effectively, with "effectiveness" defined from climber's perspective alone.

If effectiveness had become a key characteristic of climbing and replaced the "natural" intensity of the climbing experience itself, the debates about safety would have been simplified to the choice and application of means and their instrumental value. It would have been a problem triggered by the use of bolts as means rather than by their contribution to easing the interaction with nature. Bolt climbing was recognized as dominated by so-called responsibility for the product (Ibid: 123), namely how long the bolts will last and whether the climber has the competence to adequately place them. This tendency has developed in time with the more widespread introduction of "modern" ideas of climbing due to increasing industrialization and its impact on turning nature into an exploitable source.

Analyzing the ethical aspects of bolt climbing makes it questionable to define it as uncritically adopted within the values of climbing sport's ethics. Bolts are introduced in order to meet the requirements of rising safety concerns, i.e., to improve the safety level of all climbers involved. In the 1950s, the essence of climbing was defined by Kolsås by the following formulas: "Never stay on one bolt!" and "The first man should never fall down!" (Høibakk 1992: 62). The shared responsibility for the others is one of the most significant embodiments of the interaction between the climber and the

mountain that grounds the understanding of climbing ethics as a certain type of applied ethics.

In the article *Bolt Climbing*, published in the journal *Norsk fjellsport* (*Norwegian Mountain Sport*) (1948), Naess claimed that it is not right to enlist and encourage people to take up a sport which might create great sorrow for their relatives (Hohne 1992: 42). It is an experience that presumes not only that one will make particular engagements, but also necessitates awareness of one's responsibility to the experience itself, which is understood as an inseparable component from the responsibility to climber's life as a whole. To a certain extent, bolt climbing naturally entails the avoidance of experiential dualism, i.e. separating the climbing experience as an object from the climber as a subject.

Examining the value of climbing itself, I would argue that the role of training in the context of climbing is not equivalent to training for a sport. In the 1930s, climbing was addressed in Kolsås as "our dear sport" (Olsen 1992a: 54), which shows that its prototype characteristics had less to do with the contemporary understanding of sport philosophy than might be thought. Climbing was described as "dear," since joy and fun are the characteristics that give coherence to the climber's experiential gestalt.² As it is defined by the members of the club, Kolsås was not a goal in itself, it was a preparation for the mountain (Høibakk 1992: 65) in which participants cultivated their skills in order to be able to face physical, mental, and psychological challenges. Mastering such skills was designed to improve contact with nature and others rather than make the aforementioned skills goals in themselves.

In this context, a specification must be made. The ideas of exercising and practicing this philosophy of climbing—which are expressed by another representative of the later Kolsås generations, Dag Kolsrud, with one Norwegian word signifying both activities (the word "utøvelse")—should be examined in its double meaning, discerning between climbing as an existential experience and climbing as a sport. Since Kolsrud calls clean climbing an example of "a new ideology within exercising/practicing of climbing sport" (Kolsrud 1992: 116), it is important to emphasize that in the beginning, Norwegian bolt climbing was adopted as a means for keeping the complex interaction between man and nature as transparent as possible, while the forthcoming ideology of sport built on exercising

¹ Naess mentions the name of the well-established Norwegian climber, Einar W. Eriksen, as an illuminative representative of a tendency toward wide egalitarianism and anti-heroism at that time (Hohne 1992: 41).

² The term "experiential gestalt" is borrowed from G. Lakoff (Lakoff 1980: 81).

rather than on “practicing”—understood as an existential mode of becoming—presumes treating the means as goals in themselves. On a micro-methodological level, it shows that the ideology of sport is focused on bolts rather than on bolt climbing, absolutizing the role of equipment by making it an object of severe competition: the more fashionable the equipment is, the better the climbers are. This is one idea whose development brings bolt climbing as it was introduced by Naess in Norway into question.

In turn, the revolutionary impact of “clean climbing” consisted in its introduction as a practical and environmentally friendly way to climb, since the changes in technique caused changes in the philosophical influences behind them. While the egalitarian ideas of NTK were influenced by British philosophy, clean climbing opened the door for a stronger American intellectual influence. According to Kolsrud, the American influence in question became more apparent in the late 1970s and early 1980s, triggering changes which, however, were not very instructive only for Norway (Ibid: 115). The Alpine traditions, the role of the mountain, and the philosophical foundation of outdoor life in the lives of Norwegian climbers predisposed them toward adopting the practices of Middle Europe. In practice, such an impact means that the latter were rather replaced with some American ideas, shifting the focus to style and technology, and to the growing interest in safety equipment and free climbing (Ibid).

Free climbing itself was triggered by the generational shift in Kolsås in the early 1970s, as well as by the international development of the field of climbing, which both contributed to raising free climbing to the level of sport. The climbing in question also showed how the use of German words and expressions for climbing were being replaced with new English terminology. As Kolsrud himself argued, the secondary language in Kolsås was no longer *Ny Norsk*,³ but English (Ibid: 117).

The intensive internalization of climbing in Norway led to its transformation in the face of the increasing impact of industrialization on society generally. This transformation had both its positive and negative sides with regard to the uncritical reception of different ideals. In the case of Norwegian climbing, although the uncritical import of American

ideals partly followed other dividing lines, it revealed how the development of climbing follows the development of society (Ibid).

In this context, the sportification of climbing caused by the internalization of foreign values can be seen as emerging from an uncritical acquisition of foreign norms, which in turn provoked the replacement of climbing ethics with those of sport. The transformation in question presumed a change in the mode of becoming: the meaning of the climbing experience guided by the formula “Because it (the mountain) is there” was substituted with the Kolsås’s “Because we are here.”⁴ Thus, in order to understand the genealogy of the subject change in climbing, we should focus on outlining the normative validity of experiential gestalt as grounded in the complex pattern of implementing different ideals of climbing—namely, whether climbing is recognized as ascending a traceless passage (*ferdsel*) or a well-trodden way (Ibid).

However, so-called clean climbing is not only a cliché (Ibid: 115). In terms of safety, the better equipment is, the faster and safer the climbing is. On the other hand, the necessity of creating more elaborate equipment does not exhaust the debate about the purpose of climbing, which is a significant argument in favor of the thesis that such an interest is not necessarily a sign of a need for its sportification.

Since industrialization requires a mass production of artifacts, climbing faces the negative influences of those changes. The so-called lime debate (*kalkdebatten*) (Ibid: 117) in Norway is an illuminative illustration of how the aforementioned mode of non-necessity comes into question through pressure to mass-produce climbing equipment. The debate concerns the quality of “climbing production,” which “does not have only cosmetic or psychological effects” (Ibid: 119). It is taking place at a time when free climbing is being introduced, showing a gradual change in climbers’ attitudes towards exaggerating the role of equipment. This is also one of the first signs of the forthcoming sportification that makes the price a value in itself, and thus encour-

³ *Ny Norsk* (New Norwegian) is one of the two official Norwegian written standards. It was created in the mid-19th century in order to provide an alternative to Danish, which was still dominant in Norway at that time.

⁴ These formulas are answers to the question of why people climb. The first one was given one hundred years ago by Albert Mummery (as a response to the question of why he climbed the Matterhorn in the Alps). He emphasized that the real subject of climbing is not the climber, but the mountain. The second answer shows the growing desire among the members of Kolsås to establish a certain type of group belonging which strengthens self-realization via the process of identification (Ibid: 117).

ages striving for sportification for commercial reasons.

In turn, raising the level of safety does not lead to ruining the mountain, since clean climbing happens “almost silently and tracelessly” (Ibid: 116). That new securing process is based on placing and removing bolts with one’s hands, as ease of execution is not recognized within the contemporary context as merely raising the level of efficiency, i.e. as reducing the time for reaching the goal, but also extending the space for both others and environment by “cleaning” given signs of man’s presence in it. On a macro-methodological level, it means that the formula “Easy and fast” is a formula which differs when adopted in extreme rock climbing or indoor climbing, because it does not concern the amplification of time, but the clarification of space understood as a horizon of interacting rather than as an arena for certain sport activities.

As Kolsrud emphasizes in his essay, clean climbing established both a concept and its own activity, but it does not follow that safety should be put under the umbrella of climbing itself (Ibid). Clean climbing does not have to be exploited to win a climb, to move upwards, but only to prevent and stop falling without ruining nature.

2. The Turn of Imaginative Rationality and Its Impact on the Philosophy of Climbing in Norway

The “magic” underlying climbing does not have to be interpreted as a form of anthropomorphism, nor as merely an effective metaphorical expression, but rather as a new type of rationality extending the boundaries of cognitive rationality. An illuminative example in this respect is Naess’s idea of what it means to “think like a mountain.”⁵ I argue that such a mode of thinking becomes understandable through the adoption of imaginative rationality,⁶ which gives normative validity to the state of contemplation. The latter provides the justification for man’s being-for-itself as a “natural condition,” i.e. as a condition initially concerned with nature’s being-in-itself. On a macro-methodological level, the state of contemplation internalized as the purest form of meeting between man and nature has to be recognized as the most relevant form of self-realization based on the biosphere’s realization.

Furthermore, the rehabilitation of the normative validity of man’s holistic experience shows how mastering practical wisdom depends, in its initial stage, on a focus upon the physical experience of the climber, including the issues of food and clothes. Although the physical experience is a necessary but not sufficient condition for clarifying the whole process of self-realization, it contributes to specifying why the concept of knowledge should be extended beyond the boundaries of pure rationality. In this context, we can outline the other aspect of imaginative rationality. In turn, “talking and feeling like a mountain” presumes the rehabilitation of a certain type of ontological grounding, namely, seeing/hearing like a mountain, which is one of the most important goals in the process of contemplation as defined by Naess, Kvaløy, and Faarlund.

On a micro-methodological level, the reconsidered normative validity of understanding through the mode of imaginative rationality clarifies one of the puzzling topics in Naess’s and Kvaløy’s writings—how to talk about a mountain (i.e. Tseringma⁷) as a god, father, mother, and princess in an ontologically grounded way. At first sight, the reader faces the challenge of interpreting the aforementioned statements purely metaphorically. However, the temptation to talk about irrationality comes from the conceit of insisting on examining reality from the perspective of the formula *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, which ascribes irrationality to non-existing things. If we refer to the non-existence, we would question one of the main principles of the 20th-century Norwegian ecophilosophies—the idea of meaningfulness (recognized as a surplus of meaning) determining the process of man’s self-realization (to be understood as driven by nature’s realization). Although the surplus of meaning is justified as ontologically grounded, i.e. as stemming from a surplus of determined being, it does not follow the regulations of the adequation of intellect and things, since the correlation requires evaluating the role of both emotions and corporeal experience.

Due to adopting the concept of imaginative rationality, we can see how the dialectical tension between man and nature can be handled—by reconsidering the faulty presumption that irrationality has nothing to do with rationality as such.

On a macro-methodological level, this means that the process of understanding concerning man’s self-realization is impossible if we reduce it to cog-

⁵ The expression “to think like a mountain” was coined by the American environmentalist, Aldo Leopold, in his book *A Sand County Almanac* (1949).

⁶ The term is borrowed from Mark Johnson (Johnson 1993: 3, 134).

⁷ Tseringma (also Gauri Sankar) is a mountain in the Himalayas.

nitive knowledge as such. This would exclude complex understanding, which is key in cultivating sensitivity towards Otherness in all its representations. An insight in this direction is provided by A. Jensen, who comments on the Norwegian word “kjennskap” (knowledge) as understanding (Jensen 2000: 102–103), illustrating how encouraging sensitivity towards the biosphere presumes adopting an awareness that has an uncontradictory normative validity.

3. Some Specifications of Norwegian Philosophy of Climbing as Applied Ethics

In this context, we can find well-grounded arguments supporting the understanding of the Norwegian philosophy of climbing espoused by Zapffe, Naess, S. Kvaløy, and N. Faarlund as based on applied ethics. Regardless of the fact that ethics plays an implicit role in their writings, they agree about the main issue of climbing, which gives license to discuss Norwegian climbing philosophy as underlined by unquestionable applied ethics. The latter promotes the principle of cooperation over competition, as well as the rule of protecting nature rather than ruining it.

A good illustration of this is the so-called “anti-expeditions.” Sigmund Kvaløy, who was one of the many young adherents of Naess, spoke of their eighteen-day road trip from Oslo to Gandhi’s institute in Varanasi (1969) as a turning point in clarifying the role which Gandhi’s ethics of non-violence can play in overcoming the problems triggered by Western thinking. In 1971, N. Faarlund, Kvaløy, and Naess set out on an “anti-expedition” to Nepal with the aim of helping the local Sherpa in their campaign to protect the sacred mountain Tseringma from the invasion of tourist-mountaineers. During that trip, Naess completed a sketch of a new environmental philosophy (or “ecosophy”), Kvaløy formulated the principles of ecopolitics of a “life necessities society” (as opposed to the dominant “industrial development society”), and Faarlund was inspired to continue his philosophy of outdoor life (*friluftsliv*) as a wider approach to outdoor education (Brennan 2013).

Judging by the aforementioned examinations, I would argue that in the beginning, dating back to Fridtjof Nansen’s description of his experience in Jotunheimen (Nansen 1978: 17), the evaluation of climbing still relied on the contradiction between *Homo Ascensus* and *Homo Viator* triggering reminiscences of Romanticism’s ideal. The ideal in question presumes vertical space to have higher symbolic value as a space of freedom and self-realization. It is

the space where “fresh” and “free” are determined to be ontological synonyms (Nansen 1978a: 48) that in turn determine the realization of our nature, so far as both body and soul should “claim their right” (Rubenson 1978: 117).

The coherence of corporeal and spiritual experience having normative validity is illustrated in the early 20th-century Norwegian environmental texts as focused on the “material” part of the preparation, and its value as grounding the realization of the expeditions. The complexity of the climbing experience is gradually specified as an experience driven by all man’s capabilities, namely by the coordination of his intellectual, emotional, and corporeal abilities. The engagement of corporeal abilities is recognized as being of high importance, since the choice of relevant equipment is essential not only for safety, but also for environmental protection. The latter involves other considerations, such as the way that traces left by the climber carry ethical implications due to the presumption that the climbers should pass through the deep snow unaggressively.

An example in this respect is Zapffe’s essays *Soveproser (Sleeping Bags)* (1934), in which first contacts with wild nature are evaluated through the opportunity to spend the night under the open sky in sleeping bags. This direct physical interaction with nature is motivated by traditions reaching back to the first Norwegian polar explorers, R. Amundsen and H. Hansen (Zapffe 1978: 178). In turn, the outdoor life shapes man’s mentality in a unique way, which leads to implementing practical wisdom against a different background. Referring to this explanation, I would argue that the aforementioned background has to be understood as stemming from a different idea of compression of time and space. The practical striving for efficiency, which is focused on shortening the time and space for realization, inflicts the justification of mechanical time at the expense of organic time,⁸ as well as the recognition of city space at the expense of nature’s space.

While Zapffe describes the interaction in question as driven by the necessity to introduce one biological-ecological theory (Ibid: 175), Rubenson characterizes the physical as a part of the religion of the stars’ sky (Zapffe 1978a: 160). The latter does not have to be understood only as a metaphorical expression, but rather within the framework of what Rudolf Otto calls *numinous*. It provides ethics *per se* by which man’s self-realization is defined as intrin-

⁸ Kvaløy refers to Bergson’s distinction between organic and mechanical time.

sically connected to the process of the biosphere's realization.

On a macro-methodological level, it means that the wide set of requirements regarding corporeal experience determines the way that successful (from an ethical point of view) interaction with nature should be accomplished. On a micro-methodological one, climbing values are justified by the normative validity of striving for harmony. If body and soul are in harmony with each other, it is a necessary and sufficient condition for recognizing harmony with nature.⁹

On the other hand, the democratization of climbing as represented by Rubenson can be sought by seeing applied ethics as a matter of a collective responsibility that encourages cooperation at the expense of competition. The point is no longer to talk about loneliness, which is not reducible to either the concept or the feeling of being lonely (Rubenson 1978: 119), but rather to talk about the intrinsic value of transperspectivity on a generic level, in which men as belonging to mankind interact with different living forms because they are also a part of the net of biospherical knots in the sense described by Naess.

The necessity of clarifying the role of ethics is explicitly stated by Faarlund, who claimed in one of his early writings, *Fjell og vidde (Mountain and Mountain Plateau)* (1968)—published in the *Tidsskrift for klatring (Journal of Climbing)*—that it is of crucial importance to introduce a more binding ethical evaluation of both climbing (klatreetisk vurdering) and action, so that it can be built on facts rather than on illusions (Faarlund 1968: 32). Referring to his thesis, we should clarify that the evaluation does not have to be understood within the framework of objective naturalism, nor does it question the role of what I called imaginative rationality in climbing. On the contrary, it has to be focused on specifying relevant ethical rules in governing the diverse moral experience concerned with climbing. Thus, it should aim at outlining in a noncontradictory way the methodological connection between ethics and moral experience as it pertains to the contact of the climbers with the mountain. It is the develop-

ment of an ethical grounding for climbing—recognized by Faarlund as a significant branch of the outdoor life—that justifies Faarlund's philosophy as a form of modern pedagogy requiring the cultivation of one's awareness of the diversity of the biosphere.

In turn, the idea of democratization—understood as a pluralism of interrelated living forms—has its adopters in Naess and Kvaløy, who try to implement the principles of “natural” democratization as the most relevant societal model. The expression “natural democracy” is not an ontological oxymoron because it is implicitly seen as grounded in the initial interrelatedness of the living things, which have value in themselves. The ethical connotations derive from the presumption that all living things have an unquestionable intrinsic value, a value that depends on the fact that there is no Living Thing with capital letters.

In this context, I would argue that we should discuss the philosophy of climbing as based on applied ethics rather than the philosophy of alpinism. A reason can be found in Zapffe's essay *What Is Climbing Sport? (Hvad er tindesport?)* (1933). Judging by his explanations, I draw the conclusion that the Norwegian philosophy of climbing up to the late 1960s is irreducible to the philosophy of sport, because it should be understood through the Norwegian word *idrett*.¹⁰ It is a matter of a physical activity that stems from the complexity of man's emotions, expectations, and cognitive abilities, and is focused on how one should situate oneself in the world.¹¹ In contrast to the present day, *idrett* used to be understood as a process of applying practical wisdom in different activities in order to orient oneself within the world. This idea contradicts the common contemporary understanding of sport as a competitive physical activity focused on achieving concrete goals like breaking records.

Extrapolating from Kvaløy's distinction between organic and mechanic time, I would claim that if *idrett* relies on the changing attitude towards time—from viewing it as a natural rhythm to seeing it as an intensification of speed—then the difference between sport and *idrett* can be defined as a difference between pace and speed, a difference wherein pace reaching its maximum corresponds to nature's pure rhythm, while maximum speed refers to the

⁹ This thesis is also supported by Faarlund, although he does not emphasize the normative connection between man's harmony and nature's harmony, namely that the former is a necessary and sufficient condition for the realization of the latter due to its strong ethical connotations. Faarlund stresses the fact that it is one and the same harmony, but does not explicitly reveal the premises of the ontological ethics lying behind this assertion (Faarlund 1978: 46).

¹⁰ There is no difference in the translation of the words “sport” and “*idrett*” in English.

¹¹ Discussing the context in which the word *idrett* has been used, G. Breivik emphasizes that it was first used to characterize the Vikings' endeavors to find new places and discover new lifestyles (Breivik 2010: 195).

“best” time available according to calculations by humans.

It is the sensitivity towards the world embodied in the concept of *idrett* that allows cooperation to be recognized as having a high normative validity. As Zapffe himself claims, climbing is a certain type of experiential learning with strong moral connotations, since it is seen as signifying the difference between good and bad (Zapffe 1978a: 87). Developing this idea, he explicitly argues that climbing is not a sport, but rather a Dionysian confirmation of life (Ibid). The Dionysian potential comes from the meeting with nature, which requires mastery of a different type of practical wisdom through what I called imaginative rationality. The latter determines the way in which nature can be understood as elusive. This elusiveness is one of the objects of man’s strivings that allows the climber to obtain an aura of transcendence insofar as practical wisdom helps unify knowing and feeling in a state of beyondness.

According to Zapffe, the climber does not “crawl up,” but “sets himself up” (Ibid: 87). The Dionysian entity of climbing is also emphasized by the idea of so-called fighting geniality (*en vildt strittende genialitet*) (Ibid) having its exotic combinations. On a macro-methodological level, it means that the turn of imaginative rationality allows us to understand cooperation within the framework of ontological ethics as a form of cultivating sensitivity towards Otherness in all its representations. Furthermore, cooperation is recognized as engaging both cognitive abilities and emotional dispositions, i.e. as creating moral understanding that presumes a high level of responsibility on the part of the climber during the meeting between climber and mountain.

The more concrete aspects of the imaginative rationality can be traced through climbing because the latter provokes ecstasies beyond the norm. Faarlund adds one more distinction, namely the distinction between ascending and climbing. So-called “free climbing” mediates a form of movement’s ecstasy (*bevegelsesrus*), which relies on “seeing the solutions in one passage and living out the solutions” in question (Faarlund 1978: 46). The climber measures the rhythm of the mountain with his own pulse because both of them have no beginning and no end (Ibid). The mode of beyondness becomes based on the prerequisite of nature’s repetitiveness, which is later interpreted in the context of increasing technocratization as a vicious circle.

The turn of imaginative rationality for climbing is also represented in Naess’s writings, where Zapffe’s Dionysian entity is recognized as a “climbing

booze” (Naess 1978: 122). Naess’s experience in the Pyrenees in the early 1930s is described as relying on spontaneity and prolongation of engagement (Ibid). According to him, climbing “in the high mountains has much to do with a given mountain’s mythology” (Ibid). This justifies a new type of meaningfulness, which is reaffirmed by rehabilitating the normative validity of spontaneity. The mythological framework should be outlined as contributing to the recognition of meaningfulness as a surplus of meaning/being that becomes identifiable through the mode of beyondness. The methodological similarities between Zapffe’s and Naess’s ideas of climbing can be found by outlining the ecstasies they describe as prototype characteristics of the existential experience of climbing. The Dionysian is comparable with the booze, since in the ecstasies the climber sees the open face of nature, which fills him with joy.

Like Naess, Faarlund defines climbing as a life philosophy that is based on the development of joy as its highest value. While in his early writings he sees the practical effects of applied ethics, in later writings the implicit idea of rehabilitating the role of ecolife through the lens of ontological ethics is emphasized. It concerns the intrinsic joy of life philosophy affirmed as a way towards nature. It is the process of grasping that illustrates the gradual transition from applied ethics to ontological ethics. Similarly to the way the mountain grasps the man, man grasps the mountain in a non-aggressive way.

In turn, imaginative rationality is embodied in the idea of the sacred in the sense of Faarlund. It is his idea of the “very sacred mountain” (Faarlund 1983: 45-46) that determines the distinction between “grasping” understood in its literal meaning versus the act of self-realization. Such an understanding is part of already established tradition concerning the mythology of the mountain. According to Naess, the Big Mountain (Storfjellet) is what is called in mythology a God (Naess 1978: 120). A similar idea grounds the normative validity of the extended idea of rationality in Mahayana Buddhism, which has the benefit of avoiding the simplifications of anthropomorphic explanations. Naess claims that Tseringma makes it possible to identify the mountain with Buddha himself (Ibid).¹² In this respect, the most significant representation of implicit ontological ethics can

¹² The strong references to Mahayana Buddhism are a result of the so-called anti-expeditions, in which Naess, Kvaløy, and Faarlund become acquainted with the Eastern thinking for the first time.

be seen in how he argues that a new type of rationality has to be justified in order for the meeting between man and mountain to be understood as crucial for their common realization.

4. Conclusion. A Reconsideration of Norwegian Climbing Ethics as Ontological Ethics

The initially lower level of “sportification” of bolt climbing in Norway was defined by the intrinsic value of safety, which addressed both the climber’s interactions with others and his contact with mountain as such, albeit in different ways. Furthermore, clean climbing, as it was introduced in Norway, cannot be seen as a sport from the beginning, since its prototype characteristics of “faster” and “easier” primarily concerned the safety of the climber and did not have an intrinsic price, such as when they were adopted in justifying climbing as a sport. This derives from the fact that the mountain was not yet considered to be an arena for competition, but rather a landscape for situating man, which is why I would claim that Norwegian clean climbing did not encourage climbing to become a part of industrial production of safety equipment. On the contrary, it contributed to mastering the techniques needed to effectively employ such equipment when climbing with others.

Regarding the Norwegian philosophy of climbing, we should talk about *adequation of understanding and things*, so far as the restrictions of the principle of adequation itself are driven by conceptual limitations, not by the matter itself. Such a perspective changes the idea of knowledge by recognizing “knowledge of senses” as something other than an epistemological oxymoron. The first prerequisite for justifying this epistemological theory, which should be interpreted through ontological ethics, is to clarify the normative validity of this extended idea of the rational. By referring to this process, Naess adopts the idea of “extended” rationality due to the goals of general cultural anthropology (Naess 1999: 59). The methodological concern in his contextualization, however, is that he is focused on the process of defining cultural identity, which is a necessary but not sufficient condition if it is interpreted beyond the problems of moral understanding and learning.

Analyzing the implicit ethical grounding of early 20th-century essays on the Norwegian philosophy of outdoor life (*friluftsliv*), I would argue that the Norwegian philosophy of climbing can be defined as a type of applied ethics due to the fact that it was developed as a form of experiential learning whose normative validity arises from outlining practical

wisdom as its prototype characteristic. Yet in Rubenson’s writings, the ideal experience of nature is explored as embodied in experiential learning while climbing (Rubenson 1978: 118), which makes the role of the senses inseparable from the understanding of knowledge as such. Cognitive knowledge is justified as having the same normative validity as seeing and hearing, so far as they all contribute to the realization of a pure openness to nature. In this context, Zapffe’s famous saying that “climbing to other sports is like champagne to bock beer” can be understood if we introduce the comparison between sport and *idrett*, namely, that climbing to other sports is like *idrett* to sport.

With all this considered, I would argue that the “magical” power of climbing derives from the ontological tension created by the mode of beyondness, which shows how mastering practical wisdom in order to reveal nature as an object in itself is a matter of adopting a complex sense of rationality that does not coincide with common sense.

Ontological ethics is important for understanding 20th-century Norwegian climbing philosophy, since referring to it is a “natural” (in the sense of logical) consequence of striving to find a complex perspective which clarifies the problem of normative validity and its representations of man’s interaction with nature. This striving is also a logical result of two ways of thinking about biosphere (Breivik 1979: 10), which can be seen as two worldviews that are not merely contradictory, but can also be reconciled with each other in terms of outlining the necessity of building the whole picture of rationality as irreducible to cognitive knowledge.

Last but not least, the need to justify the role of ontological ethics against the background of philosophy of climbing is driven by what G. Breivik calls a striving for a “new global ethics” (Breivik 1978: 15). In this context, I would argue that global ethics stems from the need to rehabilitate the interrelatedness of all living things, for which the only one way to avoid reference to the paradigm of objective naturalism is to reconsider the influence of ontological ethics as a way of justifying the normative validity of the meeting between man and nature. On a macro-methodological level, it contributes not only to avoiding the implications of growing anthropocentrism, but also to avoiding falling into the trap of radical bioegalitarianism.

Analyzing ontological ethics argues for a reconsideration of why Zapffe’s implicit existential philosophy cannot be simplified as a pessimistic project in contrast to the ones of Naess and Faarlund, which

emphasize the role of joy in examining the aforementioned interrelatedness. The joy itself is explored as deriving from nature, because the normative validity of spontaneous experience guarantees the procurement of the complex nature of man's self-realization.

Faarlund argues that our lives can be easier insofar as life in nature is easy by default due to its naturalness. The overlap between his ideas of climbing experience and experience in nature can be seen in the way the word of grasping mediates the methodological connection between the ideas of joy¹³ and the sacred. It is the outdoor life that "grasps us with joy" (*griper oss med glede*), and thus deepens both our knowledge and the sense of fellowship (Faarlund 1976: 29). Faarlund's thesis illustrates how joy makes the integrity of our experience and knowledge possible by developing the idea of rationality, which introduces the one of common engagement. Regarding the logical connection between understanding and learning, since the latter leads to the development of the former, I would argue that a certain type of fellowship should be encouraged. This would lead to a strengthening of moral understanding through the practices of learning that are recognized as moral practices.

Against the background of the aforementioned investigations, it is important to clarify why the idea that we can talk about pessimistic and optimistic visions—a conception that is even supported by Naess in his evaluation of Zapffe's theory—reveals only one side of the problem. Rather than emphasizing the aforementioned distinction based on overexposing the literal textual references in the philosophers' writings, I focus on pessimism and optimism as mutually interconnected representations of climbing philosophy, and on climbing philosophy as driven by the state of ecstasy experienced by the climber. Ecstasy becomes understandable insofar as man and nature have intrinsically interconnected values—values which are visible in the process of the interaction itself, as long as it is not evaluated from the perspective of moral objectivism—strengthening the anthropocentric model.

According to Zapffe, the first practical experience in examining mountains is characterized by a

feeling of helplessness, thoughtlessness, as well as cramps of desperation and a reliance on destiny (Zapffe 1992: 147). In this context, I argue that such emotions also contribute to the state of ecstasy, as loneliness has many faces that help to spur climbers' self-realization in the mountain. Analyzing Naess's statement that the mountain is always on both our side and life's side (Naess 1978: 124), I would also argue that what he calls balance refers to harmony, which is not equivalent to the process of harmonization, which presumes that the dialectical tension of nature's own development has already been obtained. If the move from balance to balancing corresponds to the move from harmony to harmonization, so-called pessimistic feelings turn into a necessary condition for people and nature to be on one and the same side, making man aware that he is not the master of the universe.

Judging from the aforementioned investigations, I would argue that seeing Zapffe's project as contradictory to the ones of Naess and Faarlund is possible only if we interpret their texts as illustrating fundamental contradictions in the grounding of ontological ethics. Such a simplification would put in question the essential nature of Norwegian climbing philosophy—namely, the normative validity of experiential philosophy, whose prototype characteristic is practical wisdom driven by imaginative rationality. This can lead to misunderstanding common ideas about the role of bioegalitarianism as inflicting man's self-realization through the idea of biosphere. If Zapffe's climbing philosophy is examined as a pessimistic one focused on mankind's intrinsic deficiency, then the idea of self-realization itself would lose its normative validity for good.

Loneliness, understood and felt as a state of being alone, can be seen as merely one possible representation of the one's experience, taking into account that it is a necessary but not sufficient condition for triggering the sense of wholeness with nature. The idea of loneliness is still implicitly stated by Rubenson, who says that it is not the concept of it, nor the feeling, but loneliness itself (Rubenson 1978: 119). Therefore, what is evaluated in a negative way as pessimistic, wrongly equating concrete representations with their normative validity, should be rehabilitated as a crucial condition for the realization of the state of ecstasy, since the latter has both logic and ethics *sui generis*. It is the ethics in question that make it possible to talk about Loneliness with a capital "L" and understanding it as a physical condition, emotional state, cognitive concept, etc. Within the framework of ontological ethics, the eth-

¹³ The methodological connections between Faarlund's and Naess's conceptions of the role of joy can be followed by analyzing the comparison which is outlined by Faarlund himself, namely by comparing his vision of joy with Naess' focus on the development of Spinoza's theory of *hilaritas* (Faarlund 1990: 22).

ics of the numinous becomes recognizable as a way of clarifying why ecstasy can be explored only in a dialectical way, i.e. by combining the methods of cataphasis and apophasis as mutually supplementing each other. In the state of ecstasy, jubilation is indiscernible from the deep sense of mortality and alienation, because the tension of their contradiction is what makes the catharsis possible.

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ECOLOGICAL PARADIGM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERNATIONAL POLICY-DEVELOPMENT STUDY

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Abstract:

The protection and improvement of the environment represents the most essential field of engagement among all the issues of international policy. An ecological paradigm in the traditional and postmodern context refers to a strategic approach to solving the outstanding controversies of human society in different stages of its existence. Globalization of the environment is the oldest example of this process, which in the contemporary world has gained a special significance. Negative trends in addressing ecological problems at all levels of organization of the planetary community oblige the international participants to apply more adequate measures to preserve the ecological safety of humankind.

Key words: ecological paradigm, tradition, post-modern society, ecological safety, cooperation, crisis, international policy.

Introduction

Ecological conditions and environment protection represent a first-class problem for humanity, regardless of the degree of development and production power of certain societies of our planet. At the same time, it is considered to be one of the most important matters for us to address among all the competent directors of international policy. Disturbance of ecological balance occurs as a consequence of human activity, through people subjugating nature and creating products. This has not only caused a

disturbance of ecological balance, but also created a real threat to humanity's survival.

Postmodern society finds itself with the following global problems: ongoing damage to the biosphere and its ecosystems; a huge human population of over seven billion; unfavorable demographic flow; the exploitation and subsequent reduction of many sources of raw materials; pollution and degradation of the air, water, and earth, which have led to global climate change; a vast catalog of extinct species of flora and fauna, further endangering of biodiversity; the homelessness of one quarter of the world's population; dangerous and unhealthy living conditions for a large portion of humanity; the production of huge amounts of waste with inadequate disposal; etc.

Survival of human communities in the past was often threatened by natural catastrophes, epidemics, wars, lack of food, and other hazards. These hazards, however, were all spatially limited. As opposed to the crises of the past, the crisis of today does not arise from natural disasters which are spatially limited, but out of a global disharmony in the entire structure of industrial civilization.

Maintaining the environment is an obligation of human civilization. In future generations are to continue to develop and improve human society, then our attitude toward the environment must fundamentally change. In this sense, the environment protection of flora and fauna represents a necessary condition for the internal stability and safety of each individual country. In the middle of the research on

global, national, and ecological safety, there is the essential subject of human safety.

Sustainable development refers to a future point in the development of society in which ecosystems are exploited rationally without being destroyed. This ecological paradigm represents the strategy of optimizing the social and the ecological so that there is a balance between man, society, and nature. It offers a guideline to civilizations for transitioning from traditional industrial societies to postmodern societies through international policy (Nešković, 2011, p 305).

1. The ecological paradigm within the context of international policy

Humanity at the beginning of the 21st century knows enough about itself and the space that surrounds it, for it is a part of nature, a nature which is deeply and dynamically aware of itself. However, humanity's collective consciousness of ecological responsibility for the future is not yet clear. Quite to the contrary, contemporary society is surrounded by rapidly growing ecological uncertainty (not to mention other kinds of uncertainty), untimely detachment (indolence), and restlessness about the future development of society (impatience). Every ecological question has been seen as subversive, socially unwanted. A long tradition of turning a blind eye to the objective reality of the ecological crisis has caused one group of people to feel that the problem "came out of nowhere," while for another group of people it has quickly become *the* key global issue. This is the time and place to elevate the issue; the basic conditions for the continued survival and further development of humanity demand that the question of ecological protection becomes a legitimate and universal topic of interest to both the sciences and social practice. This new way of thinking is not merely the result of the intellectual inventiveness of individuals, but of the growing dependance of society on the global processes of the ecosphere and its surroundings (the so-called "paradox of technology"). The complexity of the question of ecological safety also points to the idea that the dominant (modern) scientific-technological paradigm has malfunctioned, and that an ecological post-modern perspective cannot be obtained by the ignoring the need for a new attitude toward the ecosphere.

Most alarming are the conditions of Earth for which no national government can be held individually responsible (the greenhouse effect, the increase

of radioactivity, the ozone layer, the condition of world's seas, the shrinking diversity of life, etc.), and which endanger the survival of the humanity and biosphere generally.

The consciousness of the state of our essential dependance on the ecosphere evolved rapidly from indolent to oversensitive. Creating a safe and sustainable postmodern environment is not only a matter of acting quickly. A deconstruction of our existing theoretical and practical model of living is required—a separation from the prior (Biblical) archetype, from the anthropocentric model of humans as superior beings ruling over the rest of nature. Humans should think of themselves not as the owners of nature, but rather as good hosts (*boni paters familias*), guardians that protect nature and maintain the ecosphere. The development of the sciences that study microorganisms and a new understanding of the evolution of the ecosphere contribute greatly to our understanding of humanity's place in the world. These are the greatest intellectual achievements of the contemporary age—which as a whole represent the basis for a completely new approach to research into the unity and mutual dependance of modern human society and postmodern environment, and how they can sustainably co-exist (Nešković, 2007, str. 10).

The concept of ecological safety on planet Earth should be understood as an achievement of and for humanity, as well as an achievement of ecological safety for each individual person. Such safety is provided by a model of *sustainable development*. The essence of such a model consists of the reconciliation of ecological activities with economic possibilities, that is, the need to maintain ecological balance and sustain the living conditions of humanity, maintaining the human dignity of each individual person.

Within this context, we should examine current international agreements regarding environmental protection, particularly two important documents that have been adopted as a show of international cooperation: the *Declaration on Sustainable development* (1992), and the *Millennium Declaration* (2000). At a 1992 United Nations conference in Rio De Janeiro about the environment, the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* was adopted, a declaration which promoted the concept of the sustainable development. The Rio Declaration expressed the need for achieving certain goals for environmental protection, and for supporting sustainable

development with a new macroeconomic politics, thus enabling an economically acceptable way of life for all people (i.e., eliminating poverty) and establishing a model of production and consumption that reduces the burden on the natural environment while still meeting the basic human needs. Basically, accepting the need for sustainable development should contribute to eliminating some of the environmental damage caused by the unchecked development of science and technology. The achievement of this goal essentially demands the ecologization of production (Neškovic, 2009, p 45).

The need to educate people about the necessity of protecting and improving the environment—and of developing a new ecological awareness and a new attitude toward nature—is raised at almost all international meetings connected to human environmental problems. The essence of such a model consists of the reconciliation of ecological activities with economic possibilities, that is, the need to maintain ecological balance and sustain the living conditions of humanity, maintaining the human dignity of each individual person.

The significance of this education was stressed in the *Declaration of the First Conference of the United Nations on the Human Environment* (1982), the product of a meeting of 60 experts from 15 countries on education and politics in the field of environmental studies held non-officially in Vienna. The *Vienna Declaration* was the product of this meeting.

Two organizations—UNESCO and UNEP—paid special attention to problems of education, protection, and the environment. They indicated that the following objectives were crucial:

- Creating awareness of the complexity of the environment as a unity of biological, physical, social, and cultural factors.
- Creating awareness of the significance of the environment for social development.
- Creating awareness of the dependance of the modern world on the environment, and the economic, political, and ecological links between the them.

This education should contribute the forming of a more constructive attitude towards the environment, both in a philosophical and a pragmatic sense. The definition of an educational initiative must express its target audience and objectives. The aim of education on the protection and improvement of human surroundings is the development among the general public of an awareness about the basic char-

acteristics of the human environment and their relationship to it, leading to a renewed interest in maintaining and protecting the environment in order to ensure that the basic needs of humanity can continue to be met, both in the present and the future.

Nowadays globalization is continuing to accelerate, and its effects seem overwhelming in comparison to the state of the world just ten years ago. The structure of society and the world order itself have undergone significant changes under its influence. Anthony Giddens¹ argues that in order to facilitate the transition to this new world order, it is necessary that national states engage in international cooperation in several fields. Giddens points to five such area in which international cooperation must develop or be strengthened: 1. Managing the world economy, 2. Managing world ecology, 3. Regulation of corporate power, 4. Control of wars, and 5. Support of transnational democracy. In each of these fields great problems can be found, but for each of them our growing global integration offers a possible solution.

Ecological globalization is the oldest and most fundamental kind of globalization. It can be seen in the movement of material over long distances into the atmosphere or oceans, or in biological substances like diseases or genetic materials that influence human health and wealth. This can occur in natural way that man cannot influence, but can also occur as a result of man's activity. Examples of this are numerous: measles epidemics, plagues, contributions to global warming, holes in the ozone, etc. As there are over 6.5 billion people on the planet today, and yet the earth's bounty remains the same as when it held a fraction of that number, it is possible to anticipate approaching anarchy in certain areas of the world—such as the Middle East, where there are bloody fights over control of running water. Still, the world is not yet ruined. Stories about exhausting the world's resources and ruining it through pollution are as old as humanity itself (Neškovic, 2009).

The global ecological difficulties that the world faces today are as challenging and important as its economic problems. However, there are reasons to be optimistic about the possibility of solving these

¹ Baron Anthony Giddens is a British sociologist known for his theory of structuration and his holistic view of modern societies. Some of his most famous books are: *Sociology: A Brief but Critical Introduction*, *Europe in the Global Age*, *The Politics of Climate Change*, *Runaway World*, and *The Consequences of Modernity*.

global economic problems that did not exist until about ten years ago. It had been assumed that economic development and industrial expansion were in the direct conflict with a healthy ecology. Application of strict ecological standards meant that the cost of the environment protection must impinge upon businesses, with those costs raising prices and making it more difficult to remain economically viable. It seemed that ecological modernization and industry were in inevitable conflict.

However, the new orientation in ecological modernization has shown that the fight for environmental protection can help and even improve the industrial revolution. For instance, ecologically sophisticated examination of industry can provide innovations that would enable manufacturers to work more efficiently, increasing the productivity. An excellent example of this occurred in Germany in 1992, when the ecological organization Greenpeace introduced the use of a cooling device that was much more ecologically safe than any device that could be found on the market. For the first time in history, an organization that worked primarily for environmental protection supported a commercial product, even aiding in its advertising. Time showed that Greenpeace's cooling system was both cheaper and more efficient than the existing ones, which led to its adoption by a majority of manufacturers.

Another example of such cooperation can be found in the Dutch floral industry. With their intensive methods of cultivation, all the pesticides and artificial fertilizer used on the land had badly polluted it. But recently a system of closed canals was perfected in which flowers do not grow directly from soil, but in water and on small stones. The quality of the product is improved in this system and costs are reduced, increasing the competitiveness of the industry. While it is true that there are many industries that do not have such healthy mutual relationships with ecological groups, there are reasons to suppose that it is possible to establish them.

The most significant global environmental problems are: diminishing biodiversity (and forests); non-sustainable land use; non-sustainable water use; climate change; ozone layer damage; and the build-up of dangerous pollution and waste. Add to these all the inherent difficulties arising from both armed conflict and unreconciled conflicts between trade and environmental policy.

We exist on the world as a whole, within the mass of cultural difference of the world society, on

the divided yet indivisible Earth. That is why the care of nature is a matter of life and death for all species and all living beings. "It points to the urgent need to involve all members of the international system in establishing cooperation on the project of ecosafety. This includes the formulating of strategic documents at the level of individual states, plans which focus on man as the most important subject in changing our approach to solving our social contradictions" (Nešković, 2007, p10).

Within the context of attempting to solve our economic problems it is necessary to build a new vision of the world, a vision based on the following principle: nature is an inseparable part of humanity, and it is in the common interest of all people to sustain the atmosphere, water, and land. The international community must be responsible for protecting our planet and maintain a balance in the continuing use of natural resources. Providing this balance demands a reconciliation of unlimited production with limiting ecological factors based on scientific knowledge. Also needed are plans at the local level, and an understanding of how local plans will be integrated into regional and global plans. And in doing all this, one must also take care to distinguish between what is technically possible and what is socially acceptable.

2. Ecological and international policy

According to the encyclopedia "Life environment and sustainable development," the term "life environment" refers to the "complex of all influences on a certain organism which result from the physical-chemical conditions of the non-living environment and from other living beings, which together influence the given organism within its habitat" (Knežić, Stevanović, 2003). According to this definition, for every individual organism the surrounding environment is "dead," and consists merely of physical and chemical conditions (temperature, humidity, land Ph, etc.) and available resources (energy, water, mineral elements, etc.), although the environment also includes other living beings with which it is in direct or indirect contact.

Ecological sociologist Riley Dunlap² has suggested a new way of looking at world resources. His

² Dr. Riley Dunlap is an environmental sociologist, Professor of Sociology at Oklahoma State University. He is one of the founders of the field of environmental sociology, which was established in the 1970's. His fields of research include: environmental sociology, political

approach provides a contrast between the traditional, dominant western vision and the new ecological paradigm as ways of viewing world resources.

The traditional ecological approach incorporates the following elements:

- People are unique and have the power over all other living organisms.
- People are the masters of their own destiny—they have the intellectual and technological resources to solve any problem.
- People have access to an endless amount of resources.
- Human history consists of a consistent and eternal march toward its own betterment.

Whereas the postmodern ecological paradigm includes the following elements:

- People are dependant on other living organisms, and so protecting them is in humanity's own best interest.
- Many human activities have a negative/destructive influence on the environment.
- Some natural resources, like fossil fuels, are limited.
- Ecological constraints aimed at protecting the environment are necessary.

When examining the environmental protection which occurs within human working areas, the connections between the working environment and the life environment are revealed in the definition contained in the ISO 14001 and ISO 14004 standards.³ These standards begin from the life environment of the organization, i.e. the surroundings in which the organization works. According to these standards, the life environment is defined as the "surroundings in which a certain organization works, including air, natural resources, flora, fauna, people, and their mutual relationships."

It is possible to talk from different perspectives about life environment policy. Within the context of this analysis, the most interesting are environment policies organized and led by national and interna-

tional organizations versus policies organized and led by other economic entities.

When talking about the environmental protection policies of various economic organizations, what must be taken into account are the basic elements of environmental protection for the wider social community in which those subjects work—states or international organizations of which that entity is a member. These organizations must always observe the environmental protection policies of the relevant international organizations whenever they promote their products or services in international markets. According to a definition given in EMAS EU,⁴ a system for managing environmental policies includes all the objectives of a particular company related to the environment, including the reconciliation of economic and environmental goals. According to the ISO 14001 standard, environmental policy is defined as a statement by the organization of its intentions and principles regarding its total effect on the environment. Ecological factors are divided into biotic and abiotic concerns. Biotic factors are organic, and include the following: plant influence on other plants, animal influence on plants, plant influence on the animals, the mutual influences of micro-organisms and their influence on plants and animals, and man's influence on nature and the individual beings in it. In contrast, abiotic ecological factors include the following: climate (water, humidity, air, wind, etc.), geophysical factors (gravity, magnetism, etc.), and edaphic (soil-related) and orographic (mountain-related) factors. Important relations between environmental factors include the following: energy inflow and expenditure, nutrient inflow and circulation, and the relative stability of environment factors. A special place is reserved for climate factors.

The influence of environmental factors on the foreign affairs of states and their international relations has been a subject of study for quite some time. One example is an ecological analytical concept developed by Harold and Margaret Sprout.⁵ Their

sociology, public opinion, social movements, and others. His empirical research includes three main areas: 1. Caring for the environment; 2. The evolution and current status of the environmental movement; 3. Climate change, especially public opinion about issues of climate change, political polarization over climate change, and the nature and sources of climate change denial.

³ For more about ISO standards, visit: www.iso.org.

⁴ EMAS is a voluntary system for environmental management based on schemes integrated across the EU. Its goal is to improve the environmental performance of organizations by obliging them to assess and reduce their impact on the environment and continually make improvements.

⁵ Harold and Margaret Sprout were pioneers in research on the effects of human societies and policies on the environment. Decades ahead of their time, they were

approach is extremely behaviorist. Their interest was first focused on the influence of environmental factors on foreign affairs decisions, as well as their effects on the ecological trinity: the environment, the entities within the environment, and the relations between entities and the environment. This is the basic structure of their ecological concept. The entity-environment relation is certainly a focal point of the ecological approach. This relation always indicates a certain combination of the characteristics of the given entity and the conditions that surround it. Only through a combination of the two can one explain a manifestation or an event. In the terms of biological science, the general hypothesis is that the organism-environment relation is reduced to adaptation: in order to survive, the organism must adapt to environmental conditions. In the field of the human ecology, the situation is different: the historical trend moves from "the necessity of adaptation in order to survive" to "the greater ability to change and control the environmental conditions and events." Parallel to this trend, humanity's technological progress, population increase, and other development factors emphasize the mutual dependance of human communities. Finally, there is the spatial dimension of the organism-environment relation, with all the entities internally spatially related within the environment that surrounds them. With this, the ecological model of the Sprouts is complete, which together with the ecological trinity join the concepts of change and transformation, inter-relation and interdependance, and time and spatial distribution. From this starting point they develop their ecological thought concerning the relationship between man and his environment, and in particular the influence of environment factors on political decision-making.

There is another ecological approach which is less behaviorist: the approach of Bruce Russett. It aims to improve the future development of international relations in light of changing environmental factors. In the process of living and working, people change the environment they live in. Provoked by the interests of certain groups of people, careless interference in natural processes (e.g., construction, engineering, and industrial objects that endanger the environment) leads to the degradation of the environment. This disturbance of natural processes not

only extinguished many species of plants and animals, but also reflected back on humanity (affecting their health, etc.). Human influence on the environment through industrial development created the conditions of the ecological crisis, making the natural environment unsuitable for humanity. The shift from negative influence on the environment positive influence is one of the primary tasks needed for the sustainable development of humanity.

With the beginning of the industrial revolution, the influence of the environment on culture and social organization became primarily indirect. The environment was considered a minor factor in the destiny of the society's social and economic development. Its influence was felt in a more complex way in these cases, but never so small that its significance failed to be acknowledged in the historical-cultural analysis. International organizations represent the subjects of international law without which contemporary international relationships are difficult to imagine. Intensive scientific and technological development in the last several decades contributed to creating new problems on the international scene (including environmental damage), necessitating the founding of various international organizations to combat them. These international organizations have a role in the field of environmental protection which does not differ in principle from the role they play in other areas of international relations. Some of the most significant international documents through which the basics of politics and the rights of the life environment are defined are: the Rio Declaration, which is mostly aimed at state cooperation and defining the place and role of humanity and different groups, and Agenda 21.

The role of international organizations in the field of environmental protection consists of the following framework:

- Improvement of international cooperation.
- Development of international environmental regulations.
- Actively participating in the achievement of environmental protection goals specified in international agreements.
- Monitoring the achievement of environmental protection obligations arising from international agreements.

These postulates about the role of the international organizations in solving the ecological problems point to their decisive role not only in maintaining the environment, but also improving its sus-

among the first to investigate the consequences of the industrialization of nature.

tainable development. International politics in its traditional, classical, and especially new postmodern context includes the activity of all competent international subjects in the narrower field of ecological policy.

Conclusion

Knowledge of ecological laws, ecological process, and manifestations of ecological influence and concern in the international community allows one to see nature as a whole. In regulating nature according to their needs, people should not disrupt the functional balance between living things and their environment. This can be avoided only if people are well acquainted with environmental laws and act in accordance with them.

Ecological awareness and ecological ethics teach us to respect natural laws concerning the circulation of substance, energy consumption, and the renewal of life, taking from nature only as much as is necessary to meet basic human needs. The development of a new attitude toward environmental protection and the transformation of our sphere of work is imperative. The concept of sustainable development offers the possibility for the harmonious development and implementation of the project of ecological safety. Observing ecology from a global level as a paradigm for a new relationship between man and nature, we see a process of radical molding that is redefining our formerly problematic understanding of nature. The new ecological paradigm naturally promotes an understanding of the need for environmental protection. When we observe ecology as a science, we see that its intensive development happened in the second half of the twentieth century, in the context of the escalating threat to the life environment. The difficulty of protecting and improving the human environment is a significant global problem in contemporary society. Solving it necessitates finding a rational and nuanced way of employing natural resources. This signifies the essential postulates of postmodern international policy within the ecological sphere, and their responsibility for the continued survival of of humanity.

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ETHICS IN ECOLOGY

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Abstract:

The immediate history of relations between man and nature is marked by mutual conflict. Until recently, nature had supremacy over man through the force of its natural power. During this period, the encounter with nature for man was a conflict with wholly implacable forces. Advances in science and technology have in some cases tamed the forces of nature, and now man can carry out planned and systematic violence against it. In so doing, he came to a privileged, but also sinful relationship with nature. The end result proved devastating for both nature and for man. Man's quality of life has increased, but at an unacceptable cost for the environment, especially considering that both man and nature will be in dire straits in the not-so-distant future. It is urgent that man, as a reasonable officer of nature, finds ways to reconcile his relationship with nature.

Key words: man, violence, sinful relationship, the nature of the standards.

Introduction

"The aging former world has no more strength; depleted mountains do not give enough marble; silver and gold mines are exhausted; there no more farmers in the fields, sailors on the sea, soldiers in the camps; there is no more justice in the courts; trades is feeble; customs have been abandoned; the human race is approaching doomsday."¹

Man's progress and development has been accompanied by side effects that threaten his own living conditions. Uncontrolled enthusiasm and belief in the power of technology twisted progress into its opposite. As man continues to generate new knowledge, his ethical and moral responsibility could not be greater. The current devastation of natural resources is an indicator of the poor state of human relations to the environment and the devastation caused by both individual and collective human egoism. Ecstatic delight at humanity's rapid development has produced a proverb: "A man is allowed to do whatever he can do. And he doesn't have to do anything." It did not take long for sobering question to arise: "Is he allowed to do everything he can?" Or, "Is all that is technically possible also ethically and morally possible?" i.e. a moral good both for man and the world in which he lives? Technically speaking, one can destroy the country; but is it ethical? The prior history of the relationship between man and nature is marked by mutual harmony. Nature was for man a paradise, and man was a shepherd who watched over everything.

Man is not the only creature that has an internal order; nature is also ordered, and man must respect this order if he wants to live in nature. In order to live, you must teach yourself to recognize the creature and find inner purity—an ecology of soul. The question that has been posed to the education system at all levels, especially higher education, is how to understand the essence of ecology in a way that will enable us to live in harmony with nature and be her guardian. Syllabi were amended so that engineers, scientists, and managers were provided information necessary for them to design products and technology that are in compliance with environmental requirements.

¹This is how St. Cyprian described downfall of the Roman Empire in 250 CE. Undermined agriculture and trade, immorality and debauchery in urban life, corrupt and incompetent bureaucracy, and the moral collapse of government announced the collapse of the powerful empire.

After working my entire working life in industrial production—and particularly in industrial ecology—I realized that one should respect the principle that the created world is not and cannot be subject to man's arbitrariness. Answers to basic and enduring questions about his role and mission in the world were to be answered through reason. In order to understand his proper relationship to nature and guide his actions toward sustainable development, man must be trained in environmental disciplines if he is to have a better life with science and technology.

In the area of environmental culture, it is necessary to temper the instinct for possession and exploitation of land, air, and water. Engineers, scientists, and managers need to respect and be a friend of their environment. Talk about the environment should grow in peace and love of nature. From this free decision there can be a birth to a new ecological culture of holistic, integrated, and moral supervision of actions in environment.

This paper elaborates methods to solve these dilemmas concerning the engineering and design of products and technologies that are in harmony with the environment. Designers must be reasonable in order to ensure a future for humanity. It has been proven that love in the field of environmental ethics leads engineers to act more sensitively toward the world around us, that dominion over the earth is based on the love of the land—and so the new ecological culture will be born.

Ethics as a term

The term "ethics" comes from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning "habit, habits, importance."

The science of morality seeks to explore the basic components of morality and take a critical stand on existing moral practice; the task of ethics is not only to indicate the different perspectives of people, but also to make a value judgment and justify those values; critical and philosophical ethics examines the moral judgments that people make and recommend procedures upon which moral judgments should be made.

Ethics is the science that studies the systems and codes of morality (moral rules) that govern individual people, religions, and groups and makes recommendations for their application.

Code of Ethics: an ordered set of screening principles and rules of conduct for all members of the community or profession. Some rules are made explicit, while others are implicitly accepted.

The question of ethics comes down to a question of limits that determine whether something is

moral or not. Aristotle addressed this question by the introduction of the term "expediency." He says: "Nature does everything for a purpose." Based on this principle, he rejects the idea of the infinite, and finds that all natural beings have a certain measure and size, and are therefore ethical organisms. Human activity must avoid extreme measures. Therefore, the question of morality and ethics is a matter of personal decision, needs, and interests; entities must examine their understanding and acceptance of their norms of behavior, as well as the relations that exist in the community and the environment.

The protection and improvement of the environment have become the world's problems. Action has been delayed due to lack of financial resources and the enactment of inappropriate transitional solutions, "solutions" which have led to the pollution of air, water, food, and soil, to increased levels of noise, and to improper disposal of municipal, industrial, agricultural, pharmaceutical, electronic, and nuclear waste. The city is no longer thought of as an ecological system, and environmental ethics has been completely forgotten.

Environmental culture

The survival of human communities in the past was often been threatened by disasters such as epidemics, wars, and famines that have always been limited by space. The human race, and all that surrounds it, is an integral part of nature. He evolved and learned different ways of using the natural resources that were at his disposal, both minerals and living creatures. Man achieved remarkable progress, learning many of the secrets of nature, mastering powerful resources, improving the conditions of his own lives, extending his lifespan. Such progress continues, and is an inherent striving of the human species.

But the development and progression of humanity has led to hugely deleterious effects on nature, which in turn threaten the survival of the human race on Earth. Such effects include the continued reduction of biodiversity, the reduction of plant and animal species. This is a process that is global. From this point of view, an organized way of preventing and slowing the reduction of biodiversity would be implemented at the national or regional level.

National culture as a basis for progress

Important parameters of sustainable development which should be followed by science, morality, and ethics are:

– Interaction of energy efficiency and environmental protection,

- Sustainable development and transportation,
- Strategy and principles for sustainable development,
- Sustainable production,
- Sustainable energy and renewable energy sources,
- Sustainable environmental management,
- Sustainable agriculture,
- Sustainable management of water resources,
- Environmental technology,
- Sustainable forestry,
- Sustainable construction and architecture,
- Sustainability and economic growth,
- Sustainable tourism,
- Agricultural biotechnology,
- Sustainable development indicators,
- Legislation in the field of environmental protection

Subject research in environmental ethics

Technology with its modern influences sometimes negatively affects human life. Therefore people must be aware of their responsibilities. Science is not simply the classification of phenomena, nor merely the observation of various phenomena of nature and history. It delves deep into all aspects of the universe and seeks to control it, seeing nature from a utilitarian perspective. It takes little more than a renunciation of pragmatic scientism to reveal the significance of science in its origin and understand its aggressive nature, because its development process has no boundaries. It is a reconstruction of the conditions under which man decided to pursue scientific knowledge, which means power, active control, and conscious subordination of the processes of nature and society. The history of the human race, however, significantly mediates changes in natural history, including the profound changes in the biosphere and ecosystem. Man in changing the face of the planet to a greater extent than philosophers or theologians ever imagined. It creates an increased threat to our daily lives, and yet also a sense of comfort when contemplating the ease of operation and production of high technology. Man is endowed with enough power, authority, justice, power, confidence, and caution that he should be able to limit excesses and cruelty, and protect and ennoble the good and useful, but also preserve the face of the earth in beauty and fertility. Today men cannot be led away from their anthropocentric picture, as it deprives them of all authority. Any moral consideration for other people, other cultures, other views, or nature is dismissed out of hand.

Loss of confidence masks ritualization of man's own technical and technological power. "Caution" only amounts to avoiding visible obstructions. Man has disrupted the natural balance, and nowadays embodies nothing resembling prudence or understanding of the world.

Ethics and ecology

Ecology is the study of the relationships of all living beings, the natural environment, and inanimate environment, including what man has created by changing nature. It aims to unite a large number of scientific disciplines in order to improve understanding of both animate and inanimate nature and the life in it.

Science was once expected to only affect progress in culture, industry, and education. Today it is expected that science will be the basis of overcoming all economic, cultural, and moral crises. Science is now believed to have a monopoly on truth and progress. "Scientism"—understood as a faith in science as the basis of our reality—has become humanity's ego from the beginning of the third millennium. Man feels that science will overcome all obstacles.

If science is the only path to true knowledge, then does it not have the responsibility to distinguish between good and evil uses of its power? Is the knowledge it generates a good in itself? What is the basis of any moral justification? An effective response to these questions requires critical reflection on the nature of the threats to all elements of the environment. Science and technology have yet to create the utopia of perfect human freedom, prosperity, and happiness that proponents of scientism have led us to believe is possible. It seems that natural that technical and biotechnical science be put into service to protect the biosphere as they seek to generate new scientific knowledge and progress.

Theory of risk in ecology

The theory of ecological postmodernization has been developing for more than two decades, and today has become one of the leading socio-ecological theories of industrial transformation and the environment. One feature of the ecological theory of postmodernization is that it attempts to explain institutional changes in modern society and the environment. These changes are associated with the internationalization of new economic, political, social, and ethical values designed to preserve the environment in the context of globalization.

Ecological risk is a permanent feature of human existence, but has reached new heights of danger under the authoritarian form of globalization that is

sweeping over the planet. Four cataclysmic forces arising from this globalization are now stronger than ever. These "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" are the risk of ecological disaster; total destruction produced by nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons; the malignant growth of poverty; and the clash of civilizations and global terrorism. These growing dangers feed on accidents and crises that have shaken the world. The real question is whether people have the knowledge, ability, and material power to stop them.

In creating their own environment, humanity was forced to constantly balance taking advantage of natural resources with avoiding the harmful effects of doing so. Too often people have opted to develop their companies more than sustainable practice will allow, leading to great economic fortune at the cost of negative environmental consequences, and even disaster.

Thus, numerous theoretical and experimental studies of the current state of ecological security in our country indicate that we are in a dire situation resulting from a great many factors: political, social, economic, technical, technological, etc. The existing legal framework might be sufficient to achieve a certain level of safety for the environment if it were implemented as a social reality.

Epistemology in ecology

In order to critically discuss these problems, it is necessary to examine the historical and social layers that influence science and have generated an epistemology that is dangerous to both nature and man. In studying the history of modernity, one can easily see how many of today's environmental, ethical, and cultural problems have sprung from a critical epistemology that has encouraged and intensified limitless and unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources. It is premature to claim that we know everything that needs to be known about environmentally-oriented epistemology, or science and civilization in general. Accepting without limitation the achievements of epistemology, man renounces responsibility for the results. And so people become insensitive to environmental problems and the mutual relationship between the functioning of institutions and the environment. People may ask themselves the question of what is worth knowing; Some knowledge is capable of causing all sorts of devastation, from the death of a person to the death of all life on Earth. Some knowledge provokes fear, because knowledge is power and responsibility, and we are faced with this power and responsibility in the form of knowledge of impending environmental

disaster, a disaster that is not only a product of the misuse of science and technology, but arises from the current organizational structure of human societies and our way of understanding the world.

History points to the ambiguity of science, revealing that modern epistemology hides huge dangers and risks. It has no criteria for distinguishing good from evil, it is equally involved in creating and destroying. It has no solution for moral problems. It is the handmaiden of progress, and yet is equally the cause of disasters: environmental, demographic, political, economic, and technical-technological. Therefore, the rehabilitation of scientific knowledge must occur in at least two ways. The most important is certainly the correction of the oversights of modern epistemology, as well as modern ecology. Modern epistemology has been insufficiently explored. The second thing that must be done is that high public officials must testify to the damage caused by social and technological changes that degrade the biosphere. Unfortunately, philosophically-oriented ecology—or even ecology overall—has not attracted the attention of the public, especially in the political realm. The behavior of politicians shows that humanity has ignored its ecological responsibility for more than a century, and that concern for future generations has been completely suppressed in favor of short-term economic gains.

Morality and ethics

The moral debasement of man is a precursor to the collapse of society. To save our society, we need to save humanity. Efforts will be futile if man does not rise above his own self-interest and stand in solidarity with his neighbors. In a society without morals, any policies designed to correct the planet's urgent problems are doomed to fail. Therefore, we are in dire need of a moral renewal of society. It must be comprehensive, and it must be a priority at all levels of society: the individual, the family, schools, churches, media, political parties, and the state.

Love, loyalty, commitment, and self-sacrifice are no longer concepts that hold any real meaning. Instead of friends around us, there are careerists. Merely avoiding fights while ignoring the law has become the rule of conduct. Young people do not respect their elders, children do not respect their parents, students do not respect their teachers. There is no authority in science, church, politics, or culture.

Empirical studies show that modern industrial society with its strategy of technological development has exceeded the threshold of the Earth's ability to repair itself. Disruption of the natural balance

eventually reaches a point at which it cannot be restored. Industrial societies have offered a philosophy that becomes a theoretical model for politics and economics, and for science and technology. From this perspective, there cannot be a question of ecology, as an "objective" ecology cannot be logically conceived; that would mean the birth of a modern call to establish the responsibility of scientists, and that science is the only ethical imperative. If ethics can be a science, then it cannot arise only out of trouble (science-related practices). Therefore, it is no longer enough for man to be knowledgeable about science; we need the protection of the biosphere. Nature is not here to be available to man, but to constitute a common world with the people, plants, animals, water, air, and soil. This attitude, however, is not enough. It is necessary to protect people from destructive interactions. It could be said that protecting the environment is necessary not only for the balance of nature, but also for the balance of culture.

In order to understand the environment, we must see it through the lens of a search for a philosophy of peace that makes the world bearable. Does the structure of our thinking correspond to the structure of the world in which we live? There can be no exploitation of nature without exploitation or damage to man.

Science and environment

A significant part of the history of civilization is characterized by exploitation, destruction, and neglect of the environment. Ethics is the systematic analysis of morality, and morality is the feeling manifested through criteria of right or wrong, good or bad. Life takes place according to different criteria of moral values. If all life situations boiled down to simple objective facts, then we could not speak about ethics. Ethics opens up the possibility for analysis of moral conflict. People who take positive moral principles into account can be referred to as ethical people. Generally speaking, people want to be ethical because it makes the world a better place. The question is whether ethical behavior will be reciprocated. If we tell the truth to our friends, will they tell the truth to us? If they do not, then we must avoid them.

Environmental ethics can be viewed from three historical perspectives:

- Environmental Ethics as human health;
- Environmental Ethics as prevention;
- Environmental Ethics as protection of the environment.

The first ethical form aims to safeguard human health within the context of various human activi-

ties, including the use of natural resources. Construction of water supplies, sanitary landfills, sewage, etc., are only a few of the activities related to hygiene and human health. If human activities are threatening to permanently diminish or destroy natural resources—and thus leaving behind a barren wasteland for others, which threatens their continued survival—then they are performing an unethical act. Therefore, environmental ethics involves agreeing that the destruction of environmental resources (e.g. pollution of water, air, and land) is an unethical act because it threatens the health of others.

Another form of environmental ethics implies that man's environment has value primarily for man himself, and is consequently important for his health. By destroying the environment, we act unethically toward others. A river, for example, has value for people as an area for fishing, and pollution takes this benefit away from them. Deforestation prevents people from enjoying nature and causes soil erosion, and is therefore unethical. This concept of evaluating the inherent value of the environment is relatively recent. The discharge of hazardous substances into the water and air endangers resources, which is why it is seen today as having an impact on human health. Here we can build a future, a future based upon both our desire and need to conserve and protect nature, because we know that its destruction will impoverish humanity. Humanity needs an environmental ethics that is based upon the preservation of the environment. Environmental pollution has a negative impact on man because it is dangerous to his health, has a financial cost, and prevents him from experiencing unblemished nature. In the first case, people need water, air, food, living space, and an unpolluted environment. In the other case, they want to avoid environmental contamination because it lowers their quality of life. Humans do not wish to destroy the land, because protecting it from being polluted or otherwise damaged allows for the creation of a healthy living environment. It can therefore be concluded that environmental ethics requires that all people protect their environment.

Time for moral renewal

Moral and ethical virtues are no longer human values. Everything has a price! The common good does not exist in the minds of our people. Avarice and greed have become the norm. Our culture is dominated by showbiz kitsch and mediocrity. Cultural institutions are failing and cultural treasures are being destroyed, and we have become a poor country with a poor culture. Spiritual creativity is nobody's concern and is left to fade into nothingness.

The global economy threatens to destroy our society, with new financial centers installing new forms of economic slavery as a means of survival. And in a society of universal immorality, the state is becoming powerless; its laws, strategies, agencies, and action plans now seem like futile attempts at healing.

The heartless of humanity is our biggest problem. People have forgotten their obligations to society and the state. They have forgotten all moral values. Discarded bags of garbage are strewn along our roads and are dumped into clear forest creeks, places that will one day be garbage dumps. Turning nature into a landfill of waste is insanity. Only heartless people can destroy nature in this way.

Bad company is the product of bad people. Politicians are not evil—man is evil! Laws are not bad—man is irresponsible!

Conclusion

As globalization continues its inexorable unification of the world, humans as moral creatures are losing their higher moral values. Industrialization elevated the power machines to almost immeasurable heights, but they were still in the service of humanity. Now the better functioning of machines has become the principle that determines the manner of humanity's conduct. Given the now-overwhelming level of control that these technological systems exert over our lives, how can we effectively address the danger they pose to the natural environment? This is the fundamental question of humanity. Nature does not exist only to be exploited; humanity has been entrusted to cultivate and refine nature without destroying it.

In his place at the top of the evolutionary chain, and with his understanding of the deep interconnectedness of humanity and nature, man must consciously accept the responsibility to protect natural systems and species, both for himself and for the sake of future generations. He must abandon his anthropocentric chauvinism and limitlessly exploitative conduct in order to reach prudent, balanced, and moderate solutions for sustainable development.

Humanity and science can find a solution to the benefit of all; there are always extraordinarily capable people who are willing to make a positive difference in the world. Humanity has the power to alter its self-destructive course. Technology is becoming cheaper and more accessible, and it is assumed that it will be available to poorer countries and individuals in the near future. The current product develop-

ment programs, existing technology, and engaged resources must be maximized, and then we must move on to something new.

It is important that when you start an activity, you do it the best way, or as Sopenhauer says: "What you are doing now does not belong only to you; your works are transmitted to future generations." You must have the strength to believe in the good reasons and sound principles, and love is the thread that runs through all: ethics, morality, mental health, and physical health.

This is a difficult task, much more difficult than it ever is in movies or books; its scope nearly beggars the imagination. Often in conflicts seemingly insurmountable obstacles arise, but we can only persevere in the face of a task whose difficulty seems impossible to measure.

We lived in a time when everything has changed, our entire system of values. Thomas Mann once said that the world is accelerating, and that we cannot return to the place from which we began. We live in a time that is trampling the hearts and minds of humanity, and we need something to heal them. Our moral and ethical task is to build our own story of health and prosperity that will bind us together.

We still have a little time left to change, but not much.

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DOES EXPERIMENTAL ETHICS HAVE A NORMATIVE ACCOUNT?*

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Abstract:

The first obstacle experimental ethics faces when it comes to its normative account is Hume's guillotine, also known as the naturalistic fallacy. My objective is to show how experimental ethics can answer to naturalistic fallacy with the help of normative projections.

In order to arrive at my objective, I will first explain what experimental philosophy (xphi) is, and how it is perceived as a movement against "armchair philosophy." In the second section, I explain why experimental moral philosophy or experimental ethics is immune to many of the arguments that are raised against xphi, and why it is not necessary to be against armchair philosophers. After this, I argue that discussing the meta-ethical grounding of experimental ethics will not help us to answer to the naturalistic fallacy. The last section contains my own proposal for seeing people's intuitions and decisions as normative projections that have an impact on normative ethics. In this way, Hume's guillotine is no longer an obstacle for a normative account of experimental ethics.

Key words: experimental philosophy, experimental ethics, Hume's guillotine, normative account, intuition, semantic intuitions, normative projections.

1. What is experimental philosophy?

In the last decade, experimental philosophy (xphi) has introduced innovative ideas about morality and pointed to some difficulties with so-called "armchair philosophy," i.e. conceptual approaches that ignore experimental findings. Fortunately for my objective in this paper, these difficulties do not apply to xphi's narrowest field, experimental ethics.

But first, let us examine what is meant by "experimental philosophy," what arguments have been raised against it.

Xphi developed surprisingly quickly in last few years, and there are signs that it will continue to capture more and more professional attention. The easiest way to describe it is to say that it is a new interdisciplinary enquiry that brings empirical evidence to bear on some of the answers philosophers have provided to philosophical questions. In this interdisciplinary enquiry we can identify methodologies that are easily recognizable as common to psychology, sociology, neuroscience, and behavioural sciences. But what exactly is the object of this interdisciplinary enquiry? The usual answer is that *intuitions* are at the core of the enquiries that xphi researchers are conducting. Some are questioning the validity of these intuitions, or examine them through empirical methods.

These xphi enquiries are seen as a movement against what they call armchair philosophy. According to xphi researchers, armchair philosophers rely on their own professional intuition without bothering to test if their intuitions are common to everyone else, or if they should or should not rely on them. Therefore, experimental philosophers believe that their new approach will help armchair philosophers to gain a better and more objective understanding of the world. Some of them even argue that philosophers should "burn their armchairs" and engage in experimental enquiries in order to better understand their subject matter.

On the other hand, armchair philosophers argue that some of the evidence that xphi researchers inject into philosophical discussion should not be trusted,

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for at least two reasons. First, it is easy to identify major flaws in the experiments upon which the new movement grounds its statements. Second, their research is quite irrelevant to philosophy and to its primary subject matter. In order to better understand these arguments, we should take as an example some research on semantic intuitions.

Machery et al. (2004, 2009, and 2010)¹ and Mallon et al. (2009)² conducted experiments designed to prove that intuitions about meaning and reference vary between East Asians and Westerners, mainly because of cross-cultural differences. This hypothesis is proved with the evidence collected from the answers people gave to an experiment similar to Kripke's Gödel thought experiment.

For those who do not know the Gödel thought experiment, I will summarize it briefly below. Saul Kripke, in *Naming and Necessity*, creates the Gödel thought experiment in order to show that proper names do not refer to descriptive definitions. In the experiment he asks us to imagine a possible world in which Gödel steals the incompleteness theorem from another person named Schmidt, who was found dead under mysterious circumstances. According to descriptivism, when you use the name Gödel, you refer to the person that proved the incompleteness of arithmetic, which in this hypothetical situation is wrong, because the person who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic is Schmidt. Kripke concludes that when we use the name Gödel, "...since the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic is in fact Schmidt, we, when we talk about Gödel, are in fact always referring to Schmidt. But it seems to me that we are not. We simply are not."³ What Machery and others claim is that Kripke's intuition is simply wrong, and that we should engage in an empirical enquiry in order to answer the question posed by the Gödel thought experiment.

Max Deutsch argues against my earlier claim in his book: *The Myth of the Intuitive – Experimental Philosophy and Philosophical Method*. He explains that xphi researchers give no credit to armchair phi-

losophy, and choose to transform it into some kind of a non-empirical approach that rests only on a priori propositions. He says that "...the results of xphi studies do not... pose any challenge to any of the arguments or conclusions that analytic philosophers trade in."⁴ In another book, Herman Cappelen⁵ argues that what xphi researchers think about armchair philosophers—that they rely on their intuitions—is false. The book proceeds with meticulous care to show that armchair philosophers sometimes use the word "intuition" in a misleading way that does not affect their arguments.

Looking at these two books, we might wonder why it is necessary to pay any attention to this movement called xphi when its claims are so questionable. I would argue that there are at least two reasons. First, it is not the entire movement that suffers from these mistakes. For example, experimental ethics tends to differentiate itself from other forms of experimental philosophy, and can discuss, collaborate on, and even revise what their armchair counterparts theorize about. In the following chapter, I will describe Joshua Greene's dual-process theory as an example of experimental ethics to which the problems I have introduced earlier do not apply. Second, xphi can be seen less as a movement against a certain tradition and more as a new method of enquiry. I am now referring to something similar to cognitive sciences, where disciplines like psychology, philosophy, linguistics, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, and anthropology meet and try to answer the same question: *How does the human brain work?* In the next section, the focus will be more on the main topic of this article, which is experimental ethics.

2. How does experimental ethics, or experimental moral philosophy, fit in?

Experimental ethics fits in as a kind of enquiry similar to cognitive science without the need to question any tradition, or in other words, to burn any armchair. Joshua Greene's theory can be seen as this kind of enquiry.

In 2001,⁶ Greene published the results of an experiment conducted with an fMRI regarding the

¹ Machery, Eduard et al (2004). Semantics, cross-cultural style. *Cognition*, no. 92, pp. 1-12; Machery et al (2009) Linguistic and metalinguistic intuitions in the philosophy of language. *Analysis*, no. 69, pp. 689-694; Machery et al (2010) Semantic intuitions: Reply to Lam. *Cognition*, no. 117, pp. 363-366.

² Mallon, Ron et al (2009) Against arguments from reference. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, no. 79, pp. 332-356.

³ Kripke S. (1991) *Naming and necessity*. Wiley-Blackwell, London, p. 294.

⁴ Deutsch, Max (2015) *The myth of the intuitive*. MIT Press, Cambridge, p. 159.

⁵ Cappelen, Herman (2015) *Philosophy without intuitions*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

⁶ Greene, Joshua (2001) An fMRI investigation of emotional engagement in moral judgment. *Science*, vol 293, pp. 2105-2018.

responses that people give to ethical dilemmas. He claims that when we respond to the trolley dilemma,⁷ those parts of the brain that are thought to be responsible for cognition decide to sacrifice one man in order to save five, while in the footbridge dilemma, the parts of the brain that are responsible for emotion make us decide to not push the fat man, even if the consequences are that five people will die because of it.

For those who are not familiar with these two dilemmas, they can be described as follows: in the trolley dilemma you are at the intersection between two railways. On one railway there is one man tied up, while on the other railway there are five people tied up. At the same time you notice that a trolley that is impossible to stop is moving towards the line with the five men on it. The only option you have to alter the situation is to change the course of the trolley towards the line with one man by pushing the switch in front of you.

In the footbridge dilemma,⁸ you are crossing a bridge together with a fat man, and under the bridge there is a railway. On the railway there are five people tied up that cannot move. A train that is out of control is approaching on the railway, and the only thing you can do in order to save the lives of the five people is to push the fat man over the bridge and in front of the train. The fat man's body will stop the train, and the five people will survive.⁹

As I already mentioned, Greene discovered that this strange difference in behavior—that most people will opt to kill one person in the trolley dilemma in order to save five, but will not push the fat man in the footbridge dilemma, allowing five people to die—has its roots in the way our brains make judgments. In the articles that followed after this discovery, Greene articulated a theory that he called the dual-process theory,¹⁰ in which he explained that we use two different processes to make judgements, an

emotional one and a cognitive one. The emotional process is triggered when we are in situations like the footbridge dilemma, and the cognitive one when we are in situations like trolley dilemma.

The most controversial point, at least for philosophers, is the way Greene links his dual-process theory to other theories of morality. He claims that utilitarian moral judgments are the result of employing the cognitive part of the brain, while deontological judgments have their roots in the emotional part of the brain. It is not difficult to understand why this part of the theory is often dismissed, and even the reason why it is incorrect. I agree with Greene when he says that all moral theories try to explain the same thing—the phenomenon of morality—but that it is also normal for a theory to focus on a certain aspect of that phenomenon, while other theories focus on other aspects. One of the consequences of this is that it is possible to endorse two opposite moral theories as equally true, because they theorize about two different parts of the moral phenomenon. The only issue here, in my opinion, is that Greene misinterpreted the roles and aims of the deontological and utilitarian moral theories.

Both are normative moral theories that cannot be reduced to certain judgments that people make when they are faced with a moral dilemma. The two theories attempt to explain the phenomenon of morality, and provide distinctions which we can employ in order to solve certain ambiguities. For example, Kant's moral theory introduced the idea of a moral universal that subsumed an entire system of moral duties, such that it would not be moral to do *a* in one culture and *not-a* in another culture. Mill's utilitarianism is a more refined theory than the simple act-utilitarianism¹¹ to which Greene refers. Mill makes distinctions between higher and lower pleasures and reformulates the principle of utility; he explains how a person could make a right decision even when one does not have enough time to decide, and many other things. Without discussing any other details, the important thing for now is to keep in mind that Greene's reconstruction of deontological judgment and utilitarian judgment is neither true nor accurate.

Though I have only presented a small sample of the objections that were raised against Greene's ideas, I would like to show why, in spite of the

⁷ The dilemma that Philippa Foot poses to demonstrate that abortion could be acceptable in some cases due to the double effect doctrine. See Foot, Philippa (1967) The problem of abortion and the doctrine of double effect. Oxford Review, no. 5.

⁸ This dilemma appeared for the first time in: Thomson, Judith-Jarvis (1985) The trolley problem. The Yale Law Journal, vol. 94, no. 6, pp. 1395-1415.

⁹ More information about the two dilemmas can be found in: Edmonds, David (2013) Would you kill the fat man? Princeton University Press, Princeton.

¹⁰ Greene, Joshua (2013) Moral tribes – emotion, reason, and the gap between us and them. Penguin Press, New York.

¹¹ Mureşan Valentin. (2015) How could Julian Savulescu still be a utilitarian. Uehiro Blog, <http://blog.practicaethics.ox.ac.uk/2015/01/how-could-julian-savulescu-still-be-a-utilitarian/>. Cited 30 September 2015.

above, I still consider his work to be extremely relevant. First, it opens a path at the end of which we might be able to better understand the way in which we make moral judgments. It is true that his research is far from perfect, but if the empirical examination of the moral phenomenon continues, it is very likely that in time many of the methodological difficulties will be overcome. Second, dual-process theory proves again that our emotions have a role when it comes to moral decision-making. It is true that Greene is not the only one who makes this claim, but he is the only one who provides empirical evidence of it, with the help of cognitive and behavioural neurosciences.¹² Jonathan Haidt¹³ is another important name in this discussion; he conducted research aimed at showing the importance of emotions for moral judgment. For more information about the role of the emotions in morals, see Jesse J. Prinz's book, *The Emotional Construction of Morals*.¹⁴

Could this empirical approach have a normative account, given the fact that the experiments provide only descriptive propositions? One might wonder if this is the case, and whether one could engage in an attempt to prove that experimental ethics could have a non-naturalistic agenda.

3. Does experimental ethics have a naturalistic or a non-naturalistic agenda?

It is extremely tempting to think that if we prove that experimental ethics could have a non-naturalistic agenda, then we would not need to talk about any kind of transition from descriptive propositions to normative propositions, because the enquiries of experimental ethics give us normative propositions. The meta-ethical status of experimental ethics is extremely controversial. This being the case, I want to examine two opposite ideas about the meta-ethical status of experimental ethics and argue why they do not help us very much.

The traditional core idea of philosophical naturalism is that all moral terms can be reduced to natural terms. Another important aspect of ethical naturalism is that it believes that there are objective

truths, but that these are truths that can be explained in non-evaluative terms. One form of ethical naturalism is Simon Blackburn's quasi-realism, in which he states that all the ethical sentences can be reduced to emotional attitudes.

Intuitionism and naturalism are both forms of realism, in comparison to subjectivism, non-cognitivism, or nihilism, which are forms of anti-realism. In his book, *Ethical Intuitionism*,¹⁵ Huemer proposes his own taxonomy in order to classify these meta-ethical traditions. The reason that I think it is useful to present it here is that it could serve us well in trying to understand the primary difference between naturalism and intuitionism. Huemer thinks that there is just one main distinction in a meta-ethical taxonomy: the distinction between dualism and monism. Dualists believe that there is a distinction between two different sets of entities, natural ones and moral ones, while the monists reject this idea, arguing that there are no moral entities. Intuitionism is the only meta-ethical form of dualism, while all the other meta-ethical theories are monist, theories such as subjectivism, naturalism, non-cognitivism, or nihilism.

Looking at Huemer's taxonomy, it is clear why many believe that if experimental ethics is a kind of naturalist meta-ethical stand, then it becomes difficult for it to have a normative account.

David Rose and David Danks (2013)¹⁶ see experimental philosophy as simply another instantiation of the long tradition of philosophical naturalism. Hence experimental moral philosophy has some naturalistic roots, and cannot avoid the arguments raised against traditional naturalism. This conception about experimental philosophy is, as the authors called it, a broad conception, with naturalism and cognitive sciences classified under the same general heading.

The answer given by Rose and Danks is very different than the answer given by Guy Kahane (2013),¹⁷ who asserts that experimental ethics can have a non-naturalistic agenda. His main idea is that our intuitions about certain dilemmas could track certain moral principles. Therefore, experimental

¹² Damasio was one of the first to prove that if certain areas of the brain responsible for emotions are damaged, then the patient will be unable to act as a moral agent. See Damasio Antonio (1994) *Descartes' error – emotion, reason, and the human brain*. Avon Books, New York.

¹³ Haidt, Jonathan (2012) *The righteous mind – why good people are divided by politics and religion*. Pantheon Books, New York.

¹⁴ Prinz, Jesse (2007) *The emotional construction of morals*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

¹⁵ Huemer, Michael (2005) *Ethical Intuitionism*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

¹⁶ Rose, David and Danks David (2013) In defense of a broad conception of experimental philosophy. *Metaphilosophy*, no. 44, pp. 512-532.

¹⁷ Kahane, Guy (2011) *The armchair and the trolley: an argument for experimental ethics*.

ethics can have a normative account, because the examined intuitions track certain moral principles.

Kahane provides a solution which avoids the naturalistic fallacy. Though his arguments on the non-naturalistic agenda of experimental ethics are worthy of consideration, in order to show what is wrong with this argument, we need to go to Mackie's distinction¹⁸ between first-order morality and second-order morality. Mackie uses this distinction in order to present his own version of subjectivism, and to explain what elements he is most skeptical about. He is sceptical that objective moral entities exist, and is therefore skeptical regarding the second order, but he is not skeptical that there are certain rules which must be followed. In other words, if one disagrees with the intuitionist claim that moral entities exists, it does not mean he is against respecting moral norms. He gives different arguments for why they should be respected.

Now it becomes clear that if our argument is that experimental ethics has a non-naturalist agenda—and that therefore it has a normative account—we believe that the only way something could have a normative account is if it agrees with the claim that objective moral entities exist. But this is very problematic, because you can still have a normative account—slightly different from the first one, but still a normative account. Therefore the discussion of whether experimental ethics does or does not have a normative account is a meta-ethical discussion about the normative stand of different meta-ethical traditions. In other words, it does not matter if we show that experimental ethics has a naturalistic or a non-naturalistic agenda, as all that we are saying about its normative account in either case is that it has a *certain kind* of normative account.

The naturalistic argument against experimental ethics is much more important for the simple reason that it does not move the discussion about experimental ethics to other subjects. In the next section I will examine this argument and show how experimental ethics can have a normative account.

4. Descriptive and normative propositions

Hume's guillotine, also known as the naturalistic fallacy¹⁹—or simply as the gap between *is* and *ought to*—draws our attention to the fact that you cannot derive normative propositions from descrip-

tive ones. For example, if John is a doctor and treats his patients with respect, we cannot arrive from the proposition "John respects his patient's decisions," to "The patient's decisions ought to be respected by John." Though this is actually a moral duty, we cannot infer it from a descriptive proposition. One might say that there is an autonomy principle which states that "All human beings should be treated as autonomous agents." From this principle—which relies on no descriptive proposition—we *can* infer that "John ought to respect his patient's decisions," because otherwise he would violate the autonomy principle.

What the Scottish philosopher says is that *ought to* and *is* propositions should not be used interchangeably because they express different kind of relations. He wants to warn us against those systems of morality that suddenly start to use *ought to* propositions without ever explaining their transition from *is* propositions. If we look at the passage from the *Treatise*²⁰ in this way, we realize that Hume claims only that it would be inadmissible to give no explanation of why someone in his system of morality jumps from a descriptive proposition to a normative one. From this statement, we cannot conclude that it is impossible to have a bridge between the two different propositions, and—in a more controversial interpretation—he says nothing against arriving at normative propositions from descriptive ones *as long as we explain how we do so*.

Interpreting Hume's guillotine as an argument against any attempt to find empirical grounding for a moral enquiry is the result, Mackie says,²¹ of a non-Humean way of understanding the argument. First, according to Mackie, this interpretation assumes an objectivist or intuitionist view on morality that Hume definitively rejects. Second, it suggests that abstract science should talk about facts and what we *ought* and *ought not* do, and this runs counter to Hume's dictum from his *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.²² Hume states quite clearly that number and quantity are the only subject matters in which the use of an abstract demonstration or science is allowed, while everything that

¹⁸ Mackie, J. L. (1977) *Ethics: Inventing right and wrong*. Penguin Books, England.

¹⁹ The term was used first by Moore in: Moore, G. E. (1903) *Principia Ethica*. Prometheus Books, England.

²⁰ In: Hume, David (1988) *A treatise of human nature*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, Book III, part I, section I, pp. 469-470.

²¹ Mackie, J. L. (1977) *Hume's moral philosophy*. Penguin Books, London.

²² In: Hume, David (2011) *An inquiry concerning human understanding*. Hackett Publishing Co, Inc, Cambridge, Section XII.

"...attempts to extend this more perfect species of knowledge beyond these bounds are mere sophistry and illusion."²³ We can find counterexamples to what Hume says with which he might even agree, but it is hard to argue that he would agree that the study of morality should be based on abstract reasoning. For him the conclusions to which we arrive from an abstract reasoning "...seem to vanish like the phantoms of the night on the appearance of the morning..."²⁴ especially when "...morality is a subject that interests us above all others..."²⁵

We can continue to debate these aspects of Hume's moral philosophy, but for the sake of the article's topic, it is more important to return to our main objective, and see what we can infer about experimental ethics from what was said about Hume's guillotine.

If one gives credit only to the non-Humean way of interpreting Hume's guillotine, then experimental ethics is doomed, simply because it denies the validity of any attempt to arrive at normative propositions from descriptive propositions. We know that descriptive propositions are the outcome of an experimental enquiry, and experimental ethicists rely on these descriptive propositions as evidence in their debates. Maybe this way of interpreting the *is-ought* to gap is the reason why so many focused on the task of proving that experimental ethics could have non-naturalistic agenda. But I have argued that this line of argument does not help us much, if we want to examine whether experimental ethics can have a normative account.

One might say that using a bridge to link these two different sets of propositions is acceptable, even in accordance with the interpretation I presented earlier. Max Black²⁶ is just one example of this. In his article, he thinks that it is possible to create a bridge between descriptive and normative propositions. Is important to distinguish this attempt and others like it from Ayn Rand's²⁷ project. She argues that it is possible to arrive at *ought to* from *is* without any kind of bridge or link. She attacks Hume's arguments and his guillotine, while I propose a way in which experimental ethics can have a normative

account *without* attacking Hume's guillotine. This is not the place to explain why I disagree with Ayn Rand; the important thing for the moment is simply to make clear that I do not refer to Ayn Rand, or agree with her, when I say that it is possible to arrive at *ought to* from *is* in experimental ethics.

Now I will discuss a more specific example of how a link can be made between a descriptive proposition and a normative one. Solcan²⁸ gives an excellent example in which a bridge, as a normative projection, could link descriptive propositions to normative ones. It is true that in his example he is referring to the way we use normative projections to arrive at *grammatical* norms, rather than ethical or moral norms, but I will explain later how his example can be used in experimental ethics.

The example reveals a way in which descriptions about Romanian history and some narrative projections give a certain normative projection. In the Romanian alphabet there are two letters, *â* and *î*, which do not stand for two different sounds, and are not pronounced differently, but are used differently. Inside of the words like *câmp*, *â* is used, while at the beginning of words like *învață*, *î* is used, though it is the same sound. Why do we have such a norm, since it serves no technical purpose? Why do some people think that if you write the word *cîmp*, you break a grammatical rule? The only reason is that Romanian history provides some evidence that it was conquered by the Roman Empire, and that the people from the conquered land formed a new nation together with the Romans, namely Romania. This narrative projection sought to show that there are also some resemblances between the Romanian and Latin languages. In the case of the word *câmp*, we can easily spot the resemblance with the Latin word *campus*. Unfortunately, this rule makes no sense in the case of the words *gând* or *rând*. It is a curious explanation, since this rule of writing *â* as opposed to *î* on the inside of words makes no sense for other Romanian words that do not have any resemblance to Latin. Solcan claims that the effect of normative projections, and particularly the idea that we ought to write *â* and not *î* inside words, are in the end negotiated at a social level. So in the final equation, we have a pile of descriptive propositions which cause us to assert a certain normative projection that can be socially negotiated.

²³ Idem.

²⁴ Hume, David (1988) A treatise of human nature. Clarendon Press, Oxford, Book III, part I, section I, p. 219.

²⁵ Idem.

²⁶ Black, Max (1964) The gap between "is" and "should". The philosophical review, no. 73, pp. 165-181.

²⁷ Rand, Ayn (1964) The virtue of selfishness: A concept of egoism. New American Library, New York.

²⁸ Solcan, Radu-Mihail (2012) Filosofia științelor umane: o introducere. University of Bucharest Publishing House, Bucharest.

Let us return to experimental ethics, and look at how all this is relevant to it. I think that when xphi uses empirical experiments to examine our moral judgments, our intuitions, how our brains respond to different moral situations, or how emotions affect our decisions, they are helping to explain the ways in which we make our normative projections. It is true that these projections are sometime contradictory, but then come debates and the other social negotiations that refine these projections in order to arrive at an ethical norm. For example, when we ask someone if he will push the switch in order to save five lives, he immediately has the ethical projection that he ought to activate the switch to save five people, whereas in the case of the footbridge, he has a different projection because of the influence of his own emotions. We debate about these projections, propose conceptual distinctions, definitions, or theoretical explanations—like the doctrine of double effect—but all of these are simply attempts to improve the initial normative projection, make sure that it is efficient, and enact some measures so that it will be internalized by the people.

The role of experimental ethics is to bring all these together so that philosophers can have a clear picture (provided by experimental data) of people's normative projections. After this is done, philosophers can collaborate with others in order to find the most efficient and practical solution to a problems. Another important role for experimental ethics is the examination of why people have certain normative projections, but act counter to them. The best example of this is the corruption phenomenon in some countries, in which everyone has a normative projection against something, and still choose to act as though it is a natural thing to (for instance) give someone money in exchange for special treatment. Experimental ethics could examine this paradoxical situation and try to better understand people's normative projections, what they have in mind when they talk about corruption, while other approaches will merely state that this kind of behavior is impermissible and ought to be avoided.

5. Conclusion

In the first two sections, I briefly introduced the subject matter and explained why experimental ethics is not affected by the arguments that are usually raised against the experimental philosophy movement in general, and that it might be possible for it to collaborate with its armchair counterparts. I then raised a few questions about the idea that en-

gaging in a search for the meta-ethical grounds of experimental ethics will help us to know if it has a normative account. In the last part of the article I proposed to take the normative projections Solcan used in order to talk about how a link can be made between descriptive grammar and normative grammar, and applied it to morality. Though this suggestion could raise a new wave of problems, it is obvious that ethics can increase its practical relevance by making use of experimental ethics to analyze these normative projections.

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Book reviews

HISTORICAL TRENDS OF WESTERN EVOLUTION AND THE IMPROBABLE PREDICTION OF ITS FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

[A Review of Lucian Boia, *The End of the West? Towards the World of Tomorrow*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2013, pages 124]

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Especially during times of deep economic, social, and political crisis, of historical and structural change, people have wondered about the nature of their society's evolution: where do these changes come from, who made them happen, and in what ways will the society evolve next? These questions were the soil from which the great civilization theoreticians arose, prominent philosophers of the history and culture such as those from early modernity (Morus, Campanella, Bacon, Hobbes, etc.), those from the age of Enlightenment (Montesquieu, Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, etc.) those from late modernity (Oswald Spengler, Arnold J. Toynbee, Nikolai Alexandrovici Berdiaev, Emil Cioran, etc.) or even those from the contemporary times, who are probably larger in number than all of the above. Their answers to these questions usually fell within a paradigm defined by three main ideas: we cannot agree on an imminent end of the human world, of the human condition, but only on a deep transformation of the existing culture and civilization that will produce a renewed society; the occurrence and consolidation of a new civilization does not mean a total break from the previous ones; and the future civilization is outlined in a more or less prophetic style, assuming a more or less deterministic methodology.

Within such a theoretical framework, in his work “The Decline of the West”—published in 1918 and 1922, and written under Goethe's, Hegel's, and Nietzsche's influence—Oswald Spengler (1880-

1936) replaced the linear paradigm of universal history with a cyclic one, denying the existence of a general meaning of the historical evolution of cultures and civilizations. The eight great civilizations Spengler had identified had cyclic evolutions, like the evolution of a living body: birth, growth, old age, and death. This historical cycle is also a valid analogy for Western civilization, which may find itself to be in the stage of decline (old age), to be followed shortly by a fall akin to the fall of Ancient Egypt.¹ The philosophical works of the history written by Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975)² and N. A. Berdiaev (1874-1948)³ use the same approach. The latest such works claim that the human society will enter a new Middle Ages, following the path of a revolution of the spirit, of human conscience, and of creative activity. This revolution is not painted as a sunrise, but rather as a sunset, implying deep trans-

¹ See O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte (The Decline of the West)*, vol. I, Viena, 1918, vol. II, München, 1922.

² See A. Toynbee, *Studiu asupra istoriei, (A Study of History)*, Vol. I-II, synthesis of the ops I-X, made by D.C. Somervell, English translation by Dan Lăzărescu, Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House, 1997 (1946, 1957).

³ See N. Berdiaev, *Un Nou Ev Mediu (A New Middle Ages)*, Craiova: Omniscope Publishing House, 1995 (1927).

formations, upheavals, and catastrophes; passing to the New Age will not occur peacefully.

Professor Lucian Boia's⁴ work engages this trend of reflections on humankind's history, and especially the evolution of Western society, in a style that is accessible to a large audience.

Referring to the West, professor Boia appreciates that this civilization is at a crossroads, in the sense that "one history is ending, and another is beginning. It is not the end of the world, but it is something like it: the end of a world. The sun sets in one world, and one can see through the mist the undefined shapes of a new world."⁵ This is hardly a novelty in history: many cultures and civilizations have found themselves at a similar crossroads. However, in the context of globalization, two major phenomena characterize the "break" that the West is experiencing nowadays: the acceleration of history, and levelling of the world and its communities and states. Within this framework, the West is showing signs of fatigue, as though it has accomplished its mission—inventing the technological society and unifying the planet—and is now listless in its lack of purpose. Its position as the leader of the world is fading away while other civilizations and other poles of power are having a growing impact on the world's evolution. The schism between the West and the "others" will mean that the societies of the future, nothing will be as it was.

Born on the ground of the Christian religion, the West was almost entirely rural following the dismantling of the Roman Empire, but started to gain strength during the 12th and 13th centuries, appropri-

ating some elements of other cultures and civilizations as their own (cultures such as Classic Antiquity, the Chinese, the Arabs, the Indians, the Jews, etc.). What the West introduced that was new was scientific research, particularly the experimental science that led to the industrial revolution and technological civilization. Scientific research on man and mankind led to the acceptance of certain human rights and freedoms, of diversity, of democracy, and of the rule of law. Gradually, the West reached a "frightening stature"⁶ in relation to the rest of the world; the other cultures were to be attached to it and enter a process of acculturation. Consequently, the current civilization of the planet as a whole is the Western one, within which "everything from the light bulb to the democracy came out of the Western laboratory."⁷ But as the author remarks, the West also invented also bad, even terrible things: the slave trade, colonialism, communism, fascism, genocide, the two world wars, etc.

Asking himself *how the current fall of the West is expressing itself*, Lucian Boia identifies and analyses a few historical trends that are expressing themselves in the West, trends which are preventing, stagnating, or reversing socio-economic life. Among the most obvious are: demographic collapse; economic crisis and stagnation while other poles of power are quickly developing; the crash of the technology monopoly as "the others" continue to appropriate new ready-made technologies; the economic-financial crisis that began in 2007, which is just the first episode in a long series marking the obvious decline of the Western world; the balance of power is moving in favor of other worldwide poles (China, India, Brazil); "the others" are no longer dominated, but are partners; though Christianity remains the original pattern of European civilization, an increasingly large part of the Western population is embarrassed by its Christian dimension, with many becoming atheists, or at least expressing indifference toward the Christian point of view; earthy values and welfare in this world won the battle with the "afterlife," and this Christian belief that had such a profound effect on the shape of Western civilization faded away, no longer playing the role it had before; globalization is dissolving individual nations into a planetary amalgam by rendering borders meaningless, and by the mixture of ethnicities, ideologies, and religions; capitalism itself shows signs of fatigue, producing more and more failures; social in-

⁴ Professor Lucian Boia is titular at the Faculty of History within the University of Bucharest. He has published works in both Romania and France. Some of his works have been translated into English, German, and other foreign languages, and they were from areas such as the history of ideas, philosophy of history, culturology, etc. Illustrative of his work are titles such as: „Jocul cu trecutul. Istoria între adevăr și ficțiune” (*Playing with the Past: History between Truth and Fiction*) (1998, 2002, 2008, 2013), „Mitologia științifică a comunismului” (*Scientific Mythology of the Communism* 1999, 2005, 2011), „Sfârșitul lumii. O istorie fără de sfârșit” (*The end of the world. Never-ending story* (1999, 2007) , “For a history of the imaginary” (2000, 2006) , “Mitul democrației” (*The Myth of Democracy*) (2003, 2013) , “Occidentul. O interpretare istorică” (*The West. A Historical Interpretation*) (2007).

⁵ Lucian Boia, „Sfârșitul Occidentului. Spre lumea de mâine” (*The End of the West. Towards the World of Tomorrow*), Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2013, p. 5.

⁶ *Idem*, p. 27.

⁷ *Idem*, p.29.

equities are not concordant to proclaimed rights, to legalized equity; globalization is generating “un-democratic” economic, social, political, and military trends which do not take into consideration the will of citizens, nor their votes; the West records a deficit of utopia after periods of superabundance; the Western world has become a multicultural area assaulted by waves of emigrants, cultures, religions, and ethnicities—which is not bad in itself, but leads to poverty, marginalisation, and quarrelling; more and more the West resembles a “fortress under siege” in which we can imagine all kind of confrontations and conflicts; the traditional model of Western culture tends to be dominated by a “Brownian movement,” particularly due to the ascension of the internet and “show-time” cultures.

The author considers the idea that other trends may yet counter some of those expressed above, which might in time result in a new synthesis of civilization. It might be a more democratic world, just as it might be a less democratic one, because the future of democracy is not entirely sure, not even in the West. The author claims that “the long-term solution is an improbable but necessary reconciliation, in the absence of which disaster is lurking on the horizon.”⁸

There is no doubt that the historical trends characteristic of the modern West which the author presents are real, visible, and true processes. Considering this state of Western society, questions arise: In what direction is the West going? What will the architecture of the new planetary civilization look like in 2050? What position will the Western world hold in the new world order?

The author avoids answering such questions, reasoning that the only undeniable truth is “the rupture.”⁹ We do not know the future—or at least we “know” so little that it is not appreciably different from knowing nothing. We cannot anticipate how much the Western world will detach from its own past, or how much other cultures will alter or subsume it. We can make an infinite number of projections about the future of the West, but we cannot know which of these will be actualized; we know absolutely nothing about the true future. Plenty of predictions about the future have been proven false by the real course of events. Crucial events, major crises, wars, etc. have arisen suddenly in history, and could not be predicted. Who could predict the great oil shock of 1973, the crash of the communist sys-

tem, the terrorist attack of 2001, the financial crisis of 2007, or the Arab “spring”? The great prophecies of the Club of Rome around 1970, as well as those of Francis Fukuyama’s book, published in 1991,¹⁰ did not come true. The future cannot be anticipated.¹¹

It follows from these observations that Lucian Boia is an adept of social-historical non-determinism, and that he is fighting against the “anticipators” position and the futurologists’ standing. Therefore, despite admitting that there is causality and objective law in history, that certain regularities in events can be noticed, the author concludes that the effects of this huge number of both small and massive causes, curdling together into an amalgam, are very hard to know and weigh. We cannot know in advance the result of such complex interactions between so many different trends.

Obviously, the author’s position is debatable. When this book was first published, a famous Romanian thinker—Gabriel Liiceanu—highlighted aspects of the author’s subjectivity, and the limits of his stand on the possibility of predicting certain trends in the future evolution of the West. Beyond these observations, it is hard to accept that such a lack of predictability allowed for society’s development, or that it is utterly impossible to make certain predictions about future social evolution. If social interactions were random and social evolution and development were Brownian, then we would not be able to predict the future. Nevertheless, are there not really objective laws, a systemic organization of the society regulating its evolution? Do not socio-economic and political processes submit themselves to some regularities, to some relatively constant trends over the course of history? If human society has historically developed according to particular causes, objective laws, regularities—combined with masses of accidental social phenomena—can we really not accept the functioning of a statistical probabilistic determinism? In such a case, is it not possible to make some prediction as to great events and historical trends, even if these predictions remain vague around the edges (somehow meteorologists manage to forecast the weather with some accuracy)? The “anticipators” place themselves in such postures of thinking, persons whom Professor L. Boia is criticizing.

⁸ *Idem*, p.119.

⁹ *Idem*, p. 121.

¹⁰ Francis Fukuyama, „Sfârșitul istoriei și ultimul om” (*The End of History and the Last Man*), Bucharest: Paideia, 1994 (1991).

¹¹ *Idem*, p. 11.

Even as an adept of the non-determination of history track, the author cannot avoid joining the opposition with his own vision of the future of society. Consequently, the idea of the impossibility of predicting the future of society, according to which “when talking about the future, the word *surely should be forbidden*,”¹² runs counter to the position that the author has argued for, and according to which “the world of tomorrow provides at least two certainties. China will dominate it (which I have already marked down), and it will be warmer,”¹³ plus one more certainty—that nothing will be like it was before.¹⁴

Appreciated as a whole, Professor Boia’s work presents a unified and original conception, dense in ideas about the contemporary world, especially the Western world. The style and the language is characterised by precision, concision, and clarity, all of which effectively motivates the reader to continue reading and reflecting. The author’s attitude is expressed prudently, balanced in its analyses and in drawing its conclusions, and now and then is optimistic. We illustrate these assessments with the final words of the book: “man is the most adaptable being; so do not worry, he will fit perfectly in any possible history, and will have no reason to regret what once was.”¹⁵

¹² *Idem*, p.91.

¹³ *Idem*, p. 100.

¹⁴ *Idem*, p. 9.

¹⁵ *Idem*, p.122.