Ecological Citizen

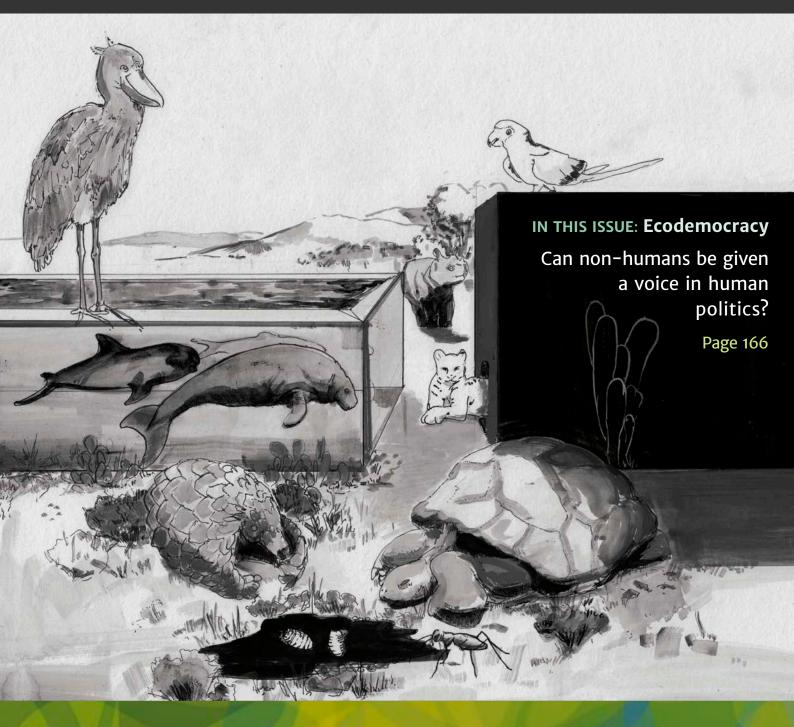
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CONFRONTING HUMAN SUPREMACY IN DEFENCE OF THE EARTH





Cover artwork

'The Parliament of Endangered Animals' – gouache on paper (50×30cm; 2019)

Anna Sebastian



An ecocentric, peer-reviewed, free-to-access journal

ISSN 2515-1967

Aims

- 1 Advancing ecological knowledge
- 2 Championing Earth-centred action
- 3 Inspiring ecocentric citizenship
- 4 Promoting ecocentrism in political debates
- 5 Nurturing an ecocentric lexicon

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"Science left to itself and setting its own expedient directions will do as much evil as good."

Stan Rowe

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Ecocentrism and our possible futures

recurring theme in ecocentric discussions is the ever-increasing possibility of ecological collapse. But collapse of what, and for whom? Basically, it means a serious degradation, terminating unevenly in destruction - on a global scale, and in a relatively short time-frame - of the integrity of the Earth's ecosystems and their ability to support life. This is already happening, and the cause is human activity. So the mass extinctions of nonhuman lives that result from collapse are, to put it simply, our fault. Beyond that, humanity may well join them. Ultimately, nature in the round will survive, almost certainly to flourish again, eventually, without us. But in the meantime, it seems that we are going to prove the truth of Gary Snyder's sorrowful observation to Wendell Berry: "The best intentions in the world will not stop the inertia of a heavy civilization that is rolling on its way" (Wriglesworth, 2014: 25).

At this juncture, the possible futures we face can be summarized this way: inevitable serious collapse; preventable serious collapse; inevitable limited collapse; preventable limited collapse.

If we really are heading into serious collapse, the idea that it is preventable (number two) is vanishingly unlikely. The scale of cultural, social and economic change that is needed overwhelms what humanity, even at its most highly motivated and best-organized, is currently and foreseeably capable of accomplishing. Equally unlikely, given the range of indications starting with climate breakdown and crashing biodiversity, is the possibility that there will be no collapse at all (number five). So we can ignore them.

Of the remaining three outcomes, number one consists of inevitable serious ecological collapse, with all its destructive consequences for both the non-human and human world. Number three, unavoidable limited collapse, would differ only in being somewhat less drastic, although still sweeping. But the challenges remain the same; the only difference is that there is more scope for adaptation.

In both cases, then, the vital question becomes: who and what to try to save? Since self-interested human-centredness lies at the heart of the activities bringing about radical collapse, any answer based on more of the same is literally hopeless. Since all life depends on a thriving Earth, the answers must concentrate instead on trying to protect core areas, ecosystems and species, so that the natural world has the best possible chance of recovering, sooner rather than later, some of its richness, and therefore the human world with it.

The focus of too much of the analysis of collapse assumes that what is mainly wrong with our ecological predicament is that it is endangering humanity. This tends to rally people around the distorted mandate of 'saving civilization,' instead of redirecting our energies toward protecting the living planet and *all* its beings from human destruction and plunder. Behind the existential threat of ecological crises, and inseparable from it, is the moral bankruptcy of the anthropocentrism that has caused them. Civilization therefore does not need to be saved, but reinvented as truly ecological.

Shrinking from that challenge, the idea of collapse can even function as a paradoxically comforting fantasy embracing impotency, since (the so-called thought goes) 'It's all going to be destroyed anyway'. This "symbiosis of defeatist thinking and wish fulfilment" (Reed, 2000: viii) is a self-fulfilling prophecy, and one that lets us off the hook of attempting the difficult work of building a movement that will have a chance

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Limits; sixth mass extinction; societal change

to bring about real change in the world — with all the pragmatic, unglamorous compromises and failures that such work necessarily involves. "Organizing", to quote Adolph Reed, Jr, again, "is a painstaking, slow and time-consuming process, and it promises no guarantees of ultimate victory or even shorter-term success. But there are no alternatives other than fraud, pretense or certain failure" (Reed, 2000: ix).

Even more-or-less successful rear-guard action will take cooperation, not only between individuals but especially in and between groups, voluntary but even more so, governmental. How else will the steps that need to be taken – severely controlling corporate behaviour in its widest sense, both production and consumption, for example – ever come about, and be enforced? Nor can collective cultural dynamics be ignored; it will take a creatively cunning mixture of inspiration and mutual coercion to sustain those changes. And even knowing what steps and changes are needed depends on having an ecocentric paradigm which is paramount in all relevant domains.

Nevertheless, it is hard not to hope! Already, this discussion has strayed into 'solutions', leading to the final scenario worth considering: preventable limited collapse (number four). This is the one on which many people are pinning all their hopes. But how realistic is it?

This is not meant as a rhetorical question. Can we expect intelligence? I am writing in the times of the Australian bushfires, resulting in not only human hardship but a massacre of animal innocents. These resulted from not only human-caused climate change but also the clueless political leadership of a rich and democratic society. Or benevolence? The richest democratic country is led by a President who is energetically dismantling as much environmental protection as possible, and looks set to be re-elected later this year. Or ethics? In China, the lives of countless wild animals caught, imported, caged and tormented, and even bred – are sacrificed purely for human palates, alongside the misery and death of domesticated animals on a massive scale.* Or daring? The steps urged by Paris Accords, from which the USA has withdrawn, are strong on rhetoric but look set to fall far short in actuality. So too does the European Union's recent muchvaunted 'green deal'; as the analysis of Varoufakis and Adler (2020) makes clear, what that mostly amounts to is greenwashed business-as-usual. In other words, it offers more of what is deeply implicated in bringing about the situation it is supposedly addressing.

Indeed, the truly frightening prospect may be this: that collapse is largely prevented by the sacrifice of all of nature that can't be enslaved. After all, history has taught us that capitalism is an extraordinarily resilient and flexible system, able to survive and adapt to crisis after crisis. The tempting belief that capitalism is destined to collapse of its own accord in the near future is thus, perhaps, a naïve optimism

– another example of that "symbiosis of defeatist thinking and wish fulfilment" noted above. Instead, if we do not act, perhaps things will terminate in the kind of dystopia which John Stuart Mill (1871: bk. IV, ch. 6) envisaged:

with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature; with every rood of land brought into cultivation, which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture ploughed up, all quadrupeds or birds which are not domesticated for man's use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture.

Of course, this brave new world would have to be updated by adding mega-cities, laboratory-produced 'food', government by corporate algorithm and 'artificial intelligence', 24/7 surveillance, mass addictions, pandemics, and so forth. Nonetheless, the Earth would still "lose that great portion of its pleasantness which it owes to things that the unlimited increase of wealth and population would extirpate from it, for the mere purpose of enabling it to support a larger, but not a better or a happier population..."

But more than nature's pleasantness is at stake, important though that is. Given that human societies depend on healthy and functioning ecosystems, the utter collapse of those societies would surely intervene before ecocide was complete. Or so it is to be hoped, if those really are the only two alternatives left.

So any degree of success, whether in preventing (to some extent), mitigating (for some beings) or adapting to collapse, comes back to the *kind* of measures undertaken – who and what are they intended to protect or help, and how? – as much as their scale and extent. Given what is needed, the historical record, right up to the present, is not encouraging, although absolute certainty is not an option. But without intelligent and compassionate ecocentrism at the heart of those measures, we – and all the creatures, plants and places who, unlike us, bear no responsibility for this situation – really are doomed.

*At the time of writing, due to the coronavirus, it appears this situation may be changing.

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Small cetaceans, big problems

orldwide, a staggering 100,000 small whales, dolphins and porpoises are intentionally killed every year. The motives for this slaughter include the provision of meat for human consumption, bait use in shark fisheries, traditional medicines and the elimination of supposed competitors for an ever-declining number of fish. The majority of killings are illegal and unsustainable, while enforcement of laws remain weak and flourishing black markets are often established.

Since the turn of the 21st century, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of countries involved, the number of individuals killed and the range of species targeted. This is particularly a problem in places where fish numbers have been depleted, and cetacean meat is seen as a way to meet the food demands of growing, often displaced human populations. However, small whales, dolphins and porpoises accumulate high levels of heavy metals, chlorinated organic compounds and other toxic substances in their bodies. These contaminants compromise their lifespans and fertility, while also presenting an acute health risk for people who consume their

River and coastal dolphins are especially vulnerable. For example, thousands of Amazon river dolphins (boto) are hunted annually for bait in commercial fisheries. In one river in Brazil, a 50% population decline of the boto was documented between 2004 and 2014. Unfortunately, it may already be too late to reverse the decline for some species, such as the Atlantic humpback dolphin, which is now locally extinct in some coastal areas throughout West Africa and may end up being eaten into oblivion.

In several countries, markets for small cetacean meat have resulted in the

'restyling' of *incidental* bycatch (where individuals are accidentally caught in fishing gear) into *assisted* bycatch (where individuals are not released from fishing gear if found alive). This trend has reinforced increased commercialization and directed hunts. Most small cetaceans are killed using rudimentary methods – for example, being butchered alive in Faroe Island and Japanese hunts, or elsewhere even targeted with dynamite – and individuals suffer prolonged and intensely cruel deaths.

Many countries, both developed and developing, are involved in the annual killing of thousands of small cetaceans - including Canada, Brazil, Venezuela, Greenland, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Madagascar, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Solomon Islands and Taiwan. By far the world's largest kill occurs in Peru, where, despite legislation, up to 15,000 dolphins are killed for shark bait every year. Up to several hundred small cetaceans are hunted yearly in the US (Alaska), Cameroon, Tanzania, Colombia, Faroe Islands, Guinea Bissau, Kiribati, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines. In Africa, pressure from rapid population growth and declining fish catches has undermined traditional reluctance to consume cetaceans. Small cetacean hunts now occur in many coastal countries, with body parts used for human consumption, medicinal purposes and shark bait. In 2014, one port in Ghana, for example, saw a 400% increase in dolphins landed compared to 2003. Moreover, a recent study found that all countries of South-East and East Asia report directed hunts for marine mammals, as well as the opportunistic use of live and dead marine mammals. In Indonesia, for

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Keywords

Conservation; water

More information

For more information on the impacts of hunting on small whales, dolphins and porpoises, see: https://is.gd/cetaceans.



A striped dolphin (© Nicola Hodgins / WDC).

example, a single net positioned in a pelagic migratory corridor caught over 577 pilot whales and 312 unidentified dolphins during one eleven-month 'set'. The creatures killed with this method were processed into pet food for export.

A number of indigenous communities around the world have a history of hunting small cetaceans and a handful of government-sanctioned hunts for 'subsistence hunting' are undertaken. Some hunts, however, remain unregulated, illegally provision tourist or foreign markets and are based on minimal science. In the Arctic, the number of individual cetaceans taken by indigenous peoples has expanded in recent decades, because of human population growth, the introduction of modern hunting techniques and changing sea ice conditions facilitating easier access. Despite many of the hunts being ostensibly managed by a quota system, catch limits are frequently exceeded, while the actual number of small cetaceans killed is higher

because of the large number of animals struck with a weapon but not landed.

Given the multiple anthropogenic threats that small cetaceans face, the uncertain conservation status of many populations, their slow rate of reproduction and the contamination burden they carry, these killings are an appalling and profoundly disturbing additional assault on their lives. The ongoing and increasing massacre of small cetaceans must be stopped, even as we also apply ourselves to end the barrage of other perils they (along with many more marine creatures) face, including habitat destruction, declining prey, toxic pollution and entanglement in fishing nets and gear.

Further reading

Altherr S and Hodgins N (2018) Small Cetaceans, Big Problems: A global review of the impacts of hunting on small whales, dolphins and porpoises. Animal Welfare Institute, Washington, DC, USA, Pro Wildlife, Munich, Germany, and Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Chippenham, UK.





Clockwise from top: whaling in the Faroe Islands (© Erik Christensen); a slaughtered Atlantic white-sided dolphin (© WDC); cut-up harbour porpoise to be sold as food (© Rob Lott/WDC).



Pilot whales (© Andrew Sutton).



Do current conservation plans to protect vital marine ecosystems need to do more?

he ocean is the source and vital sustenance for all life on Earth.

Approximately five per cent of the ocean is protected in some form, with countries collectively moving towards protecting ten per cent by 2020 and 30% by 2030 (MPA News, 2016). Current conservation plans largely focus on the high seas and coastal ecosystems, owing to their size and importance, respectively. Questions, however, remain as to whether we will reach these targets and if they are enough.

The high seas, or waters that are beyond the 200 nautical-mile perimeter of national jurisdiction, constitute almost two-thirds of the ocean and nearly half of the planet. The 'tragedy of the commons' highlights the need to protect this ecosystem; competition, common ownership and lack of protective frameworks and enforcement have led to over-exploitation of the ocean and its species.

Currently over 99% of the high seas is unprotected. A treaty that would create legally binding mechanisms for establishing marine protected areas in the high seas is being discussed at the United Nations. While the adoption of an international legal instrument is a lengthy and highly complex process, a new treaty would ultimately provide the strongest framework of enforceability for the conservation of this ecosystem.

However, scientists advise that the global protection target should be closer to 50% (Lubchenco and Grorud-Colvert, 2015; Milman, 2016; O'Leary et al., 2016) and that the high seas should be completely closed to fishing. Others, like Sea Shepherd's Captain Paul Watson, propose a moratorium on all commercial exploitation for 50 years (White and Costello, 2014; Watson, 2018). Such a

measure would allow marine biodiversity to heal and resurge.

Additionally, coral reefs occupy less than one per cent of the ocean (being largely confined to coastal waters) but are home to more than 25% of all marine species. In addition to providing habitat, food, shelter and breeding grounds for marine species, coral reefs also benefit human health and livelihoods. These ecosystems provide medicine, food and jobs for millions of people, while providing protection from weather events and erosion.

Conservation plans can involve the following (Bender *et al.*, 2019):

- regulating human activity through the use of marine protected areas and sanctuaries;
- market-based approaches that incentivize stewardship through coral growing and restoration projects;
- an insurance scheme that allows for a fast response when a reef is damaged by providing the funds necessary for intervention and restoration, such as that for the Mesoamerican Reef.

However, owing to the biological dynamics of coral-reef ecosystems and their sensitivity to water temperature and chemical changes, reducing fossil fuel emissions and stabilizing global rise in temperature at 1.5°C is considered "the only opportunity" to save coral reefs (Heron *et al.*, 2017: 10).

In order to save coral reefs, the high seas, the ocean and their species, local efforts must be supplemented by global efforts, and commercial fishing and greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced. Groups such as Earth Law Center are concerned that current conservation plans adopt the same anthropocentric worldview and framework

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Conservation; Earth jurisprudence; rights of nature; water

Earth Law Center

For information on all the work of Earth Law Center, visit www.earthlawcenter.org.

that have driven the decline in ocean health. We must move beyond business-as-usual practices, but also cultivate a new mindset. More can be done, including a fundamental shift in the perception of environmental law, from valuing the ocean as property and a resource, to respecting the inherent and inalienable rights of the ocean to exist, thrive and evolve.

What if instead of focusing on our rights to the ocean, we focus on the rights of the ocean?

Acknowledgement

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Coral reef in Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuge (photo: Jim Maragos/US Fish and Wildlife Service [CC BY 2.0; https:// creativecommons.org/ licenses/by/2.0/).

De-centring humans from environmental valuation: Introducing the Life Framework of Values

uilding on the understandings of how we value nature through reports such as The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (Kumar, 2012), as well as those of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) and the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (2011), policy frameworks, including 'ecosystem services' (ES) and 'nature's contributions to people' (NCP), work on the premise that by thinking of the environment as a set of services or contributions that our economy benefits from, then we may start to better understand the value of nature (Diaz et al., 2018). These benefits may be indicated by monetary values, but they may also be expressed through non-monetary values, such as cultural or spiritual values. Proponents argue that a better understanding of the value of nature will better ensure its protection and centrality in our decision-making. However, this way of valuing the environment is still predominantly anthropocentric in form in that it is about recognizing the importance of nature for humans' use alone and as a result has been met with a lot of criticism, not least in its inability to account for the intrinsic value of the environment, which is a key tenet of the Convention on Biological Diversity (McCauley, 2006; Silvertown, 2015; Piccolo, 2017). Similarly, although there has been a recent turn to improve our understanding and inclusion of relational values in this field (see, e.g., Chan et al. [2018]), these discussions are still on the margins and there is little understanding of how this can relate to decision-making in practice (Gould et al., 2019).

A new article that I co-authored looks to address these critiques through introducing a 'Life Framework of Values' (O'Connor and Kenter, 2019). Building on the understanding by O'Neill *et al.* (2008), this framework recognizes that we value the environment – that is, we find the environment to *matter* – according to:

- 1 **how we live** *from* **the natural world** this category refers mainly to how the environment provides us with crucial resources and materials that we depend on for our survival (food, energy *etc.*);
- 2 how we live in the natural world referring to the environment as the stage of our life events and cultures, and the foundation of our identities and relationships;
- 3 how we live with the natural world acknowledging the planet's existence long before and after us humans and the fact that we share this planet with the more-than-human world;
- 4 how we live as the natural world recognizing the different ontologies (worldviews) of the various human communities around the world who express a notion of harmony and unity with the environment.

This last framing allows predominantly western frameworks such as ES and NCP to move beyond their underlying assumptions of a nature—culture separation, which have often alienated marginalized groups, who struggle to comprehend these frameworks as a result.

This Life Framework of Values now allows us to recognize the balance of values across the different life frames expressed in any given decision-making context. For example, working on a conception of 'articulated intrinsic values' (something being *good for* something else, in the natural world, without reference to humans), we can now include the articulation of intrinsic values in a deliberative democratic

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Citation

O'Connor S (2020) Decentring humans from environmental valuation: Introducing the Life Framework of Values. *The* Ecological Citizen 3: 117–18.

Keywords

Anthropocentrism; ecodemocracy; intrinsic value; values decision-making process. In our article, we put this theory into practice through reporting on a non-monetary valuation project relating to the marine environment in the UK, where we challenged the participants (a representative sample of marine environment stakeholders) to consider value and management outcomes from the perspectives of the more-thanhuman world (O'Connor and Kenter, 2019). A large number of relational values were elicited from this exercise, as was the notion of 'articulated intrinsic values'. These values fell largely within the 'living in' and 'living as' frames for relational values and the 'living with' and 'living as' frames for the articulated intrinsic values. These values, which were elicited as part of the non-monetary valuation project, were presented in a video that was played at a deliberative workshop on future UK marine policy by a similar group of stakeholders.

As a result, this may encourage a move away from decision-making that predominantly values the environment in an anthropocentric sense — *i.e.* purely living *from* the environment — to start to recognize the plural values that fall within these other categories. While this approach still centres the humans as the *valuers*, by bringing the voices and perspectives of the more-than-human world into our

decision-making this represents a move towards a more ecocentric approach to environmental valuation.

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Field guides as a gateway to appreciating more-than-human concerns

Wildflower Guide. For the other, it is Les Punaises Pentatomoidea de France, a guide to shieldbugs. If you spend time studying natural history, or even if you are a more casual naturalist, the book that you find most indispensable may well be a nature-manual, as it is for each of us.

The ostensible primary purpose of such books is to allow the quick identification of wild organisms. For many, unfortunately, this remains their only significant use. The two of us, however, have drawn (on different sides of the Atlantic) the same additional major benefit. Against a background of ongoing deep-green study, we have found that accentuating the experience of walking in wild places with the information in these books has done something remarkable. Out of objects it has forged subjects, subjects that are imbued with meaning and value and that have independent concerns.

Through this shift, our own worlds have changed. New relationships and value centres have become evident everywhere. And the realization has followed that we, too, are part of the immense and integrated new whole.

Beyond mere facts

We certainly do not wish to imply that field guides are essential for forming a good relationship within nature. Freya Mathews, for instance, has described a "sense of inner affinity with the natural world" that arose in her independently of any detailed empirical knowledge base (Mathews, 2019: 16). But we do challenge the contention of John Fowles (2000: 48; emphasis added) that "nature–manuals [...] may teach you how and what to look for, what to question in external nature; but never in your own nature."

More broadly, we wish to champion field guides as tools for learning more than mere facts. Because, hopefully, at some point after a name and the corresponding ecological notes are absorbed, a more spiritual acquaintanceship may arise. Its cradle: an appreciation that all the individuals that comprise a named species are important both in their own right and as part of a greater whole. This is an appreciation that probably would not arise as strongly, we believe, if you knew nothing about names or ecology but just that there were x species in a particular area. And here's the funny thing: You don't even need to observe individuals of the species in question to derive such a benefit, or at least a partial one, from the guide. Just knowing that you are walking in their habitat can be enough.

Following paths

The relationships within the newly discovered whole – the ecosphere – offer many fascinating paths, if you are open to them. One's initial field of interest broadens out to cover the part of the Earth available to them. Suddenly one needs to learn about bumblebees because one has been seen forcing their way into a jewelweed. Wow, a whole new field! Why are there no dandelions here? Oh, damn, these pesky mosquitoes must be encouraged! The frog songs are wonderful here, but why are there fewer calling? Which species are declining?

On such journeys, field guides offer a window into local-scale diversity, connections, complexity and beauty, and there follows an inevitable conclusion: Everything intertwines. And thus, gradually, one realizes that all life is one's equal.

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Ecological citizen!?

n ecological citizen is a citizen who is also ecological. Amen! We ought to be ecological citizens. But let's be more precise. An ecological citizen is a citizen who *resides in* an ecology. Can you be a *citizen of an ecology*? Exactly what we mean needs some analysis.

One is a citizen of a nation-state, and derivatively from that a more local citizen of a state such as California or Massachusetts, or of a city such as Los Angeles or Boston. You need a passport to leave and re-enter your nation-state. You must be a citizen to vote in elections, and you will be required to pay your taxes. You must be civilized, your nation-state is part of your culture. This is a different realm from that of your ecology. You can't be a citizen of a forest or a grassland. Or of the Earth. Or of the biosphere. They don't issue any passports.

Important people, thinking themselves too big just to be citizens of a nation-state, like to call themselves cosmopolitan. They wish to establish a cosmopolis or "world state" for all of humanity, and thus promote globalism and internationalism. Their cosmopolitan community might be based on a universal morality, shared economic relationships, or a political structure that encompasses different nations, like the EU. They want the nation-states to form relationships of mutual respect, despite their differing political, cultural, and religious beliefs and practices. But no one is a citizen of such a cosmopolis. These cosmopolites still need nation-state passports if they are to travel around their cosmopolitan Earth. Fortunately, whether nation-state or cosmopolitan, these are not the only ways for human beings to be 'citizens'.

Citizens, wherever they live, need 'ecosystem services'. Ecosystem services are

the many and varied benefits that humans freely gain from the natural environment and from properly functioning ecosystems. These might be agroecosystems, forest ecosystems, grassland ecosystems or aquatic ecosystems. Nature is a world that runs itself, and all ecosystems need and provide water and air. They recycle materials, keeping soils fertile and oxygen and carbon dioxide levels at some equilibrium. Ecosystems supply these benefits to all the citizens of all nations, as well as to all the non-humans on Earth.

Rain falls from the skies. Carbon, oxygen, nitrogen and hydrogen — four of the elements most essential for life — are all provided in our atmosphere. One needs these endless flows of water-laden air, of oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide, if there is to be life on Earth. These goods are not provided by political or government sources, which may in fact do little to protect these freely provided vital benefits. Politics and government more typically pollute the atmosphere, the waters and the soils.

No government owns these ecosystems with their services. The air does not belong to any citizens of nation-states. The air we breathe today was in China last week, and will be in Europe next week. Half these atoms now incorporated into my body once floated in these skies above. The flow of water between Earth and sky determines the weather and the climate. Meteorology has turned out to be substantially more complex than anyone predicted. Weather has proved impossible to predict more than two weeks ahead because of the chaotic elements in the atmospheric system. Nevertheless natural systems have reliably provided weather and climate for many millennia. All this points to the imperative,

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"Human-dominated ecosystems today cover more of Earth's land surface than do wild ecosystems." beyond political citizenship, to become ecological citizens as well. Our sustainable future depends on it.

Ecological citizens do have a major worry, namely, the rise of the Anthropocene enthusiasts. These are gung-ho cosmopolites, dominantly in the wealthy nations, that now seek to re-engineer the planet with an ecology that (so they claim) suits us better. By recent accounts human dominance is so extensive that Earth has entered a new age, the Anthropocene epoch. The mental activities of humans reshaping their agentive capacities physically to re-build their landscapes has produced technological developments giving humans vast powers for transforming 'their' planet through agriculture, industry, and technology. This has so dramatically escalated that we have entered the first century in life's history on Earth in which one species can aspire to manage the planet's future.

Human-dominated ecosystems today cover more of Earth's land surface than do wild ecosystems. Agriculture, construction and mining move more earth than do the natural processes of rock uplift and erosion. Humans are now the most important geomorphic agent on the planet's surface: "Human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary terra incognita" (Steffen et al., 2007: 614).

Beyond the geology, 'Anthropocene' has become an 'elevator word', and put to philosophical use to promote the human shaping and management of planet Earth. A recent cover story of *The Economist* opines that "the challenge of the Anthropocene is to use human ingenuity to set things up so that the planet can accomplish its 21st century task." The report envisages "10 billion reasonably rich people" on a geoengineered Earth overhauled for happy human consumers in centre focus (The Economist, 26 May 2011 edition: 11, 81). Relatedly, capitalist markets and the media celebrate increased fulfilling and expanding of human wants. The Anthropocene "humanity's defining moment,"

according to the American Geosciences Institute (Seielstad, 2012). "Humans are the ultimate ecosystem engineers" (Ellis and Ramankutty, 2009). According to the ultimate Anthropocene hyperbole, we are "the God species" (Lynas, 2011).

We have entered, so they claim, the era of the imperial human domain. "What we call 'saving the Earth' will, in practice, require creating and re-creating it again and again for as long as humans inhabit it" (Shellenberger and Nordhaus, 2011: 61). Humans are now "too big for nature." "Let us embrace the challenge to gain mastery over human engagement with the earth" (Ellis, 2015). Enter the civilized designer world. Now the citizens, at least the wealthy and high-tech ones, propose to choose and build their re-vamped ecology, their 'synthetic Earth'.

The editors of an earlier Scientific American special issue, 'Managing Planet Earth', anticipating current trends, asked "What kind of planet do we want? What kind of planet can we get?" (Clark, 1989). The management agenda included a host of planet-scale tasks: Find ways to redistribute rainfall, stop hurricanes and tsunamis, prevent earthquakes, redirect ocean currents, fertilize marine fisheries, control sea-levels, alter landscapes for better food production, and generally make nature more user-friendly. But these Anthropoceniacs may find many, even the majority of Earth's residents, pushing back: Is our only relationship to nature one of engineering it to make it better for us?

Ecological citizens need and yearn for a sense of place. All peoples need a sense of 'my country', of their social communities amidst landscapes they possess in care and in love. The English love their countryside, the Scots their highlands and lowlands, the Swiss their Alps. South Africans love their fynbos. The Japanese treasure their Zen gardens. Taiwan is Formosa, the beautiful island. In China, Confucius taught that humans and nature ought to be in harmony, and for millennia the Chinese have cultivated their landscapes in ways that were integrated with the passing seasons and the rhythms of nature — those

ecosystem services. The promised land has been central in Hebrew faith.

Americans sing, with goose pimples, America the Beautiful. We love our landscapes: the Shenandoah Valley, the Chesapeake Bay, Cape Cod, the Great Lakes, the Ohio rivers, the Sierras, the Adirondacks, the desert South-West, the Pacific Northwest, the Rocky Mountains. Oklahomans sing: "We know we belong to the land, and the land we belong to is grand!" (from Oklahoma!). Montana takes its name from its mountains. West Virginia is the "mountain mamma" – and her offspring hate to see their mountaintops blown away.

Aldo Leopold famously urged us to "think like a mountain." Beyond that, now we must think with the Earth. Leopold celebrated "a sense of kinship with fellowcreatures; a wish to live and let live; a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise" (Leopold, 1969: 109, 129). This is the biology of ultimate concern. In this pivotal and turbulent time, we are traveling deeper into ethics than ever before, as more and more human beings respond to the urgent call for respecting all life globally. This Earth ethic sounds like ecological citizenship on lands we love, not re-engineering them to fulfil a domineering stance and escalating material preferences.

Part of the needed ethic does demand a constructed sense of place of social communities; but human beings also need an embodied sense of residence on an ecological landscape. Ought not what we do in management of such places also be sensitive to values that are already 'in place' before we humans arrive to dwell there? Yearning for a sense of place is a perennial human longing, of belonging to a community emplaced on more-than-human landscape. That is, and should be, the desire of every ecological citizen.

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"In this pivotal and turbulent time, we are traveling deeper into ethics than ever before, as more and more human beings respond to the urgent call for respecting all life globally.")

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Life series by Brittany Ellis

About the artworks: This series from 2019 pictures the evolution of planets in conjunction with the mythological tales of the Gods. Using obsolete iPads as a substrate, paper collage, found objects and acrylic paint, narratives of planets are composed documenting a moment frozen in time.

Higher-resolution versions: https://is.gd/ecoartwork





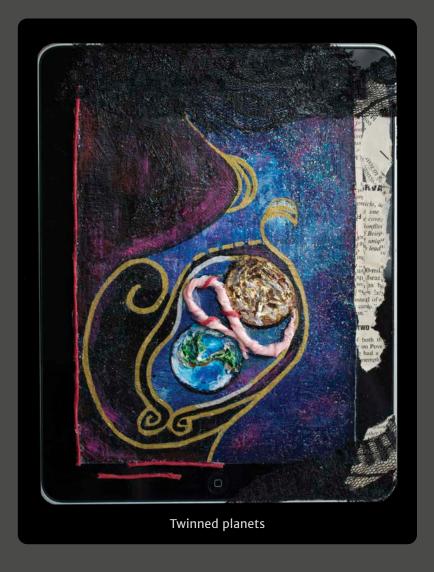












Towards an ecocentric movement?

An ecocentric movement is one which mobilizes and organizes people to transform, or abolish and replace, existing anthropocentric societies, which seek to dominate the other-than-human world. The instrumentalities of anthropocentric domination will not simply wither away. They must be forcefully dismantled. That dismantling will be neither quick nor easy, and will be met with enormous resistance from those that benefit from domination, and from those that fear change. Only by keeping one's eyes on the prize – the recovery of biodiversity and the Earth – and not being diverted by other goals, can the prize be attained.

n ecocentric movement is one which mobilizes and organizes people to transform, or abolish and replace, existing anthropocentric societies, which seek to dominate the other-than-human world. It is, at heart, an anti-colonial movement which would end human violence against the natural world and non-human species. In the words of 16 US Code §1532, definition 19, to "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct" would be prohibited with regard to not just endangered species but all species. An ecocentric movement seeks to safeguard and restore the integrity of ecosystems and ecological processes; it seeks to secure at least half the Earth - marine and terrestrial - in a selfwilled state, with an emphasis on highly productive lands and waters; and it seeks to bring into existence human societies that are compatible with ecologically healthy populations of all species native to a place.

The contemporary conservation movement is not unified or mostly motivated by ecocentrism or biocentrism. In North America the Earth First! of the 1980s was ecocentric; the Center for Biodiversity (www.biodiversitycenter.org) is ecocentric; and many smaller NGOs strongly lean to biocentrism. But larger conservation groups, seeking to exercise influence via insider approaches such as lobbying,

and to raise money from the wealthy and from big foundations, tend to the lowest common denominator. Most of their rhetoric - and, more importantly, their actions - are decidedly anthropocentric and pro-growth. They ignore the reality that one can only bargain down not up, so if a million acres are needed then ask for 10 million. Moreover, few conservation organizations are prepared to talk honestly about the causes of biodiversity decline human population and consumption - and instead focus on the symptoms. After all, raising the matter of fundamental social change can be divisive and is likely to run contrary to the interests of big funders. Keeping in mind that ecocentrism is a strong minority view within conservation but that there are few organizations that express it, to build an ecocentric movement we must ask and answer what must change within conservation as conservation seeks to change the world.

Social movements undertake collective political action to bring about change. They must be strong enough to do that, so they must not only invest directly in their goals but also in making the movement itself stronger — recruiting participants with commitment and skills, and building coalitions. They must be able to see and exploit opportunities. Within movements there are both centrifugal and centripetal forces, which can often make

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decisive action can halt the sixth mass extinction."

discussion about direction and strategy intense. Creating a movement that can fundamentally transform human societies is a messy business, and they have more often failed than succeeded. What is more, dismantling the institutions of control and domination of the natural world, and the withdrawal of humans as an occupying or colonial force from much of the world, is a new and monumental task for a movement. It has never been done.¹

As the herald in Peter Weiss's play Marat Sade observes, "Talk's cheap. The price of action is colossal" (1965: 52). Change has many enemies; it is a risky enterprise. Yet nothing but decisive action can halt the sixth mass extinction. It was the same with the abolition of human slavery, the overthrow of the European colonial empires, and the ending of apartheid in South Africa. Organized and committed groups shed their meekness and said to those who ran things and their minions: you do not get to do this any longer; if you try to continue you will be met with resistance and, if that fails, the necessary and proportionate force to cause unjust behaviour to cease. In the famous words of Frederick Douglass (1985: 204):

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both.

Can people be successfully mobilized on behalf of all life?

Typically social movements are about human-on-human injustice. Human groups give voice to their grievances and the grievances of other humans, organize in their own defence, and tap into common emotions and other traits. However, sharks, wolves, forests and coral reefs cannot speak for themselves, and cannot organize in self-defence or mount a concerted assault on human perfidy. Yet there are successful examples of mobilizing people around

limited goals to protect domestic animals, farm animals and wild animals, forests, grasslands and marine areas.

There is no obvious agent of ecocentric change similar to the proletariat of Marxism. Research into conservation advocacy and support suggests that childhood immersion in nature, and perhaps close relationships with pets, can provide an emotional connection that generates action (Melson, 2001; Kahn and Kellert, 2002; Louv, 2005). Those who have had epiphanies, have a religious disposition for caring, or who possess an expansive sense of justice are further targets for mobilization.

However, an effective movement seeking ecocentric goals cannot consist only of those who are ecocentric or biocentric, as that community may never be large enough to bring about extensive social change. Historically, almost all social movements have consisted of people who shared broad goals, but differed widely in their motivations for seeking those goals. For example, some abolitionists opposed slavery on religious grounds (as a transgression of God's laws), others on entirely secular grounds (such as Bentham's utilitarian objections). Similarly, a movement that seeks justice for the nonhuman world will necessarily comprise those with a variety of motivations.

Can the movement maintain itself for the long struggle?

Many people do have sympathy for other-than-human life. They give their money and time. But does the flame burn bright and hot enough to sustain risky, intense political action over the long haul – for example, the length of time it took to end slavery in the Americas? We know that people can tire of risk and fervour, yet some struggles need to continue over generations.

One risk to the longevity of social movements is internal conflict. There will be factions within any movement for ecocentric societies, and likely *many* ecocentric movements, not just factions within one movement. Factional struggles consume energy. Nor is it likely that

leadership conflicts can be avoided – after all, narcissists gravitate to leadership positions. Furthermore, the motivations and hopes that initially charge a movement can fade with time, with partial victories or with repression.

How to sustain a movement's mobilization is a challenge, especially because the ecocentric community is relatively small. Untested recruits will always threaten to corrode commitment to the mission. Conversion is a long, difficult path, but it is important to remember that it is not the only path. An ecocentric movement must not only seek recruits but coalitions, and the latter are often the most efficacious path to influence. Allies will vary from issue to issue.

Building an ecocentric culture within the movement is crucial to sustaining mobilization, as well as for changing the dominant anthropocentric culture. That involves creating not just a culture of purpose, but also a common identity. An ecocentric culture must create a new sacred – the fundamental, unchallenged meanings and purposes for a group and the myths that carry it; it must also produce lesser stories to guide day-to-day behaviour. This can be done through a range of practices - from the structure of everyday interaction, to ritual, literature, music, theatre and the like, to new forms of enculturation and socialization that immerse children and older people in the natural world.

Can humans adequately represent the interests of the other-than-human world?

Experience has shown that if a movement does not incorporate, or 'prefigure', practices it seeks to order the larger society by, then such practices are unlikely to be realized. The Bolshevik Party adapted to the repressive Czarist state that it overthrew and that regimentation continued into the decades that followed, making democracy impossible (Bahro, 1978); small farmers committed to equality and radical democracy could not hold their own against those who sought to transform the North

American colonies into a British-like state committed to wealth and power (Wood, 1969). What practices must be incorporated into an ecocentric movement? In particular, how does such a movement begin now to integrate the needs of other species and create institutions and practices that do so? There is not a simple answer to this question.²

A central difficulty is that understanding of the world is profoundly limited in many ways – one reason why the concept of 'environmental management' is an arrogant and dangerous fantasy (Ehrenfeld, 1978; Wright, 2004). We also lack adequate empathy and wisdom. Nonetheless, the careful study of otherthan-human life can tell us much about what it needs. We know, for example, that big, self-willed and highly productive areas need to be left alone (Soule and Terborgh, 1999; Wilson, 2016). Furthermore, there is a growing understanding of what other creatures feel (Bradshaw, 2017; Darwin, 1989). But there are places and creatures we do not know or understand, and scientific expertise is not a substitute for grasping what it feels like to be another - to know another's needs from the inside.

Assuming that our knowing and understanding will never be complete, how are other species' needs to be integrated into human decision-making, which has such a huge effect on their lives? Group decision-making even among humans is grossly imperfect and contentious. The hunter-gatherer campfire or the deliberative democracy of the New England town meeting do not work with hundreds of millions of people. The alternative is some form of representation. But non-human species (or future generations of humans, for that matter) cannot vote, otherwise directly give their consent, or hold representatives accountable. Rituals such as Councils of All Beings may help, but they remain human rituals, which are not always wellinformed. Our tremendous capacities for denial and rationalisation allow us, all too easily, to create self-serving belief systems and justifications. Our species

"Building an ecocentric culture within the movement is crucial to sustaining mobilization, as well as for changing the dominant anthropocentric culture."

Carth we must dismantle power, not create new and more pervasive

forms of it.))

has grown distant from the Earth and our emotions potentially untrustworthy.

Can fundamental human social change be brought about given the inertia of 12,000 years of anthropocentrism?

Fundamental social change that is both deliberately planned and successful is rare. Efforts at such change often fail or generate unintended negative results. Historically, those events which are labelled 'revolutions' have tended to move human societies further away from the natural world by generating more energy use, more domination over nature and consequently more hierarchy within the human community. To heal the Earth we must dismantle power, not create new and more pervasive forms of it. Humans have never successfully done this. As the old East European joke used to go: under capitalism man exploits man; under socialism it is just the reverse. Anarchism, syndicalism, various utopian communities and other efforts at re-establishing egalitarianism have never taken hold in large-scale society. It seems that the Neolithic marked the end of that possibility (Boehm, 1999; Flannery and Marcus, 2012).

Many ecocentric thinkers and other critics talk about power and egalitarianism without any understanding of how either relate to population size. At least two obstacles limit egalitarianism among humans and between humans and other species. First, the coming of agriculture involved the control of soil, water, plants and often animals, and this demanded intra-human hierarchy to manage it (Johnson and Earle, 2000). Second, the transformation of egalitarian cultures into hierarchical ones is not easily reversed. This is in part because of social and psychological habituation. But it is also because an ecocentric and egalitarian society would be unable to support the level of population produced by our hierarchically organised, anthropocentric society - dependent as it is on massive energy subsidies from fossil fuels and extensive exploitation of the natural world. Hence, to dismantle

highly institutionalized hierarchy will require major population and population density reduction, and reliance on smaller-scale means of social control. Any such dismantling will also demand the creation of new institutions, and new mechanisms for enforcing ecological restraint.

The attributes of successful social movements

Perseverance

Without a long-term commitment that is apparent to the opponents of conservation, they will simply try to outlast change-seekers, hoping they will tire. As pointed out above, achieving change — especially fundamental change — has always required pressure and disruption over the long term. Conservation confronts a special difficulty in that goals and milestones can take a long time to show results: it may take decades to protect an area but even longer to know if the protection is working.

The perseverance of a social movement depends upon a number of factors. It rests on mobilizing and harnessing strong emotions and deep beliefs, so that action survives both failures and successes (Goodwin et al., 2001). Ritual is also important, because through it a community declares and celebrates achievements, and recommits itself in the face of adversity (Kertzer, 1988; Rappaport, 1999). Perseverance also depends on leadership, on feelings of effectiveness grounded in tactical innovation, and on a sound ideology. Ideology is the vision and purpose of a group brought to ground: it explains the nature of the struggle and its importance, fulfils supporters' need to make sense of things, and sustains people by sanctifying purpose, not just by providing it. Extant religious and secular beliefs may inform ideology with notions of divine justice or historical inevitability.

Clear, bold vision

Movement success depends in significant part on a vision for the future – the world as it should be. A strategy is about getting from here to there, and both the present and the desired future need to be understood.

Broad common themes such as equality or justice are critical components of a vision, helping to check internal divisions. Nurturing a vision takes resources, but the cost of not doing so can be very high. Elites have effectively exploited movement factionalism.

Vision frames specific guides to action – how to fix what is wrong. Its vehicle is a compelling story embodying core values expressed in manifestos, song, films and the like in which people can find themselves. Structurally rooted failures of justice, such as the destruction of biodiversity, require a bold vision and action rather than aspirin-like treatments. Although it does not guarantee success, only boldness can inspire. It is also a tactical imperative.

Uncompromising position on goals with flexibility in means

A bold vision is not much good if it is compromised in implementation; and no human, ecocentric or otherwise, has the right to compromise the lives of other species. Compromising the vision, those goals and purposes essential to achieving the vision, or acting ineffectively drains energy and determination, undercutting the purpose the vision embodies. Neither opponents nor decision-makers take seriously those who compromise their vision.

However, what counts as a compromise for one organization may not be compromise for another. It can be a source of strength when movements consist of different organizations, because they attract those with different levels of commitment, different views about what needs to be done, and different risk tolerance. Such variety provides a pathway for people to move among organizations as commitment and political sophistication shifts. Different organizational approaches also coincide with different policy options – for example, influencing legislators or agencies, or striving to change whole systems. But if key elements of a vision are not broadly shared amongst the different organizations in the movement, elites can easily play groups off against each other, making progress more difficult.

Partial success is often a great enticement to compromise. Attaining a seat at the table with decision-makers creates internal and external pressure to compromise. Leaders like being 'players' and will too often 'go along to get along'. Decision-makers exert strong pressure on organizations to limit demands if they want to keep their seat (Michels, 1962). If unwillingness to compromise on goals is critical to achieving those goals, so is flexibility in the means employed. Many paths may lead to a goal and being open to taking the most advantageous one can make all the difference (see the discussion of crises below).

Combining of insider and outsider approaches

Achieving ecocentric human societies is about changing the limits of what is possible. That means it cannot exclusively rely on, though it must make use of, insider approaches such as lobbying and electoral involvement and personal connections with elites, and on the largesse or personal inclinations of some leaders. But the wealthy and the powerful seldom ignore their material interests; their support is always conditional on truncated conservation goals. And conservation opponents are well positioned to dominate the insider game.

Changing what is possible invariably requires breaking the rules imposed by the elites for their benefit, and creating new rules. No major societal change has been achieved without the credible threat of disrupting business-as-usual until demands are met (Gamson, 1990; Giugni, 1998). But, of course, outsider strategies are high risk and require people willing to take on the inevitable dangers of repression (Wood, 2001).

For outsider strategies to work, movement organizations must accurately anticipate the mix of concessions and repression that disruptive action will trigger from elites. Forecasting elite responses — given their divisions, uncertainty and fear — is not easy, but success depends on it. Outsider approaches also depend on making

"Structurally rooted failures of justice, such as the destruction of biodiversity, require a bold vision and action rather than aspirin-like treatments."

coalitions with those pursuing insider approaches, especially those with strong connections to decision-makers. Insiders can act to limit repression against outsiders, and can use the threat of disruption to force concessions in negotiations.

When existing structures or foes are strong and united, disruptive protest may be the only path. Non-violent protest was successful in the US civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, but those successes were owed in part to other groups in the movement espousing revolutionary action (Nimtz, 2016). Furthermore, nonviolence is no guarantee of personal safety, as the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 demonstrates (Li et al., 1991). It was the looming threat of civil war in South Africa - a civil war the elites knew they could not win – that ultimately brought authorities to the bargaining table to end apartheid (Wood, 2000).

Successful movements prepare for repression and minimize it by exploiting elite divisions and finding sympathizers within the elite who may limit its use, by demonstrating to those using it that it will not work or will backfire, and by gaining broad recognition that repression is unjustified and indicates elite malevolence and moral failure.

Exploiting of crises and divisions within elites

Crises and divisions may weaken opponents and de-legitimate dominant ideologies and institutions, but they must be recognized and acted on.

United elites are more difficult to overcome compared to those that are divided. In the midst of crisis and divisions there is greater potential for alternative definitions of problems and solutions to be accepted, and more room for action by non-elite actors.

It is no coincidence that some of the strongest US conservation laws — such as the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act — were passed by a governing elite faction that sought to fend off popular resistance to an aggressive war (Repetto, 2006). Conservationists

exacerbated divisions among tuna canners, fishermen and some members of Congress, and won greater protection for dolphins. To take other examples, the divisions between economic and political elites was a major proximate cause for negotiations between rebel groups and the governments of Guatemala and South Africa (Wood, 2000).

Crises offer differential opportunities depending on how deeply rooted they are. Structural crises (such as an economic collapse) offer greater opportunity for change than idiosyncratic scandals, which may only offer the chance to replace an unfriendly decision-maker. Incremental change is the norm, interrupted by periods of significant policy change resulting from the concatenation of factors such as media and 'public' attention cycles, temporary shifts in the relative power of opposing groups, new knowledge that contributes to new definitions of issues and problems, a catastrophe, and the unexpected consequences of legislation or court decisions (Repetto, 2006).

Movements, networks and community

Movements arise from pre-existing networks and communities that are the source of purposes and resources that fuel the movement. For example, the US civil rights movement was embedded in black churches, universities and fraternal orders; the anti-apartheid movement in the townships and labour organizations. The US conservation movement has arisen from more amorphous networks of naturalists, scientists and those enthralled with grand scenery and solitude, from religious and philosophical threads that have roots almost as old as civilization, and from those who grew up immersed in nature facing the rapid loss of wildlands. Conservation has, however, generally not extended its community as successfully as other social movements have. In the 1980s, Earth First! was extraordinarily creative in generating an ecocentric culture, but it lacked the capacity to reach a broad audience. The lack of movement building and network development has left conservation a

"Crises and divisions may weaken opponents and delegitimate dominant ideologies and institutions, but they must be recognized and acted on."

sideshow or an afterthought rather than a society-changing movement.

The bonds of community - not just bonding with a cause or with leaders - sustain political action in the face of repression, success and failure. Trust and loyalty are built upon strong interpersonal ties that extend beyond politics, to friendship, family, marriage, sex, love, play, music and other cultural relationships including ritual. Such bonds buffer against isolation, and forestall attrition resulting from the uncertainty of outcomes, the often multi-generational path to realizing significant change, the oppressive asymmetry of power relationships, the potential for demobilization following major interim successes, and the vilification of movement members by defenders of the status quo. Virtual social networks can be effective at recruitment for one-off mass events, but are typically inadequate to support the organization building necessary to sustain the active involvement of large numbers of people over a long period of time.

Conclusion

The instrumentalities of anthropocentric domination will not simply wither away. They must be forcefully dismantled. That dismantling will be neither quick nor easy, and will be met with enormous resistance from those that benefit from domination, and from those that fear change. It will be tempting along the way to rely on those very instrumentalities – such as the state - to achieve interim goals (such as the defence of species and protected areas). Labour, for example, has often supported strengthening the state to check capital, only to find the state and capital teaming up against it. In the 1970s, the US conservation movement made use of the state's need for legitimacy to pass legislation such as the Endangered Species Act and other good laws. But the danger is that in propping up the state the very system of growth is also propped up. The state, after all, seeks to maintain hierarchies and secure economic growth; it has little choice but to pursue these ends and to vigorously resist any effort to undermine them (Dryzek et *al.*, 2003). But, ultimately, the ecocentric movement must seek to undermine those ends.

Only by keeping one's eyes on the prize – the recovery of biodiversity and the Earth – and not being diverted by other goals, can that prize be attained. To do otherwise is to stay stuck, focused on the short term and enmeshed in the *status quo* and the merely human.

Notes

- 1 For fuller referencing of the claims made about social movements in the following discussion, the reader is referred to Johns (2019).
- 2 For more extensive discussion of this complex matter, see O'Neill (2006), Gray and Curry (2016; 2020) and the article by Gray *et al.* in the present issue

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Religion and environmental behaviour (part two): Dark-green nature spiritualities and the fate of the Earth

It has been claimed that a 'greening of religion' is underway within Earth's predominant world religions. As the first part of this article (in Vol 3 No 1 of *The Ecological Citizen*) showed, there is little evidence to support such a claim. In sharp contrast are individuals and groups animated by ecocentric or dark-green nature-based spiritualities, which are discussed in this, the second part of the article. The rapid growth, increasing influence and ecocentric priorities of these actors suggest that they could be the vanguard of a successful sustainability revolution – perhaps even of the formation of a politically powerful civil Earth religion. However, ideas and practices endemic to world religions that hinder environmental mobilization, the power and nature of the world's prevailing ideologies and the shrinking time for effective action, all darken the prospect that any particular religion or alliance among them will arise soon enough to avert the collapse of Earth's biocultural systems.

began the first part of my exploration of religion and environmental behaviour by explaining how I arrived at these research questions:

- What might lead humanity to stop degrading Earth's environmental systems?
- What is the role of religion in environmental behaviour?
- Is it possible for religion(s) to play a positive role in the quest for sustainable biocultural systems, and if so, how?

I then focused on the world's largest and most prevalent religions (henceforth referred to as 'world religions'), paying special attention to whether they were promoting ecocentric values and political mobilization. I argued that the weight of available evidence showed the following. First, most individuals and groups affiliated with world religions do not express and promote pro-environmental values and behaviours. Secondly, those trying to nudge their traditions toward pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours are constrained by deeply-rooted beliefs, anthropocentric values, countervailing economic ideas and political ideologies, material interests and understandings that to be effective they must maintain credibility with their co-religionists, and, thus, fidelity to the tradition's tenets — including those tenets that hinder environmental concern and action. Thirdly, as a consequence these religious greens rarely prioritize biodiversity conservation, challenge existing socioeconomic systems or focus on political mobilization; instead they prioritize acts of environmental virtue, such as reducing personal, familial and congregational environmental impacts.

Before shifting focus to ecocentric or dark-green nature-based spiritualities, I should briefly explain the 'family resemblance' approach to the study of religion that underpins this research.1 This approach encourages the analysis of diverse social phenomena with traits and characteristics typically associated with religion (such as cosmologies, rituals and ethical mores), while refusing to establish a crisp boundary between what counts as religion and what does not. In taking this approach, I need not accept, for example, the untenable but common approach that attempts to sharply distinguish religion (organized, institutional and involving an appeal to supernatural beings) from spirituality (individualistic and concerned with meaning, healing and transformation). It also enables me to illuminate the affective and perceptual dimensions of

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((The common elements I have found among the most passionate environmental advocates, and within the environmental milieu, are ecocentric values inspired by experiences of awe and wonder, feelings of belonging and connection, and love for and loyalty to the Earth and its living systems."

human experience, which leads to beliefs that some practices, times, places, objects or beings are sacred — even when such beliefs do not involve immaterial divine agents, as is often the case with non-theistic Buddhists, Pagans, Animists and environmentalists.² This illustrates a key reasonwhyIvaluethe 'family resemblance' approach: it allows me to include those who do, and those who do not, believe in deities or divine forces but who share many other characteristics — and this will enable me to illuminate the diversity of ecocentric nature spiritualities.

Ecocentric or dark-green nature spiritualities³

Largely outside of world religions, I have found actors who are animated by ecocentric values, who consider nonhuman organisms and ecosystems to be intrinsically valuable, and who strive to protect them through vocational choices and political organizing designed to shape and inspire the socio-economic changes that are essential if a path is to be found to sustainable and equitable biocultural systems. While observing these actors, I noticed that their experiences, worldviews and lifeways had many dimensions that resembled religions. In Taylor (2010b) I analyzed the worldviews of a tremendous diversity of such actors, including environmentalists and scientists, politicians and diplomats, artists, writers, filmmakers, business people, professors, museum and aquarium curators, farmers, mountaineers, surfers and many more. I also pointed out that these people often enjoy institutional support, even though there are no official dark-green institutions. This support comes from public sectors including governments and international institutions and through programs they support in education, science and the arts – as well as from private sectors – including non-governmental organizations, corporations and media companies. And I observed that dark-green themes are also incubating and spreading within what I have called the global "environmental milieu, namely, the contexts and venues

where environmentally concerned officials, scientists, activists, and other citizens, connect with and reciprocally influence one another" (Taylor 2010b: 13–14).

The common elements I have found among the most passionate environmental advocates, and within the environmental milieu, are ecocentric values inspired by experiences of awe and wonder, feelings of belonging and connection, and love for and loyalty to the Earth and its living systems.⁴ I also found a widely-shared 'spiritual epistemology,' holding that, although there are many paths to proper spiritual perception, the best are through:

- direct, visceral, sensory experiences in nature including personal encounters with non-human others which lead to appreciation of the beauties and value of relatively intact ecosystems, and a realization that all organisms have their own forms of intelligence, and therefore deserve respect;
- 2 the sciences, which displace human beings from the centre of the universe and challenge notions that human beings are more valuable or spiritually advanced than other organisms;
- 3 the arts, which awaken or reinforce the above mentioned experiences and understandings in a way that is evocative, intellectually compelling, and meaningconferring.

Regardless of their wellsprings, such dark-green spiritualities typically cohere with, and are shaped, reinforced and sometimes precipitated by, scientific understandings. These understandings may or may not be fused with religious beliefs that divine beings or forces govern the universe or animate aspects of it. The most important sciences contributing to dark-green worldviews are as follows.

- Cosmology: This reveals that our Earth is just a speck in an immense and everexpanding universe.
- Biology and evolutionary theory: This teaches that we are latecomers in the history of the Earth, and that all living things share a common ancestor. For many, this understanding that every

living thing is biologically related – leads to feelings of kinship and related ethical obligations, while also eroding self-serving notions that our own species has greater moral value than others (Taylor, 2017).

- Ethology (the study of animal consciousness and behaviour): This depends on understandings of evolutionary continuity and shows that many organisms are more like us affectively, cognitively and in other ways than we used to think. Such understandings erode anthropocentric assumptions of human superiority and contribute to what I have called naturalistic Animism namely, the view that rich forms of communication, and even communion, with non-human organisms may be possible.
- Ecology: This teaches that we are nested within and utterly dependent on an interconnected web of life and, indeed, that we are ourselves symbionts, hosts to myriads of other organisms, many of whom depend on our bodies for survival just as we depend on theirs. This view leads quite logically to appreciating and valuing biodiversity.
- Atmospheric science and climatology: These in their own ways teach ecological interdependence and, in this case, that the wellbeing of the biosphere's diverse inhabitants is utterly dependent on the health of the biosphere itself. Like ecology, such understandings reinforce ecocentric values. I have called this sort of perspective 'Gaian naturalism' because it has been advanced in no small measure due to the popular reception of the Gaia Hypothesis, which likens the biosphere as a whole to a living organism, in which its diverse lifeforms and systems work together to maintain the atmospheric conditions they, and the biosphere itself, needs to survive.5

Those who have had experiences and developed understandings akin to the preceding summary, including many who do not consider themselves to be religious, nevertheless often rely on religious terminology to express their

deepest feelings and moral sentiments. For example, many may refer to the biosphere and earthly life as 'sacred' and 'worthy of reverence.' The most radical of those holding dark-green worldviews (including Earth First! and Earth Liberation Front activists), quite often call Earth as a whole, or specific places they are defending, 'sacred' while referring to places destroyed by humans as 'desecrated.' Indeed, Earth First!'s best known slogan, 'No compromise in defence of Mother Earth!', is itself a reflection of such a religious viewpoint - after all, compromise is untenable when defending sacred ground. Such views also make human laws penultimate and justify civil disobedience and sabotage as permissible, if not obligatory, tactics. Whether politically radical or conservative, conventionally religious or with an entirely naturalistic worldview, ecocentrics share a reverence for nature and place a high priority on protecting, and where possible restoring, Earth's living systems.

The future of religion and nature

After years studying the most ardent environmental actors, identifying commonalities among them, and coining 'darkgreen religion' as an umbrella term for their worldview, I had gathered, as well, considerable evidence that those with such experiences, worldviews and values were growing significantly in numbers, gaining social momentum and exercising sometimes significant political influence.6 It is apparent from this research that these trends have the greatest cultural traction in regions of the world with relatively welleducated populations and less homogenous (and hegemonic) religious cultures. The growth of such 'deep green' spiritualities is especially impressive when one recalls that the theory of evolution by natural selection - the scientific advance most responsible for eroding anthropocentric conceits and values – is only 160 years old, dating from the publication of Darwin's On the Origin of Species in 1859.

Given the increasing number of actors and organizations promoting such worldviews and values, the many creative ways they are

"For many, this understanding – that every living thing is biologically related – leads to feelings of kinship and related ethical obligations, while also eroding self-serving notions that our own species has greater moral value than others."

doing so, and how rapidly ideas can spread in this age of global interconnectivity, there is reason to expect these trends to continue. An even more important reason for this expectation is that for many, worldviews rooted in the senses and sciences are simply more compelling than those based on experiences or events that happened to others long ago.

As I studied these trends, I began wondering whether we might be witnessing the nascent early stages of what could become a planetary civil Earth religion. The idea of a 'civil religion' is a theory inspired by Durkheim (1995), but developed more theoretically by Robert Bellah (1975). Civil religion refers to a kind of nationalism in which the nation is invested with transcendent meaning and sacred purpose through a variety of means - including myths, texts, rituals, designed landscapes and buildings, and regular references to the divine that are generic (not specific to any particular religious tradition and therefore not divisive) – all of which foster a shared identity, and enjoin loyalty and ethical obligations to the nation and its citizenry. In contrast, according to political theorist Daniel Deudney, a civil Earth religion would supplement, or even supplant, identities and loyalties based on ethnicity, religion or nationality with allegiance to the biosphere. This would necessarily include the construction of international laws and enforcement mechanisms to protect atmospheric and marine commons.

If the worst predictions of massive extinctions and the collapse of biocultural systems are to be averted, then it may be that something like a civil Earth religion is needed. But for this to occur, a significant proportion of those in world religions would need to rise up and contribute to a chorus demanding dramatic change from political and other leaders around the globe. My research, however, suggests that this is as unlikely as the world's religious leaders uniting and convincing large proportions of their followers that protecting the environment is now a sacred duty.

This said, religions – even the largest ones – are malleable, and each one has

themes within it that can be understood or re-constructed in environmentally friendly ways. And, to varying degrees, most religions already contain some ardent environmental advocates within their ranks. It is also possible that the accelerating impact of anthropogenic environmental change will force dramatic changes to the worldviews of religious individuals and groups, clearing the way for the green revival that some have ardently sought.

But we should also recall that most religions evolved millennia ago, and sought to address and answer the challenges of their day. It is unsurprising, when examining what they believe and purport to do for their devotees, that promoting environmental concern and action has not been a high priority. This is the case with many of the moral causes in recent generations. Religions and religious people were, for example, seldom in the vanguard in the fight against slavery, or for civil rights – notwithstanding the tendency to celebrate the few from within those traditions who were. This said, sometimes religions do change significantly and make a positive difference.

In this light we should remember that religions reflect the societies they inhabit. Buddhists in the West, for example, have been more environmentally engaged than in most other regions, and this is likely because it is in the West that Enlightenment-rooted scientific understandings and environmental concerns have been leavening the cultural bread the longest. After all, it is in more pluralistic cultural contexts that people more freely hybridize ideas and insights from different knowledge systems. So, as dark-green and other environmentally friendly worldviews spread, over time and increasingly, we can expect more religionists to move in such directions. It may be that for religions to make a significant contribution to the sustainability revolution they need only get out of the way, which is in no small measure already occurring in many countries, as increasing proportions of

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young people drift from the religions of their birth, or mix them up with environmental awareness and concerns, and their elders pass away.

Despite these possibilities, however, it is unlikely that environmentally passionate actors within the world religions will succeed in turning their traditions decisively green. Nor should we expect them to join in alliance with those who consider Earth and its living systems to be sacred and their defence a religious duty. This is because, even during the present time when social change can happen with greater rapidity than ever before, it is unlikely that such changes will occur rapidly enough to prevent the worst of the changes already unfolding in the biosphere. This is also because religious greens of every sort face a powerful adversary: a religion-resembling modern faith that considers money sacred, its pursuit a divine right, economic growth the path to paradise, and in the case of difficulty, technology to be salvific. It might seem that green religions – whether lightgreen and anthropocentric, or dark-green and ecocentric - are no match for what has been called 'the religion of the market' (see Foltz [2007]). This is in part because most religions are either in league with it, mystified by it, or constitutionally unable or disinclined to challenge it.

And yet... the current global socioeconomic system, despite its powerful incentives, underpinnings, persuasive power and enforcement mechanisms, is unsustainable, for it is utterly dependent on the ecosystems it is voraciously destroying. Hence, it must change with unlikely rapidity or it will collapse. To paraphrase an argument from the anthropologist Roy Rappaport (1979): maladaptive cultural systems kill their hosts. For our species to survive in the long term, it will have to develop environmentally sustainable lifeways along with worldviews and values that cohere with and reinforce them. Perhaps as it becomes more apparent that the collapse of today's biocultural systems is underway, and that our existing worldviews and lifeways have precipitated that collapse, we will take radical action to avert much of it. Perhaps it will take a truly catastrophic collapse to force such a change. But if our species is to learn its manners and find a way to live within Earth's carrying capacity, it will take a much more radical spiritual and moral transformation than most people promote or realize. It will, in fact, take an ecocentric revolution (cf. Taylor, 2010c; Washington et al., 2017).

Notes

- 1 For further discussion of this approach, see Saler (1993; 2008) and Taylor (1997; 2010a). The term was coined by Wittgenstein, who explained that this approach seeks to analyse "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of details" (Wittgenstein, 1958: §66).
- 2 The sacred is rooted in experiences of transformative or healing power, and it often includes a perception that some place, object or time is holy. People often establish things as sacred that they want to protect, including buildings, animals and natural environments as, for example, with National Parks (Gatta, 2004; Mitchell, 2007; Ross-Bryant, 2013).
- 3 As noted in part one of this essay, for more details of the extensive research underpinning this overview, see this cultural history (Taylor, 2016), the related comprehensive review (Taylor *et al.*, 2016), and this study of ecocentric spiritualities (Taylor, 2010b). Most of my publications are available at www.brontaylor.com.
- 4 On wonder see Carson (1965) and, for a very recent discussion, Washington (2019).
- 5 The Gaia Hypothesis was developed foremost by Lynn Margulis and James Lovelock (Margulis, 1970; Lovelock and Margulis, 1974; Lovelock, 1979). For a history of the idea, see Joseph (1990).
- 6 For a review of the evidence, see Taylor *et al.* (2016), and a for a follow-up empirical study see Taylor *et al.* (2020).
- 7 Duedney has also referred to the idea variously as 'Gaian religion' and 'planetary civilization' (Deudney, 1995; 1998; Deudney and Mendenhall, 2016). My reflections here are adapted from Taylor (2010a).

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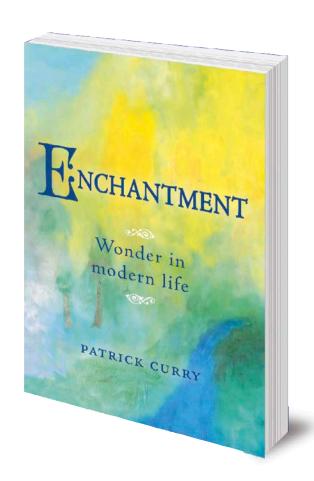
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Dr Patrick Curry has lectured widely on religious studies and cosmology at the Universities of Kent and Bath Spa. He is the author of several books, including *Defending Middle-Earth: Tolkien, Myth and Modernity* and *Ecological Ethics*, and editor-in-chief of *The Ecological Citizen*.



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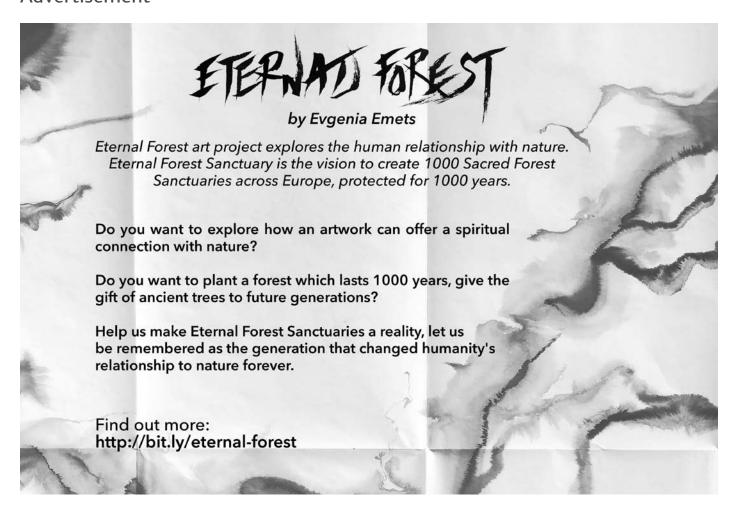


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Ecospheric care work

Caring for other beings – both human and more-than-human – is crucial to our ongoing existence. This article connects an analysis of care work with an ecospheric perspective to conceptualize how the ecosphere, in which humans are embedded, might become both a recipient of and participant in care. Such ecospheric care work might help people learn to come back 'down to Earth' in a good and equitable way, during and after the collapse of energy-intensive systems. A brief reflective case study of an ecospheric care work project in perennial agriculture is used to suggest the value of urgent service to transformative long-term solutions, and to explore how humans may learn to practice ecospheric care work skilfully and collectively.

"[An imagined postwork utopia] about recrafting the world and, later, sustaining vulnerable beings across the hardest centuries of planetary crisis and suffering [...] will likely involve familiar kinds of housework and tasks involved in social reproduction today with some additions: preparing and cooking food, building shelter, telling stories, keeping each other cool and warm and tending the sick combined with caring for soil communities, maintaining energy systems, finding clean water and growing and harvesting crops. How is this work the same as earlier forms of housework? How is it different?"

Hamilton (2019: 9)

umans are social beings who need each other. Cooperating and working together are clearly necessary traits for humans to respond adaptively to the change and collapse of socialecological systems. In particular, as people contemplate how to make decent human futures through an era of intensifying crisis, care may be more relevant than ever. So I am heartened that care-related aspects of human life – such as housework, social reproduction, emotional labour, mutual aid and community – are increasingly being perceived and investigated in ecologically minded efforts not only to remember how

people might cope and survive, but also to conceive of and work for a just transition.

Jennifer Mae Hamilton's (2019) questions in the quotation above, emerging from her critical engagement with the literary imagination of a 'postwork utopia', come at the right time to invite further feminist reflections. I feel grateful for the many ecofeminist inquiries that frame, inform and enable such reflections about the relations between women, the Earth and systems of domination (e.g. Plumwood, 1993; Salleh, 1997; Alaimo, 2000; Gaard, 2010).

I feel both relief and grief about how the kinds of care work needed now, at this moment in human and planetary history, may be the same as earlier forms. Relief because undervalued but vital work is being paid attention to; grief because paying attention to such work doesn't mean it will become valued beyond its ability to serve currently dominant social and economic systems.

And I feel intensely curious about the ways housework and care work more broadly might become different. Oxfam International's *Time to Care* report explains how the vast amount of unpaid and underpaid care work – done primarily by poor and marginalized women and girls – is "crucial to our societies and to the economy" (Coffey et al., 2020). The report

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Agriculture; human-nature dualism; societal change

How might ecospheric care work help people learn to come back 'down to Earth' during and after the collapse of energy-intensive systems?")

points to a coming "care crisis" and calls for implementation of a "4Rs" framework to recognize, reduce, redistribute and represent unpaid care work. I wonder about how to connect this social and economic framework and other analyses of care work with an ecological understanding of humans' places in the planet, including human agricultural pasts and presents (Jackson et al., 2018).

My question here is: How might the ecosphere, in which humans are embedded, become a recipient of and participant in care? How might ecospheric care work help people learn to come back 'down to Earth' during and after the collapse of energy-intensive systems?

Care work

It is first useful to distinguish between 'caring about' and 'caring for' something. There are plenty of good reasons for why humans should care about each other and the Earth at this moment in time. Lives and ways of life are at stake..

But I question the suggestion that the solution is for people in general to care more about lives and ways of life. For many, the amount we already care about plants, peoples, places and this planet is a struggle. In emotional terms alone, people especially young people – are grappling with concern, fear, anger, despair and grief due to the harm that is happening and is to come. Reckoning with mortality is one thing, and in fact a very human thing, but reckoning with the accelerated loss and extinction of species and ecosystems at the planetary scale is unprecedented and can feel overwhelming. Even though we may possess skills and methods for coping, such as those discussed by eco-psychologists (Macy and Johnstone, 2012; Pipher, 2013), we are venturing into the unknown.

Of course, some people should care more about other lives and ways of life. The reasons why they do not care – for example, because they are caught within the current systems and preoccupied with pursuing such things as money, status and power – matter. That failure to care enough on the part of some is one of the reasons why other

people must take up the additional work of caring for.

In many cases, those taking up such necessary care work are themselves survivors of historical trauma and ongoing structural violence, and are now bravely working to heal and flourish. For example, in North America, Indigenous Peoples who have survived catastrophic and genocidal system change, and who have already experienced climate change through forced relocation, are leading ecological advocacy efforts, which depend on practices of care work (Kimmerer, 2013; Whyte, 2016). As Kwagu'ł researcher Sarah Hunt remarked at a conference I attended in late 2019, at the most basic level when it comes to organizing and community events, "there has to be somebody to make the sandwiches."

I would like to foreground that aspect of caring for others: care is work and requires skill and effort (Folbre, 1995; Meyer, 2002). Caring for others is the necessarily repetitive, incessant work that doesn't get 'done' in any final sense — it has to be done over and over again for daily life to continue.

Care work has been treated in particular ways in the current society and economy. It is understood as necessary, but it is not very well monetarily rewarded, if at all – at least not in its everyday forms. Care work is often rendered invisible and taken for granted. Though some of it is visible - such as in professions like childcare, nursing and teaching – much goes unseen, underground, unrecognized and without status, such as the care work of parenting. As feminist economists have been demonstrating for many years, care work is also unevenly distributed. In the context of the dominant Western patriarchy, care work is often 'feminized' or stereotyped as essentially feminine work (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984). Kate Manne (2017) refers to this as "human giver syndrome," the patriarchal norm that the humanity of some humans (women) is contingent upon them primarily giving their time, bodies and attention to the moral support and needs of other humans (men).

Giving care is good, but since care is work, it comes at a cost. In a world where giving care is not valued and supported, human givers get burnt out (Nagoski and Nagoski, 2019). That is not an accident: it is the logical outcome of a system in which some people are allowed to exist only to serve the creation of other people's wealth.

For those of us working to build ecologically resilient networks, we should seek to make visible and recognize (the first of the '4Rs' identified by Oxfam) who is doing the *caring for* in those collaborative relationships. For example, in a US context, we should ask: In our organizations and communities, is the care work that goes into building partnerships evenly distributed, or is it mostly people of colour and women who carry that responsibility? How are care workers and their work recognized (or not) socially and economically? How could white people and men become more willing and able to do care work and do it well? And who will do the work of teaching people how to care well?

Care work connects physical labour, emotional labour and the ethical work of justice. As Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) puts it, care has three dimensions: labour/work, affect/affections and ethics/politics. Care work across these three dimensions acknowledges the tricky realities of what beings (both humans and more-than-humans) need, and calls for those needs to be met in ways that are equitable rather than exploitative.

This concept of just care work grows from ideas of disability justice. Disability, illness and mortality are realities shared across the human community – though the care work of attending to these realities is not shared evenly. As Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018: 35) reflects about her visionary work:

I wrote this because I believe we stand at the crossroads, between both the gifts and the unexpected, inevitable collapses of our work, and we have the opportunity to dream and keep dreaming ways to build emergent, resilient care webs. I believe that our work in creating the new world depends on it —

because all of us will become disabled and sick, because state systems are failing, yet 'community' is not a magic unicorn, a one-stop shop that always helps us do the laundry and be held in need.

All humans depend on the care work of others, and that dependency is only likely to increase in a world with less discretionary energy. While there may be cases where the best form of *caring for* something is non-intervention, generally people do need to care for each other and for the plants, animals, soils and places of the more-than-human world.

Long-term social justice is inseparably interdependent with the health of the Earth's ecosphere. To build ecologically just communities, we need to learn how to care more skilfully, collectively and ecologically. How to recognize and value the care of others. How to join with them. And how and where to direct our care.

Ecosphere

People might (re)turn to the ecosphere as a recipient of and participant in care work. The ecosphere is the dynamic mantle of life on this sun-fed planet in the Milky Way - the nexus of airs, waters, rocks and creatures whose interactions together with light make life (Rowe, 2003). The ecosphere includes lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere. Davis (2009) has also postulated the layer of the ethnosphere, the intellectual and spiritual sphere of thoughts, ideas, concepts, stories, cultures, etc. An ecospheric approach prioritizes integration and process across what has often been divided into these static abstractions. In sum, the ecosphere is a way to name the astonishing realization that there is a dynamic mantle of life on this planet at this time in this galactic place - and here we are, all of us, ecospherically entangled and interdependent in ongoing emergence.

In practical, affective and ethical terms, care is about people's relationships to each other and people's relationships to the ecosphere. And the term 'people' here does not mean a collection of 'atomic' individuals – singular, self-made and self-willed. We exist

"To build ecologically just communities, we need to learn how to care more skilfully, collectively and ecologically."

as people only in the ecospheric community, in those relationships to one another and to the ecosphere as a whole.

Ecosystem processes are the supposedly 'background' work of ecosystems that is necessary for Earth as ecosphere to sustain human life. These ecosystem processes are vital, yet they are made invisible by our anthropocentric culture: not fully understood or properly valued, and increasingly disturbed, disrupted and degraded. Similarly, care work is the 'background' work of our lives and jobs that is necessary for our communities to sustain human life, but is too often undervalued and degraded.

So perhaps I could say that care is about doing the background work of the world, and doing it with love. Except there is no background down here on Earth. Since human communities are inextricably embedded in ecosystems and the ecosphere, we humans need both ecosystem processes and care work to continue. We need them to be valued — which is not to say that they should be appropriated, subsumed and commoditized by the global economic system.

An ecospheric perspective points to the particular relevance of agriculture in addressing our current predicament (Jackson et al., 2018). For example, here in Kansas, USA, the Land Institute's Ecosphere Studies programme works to integrate sociocultural research and educational projects with agroecological research. In complement to wide-ranging traditions and ongoing practices of perennial and polycultural agriculture systems around the world (e.g. Indigenous agroforestry), the development of new perennial grain crops in diverse agroecosystems contributes exciting possibilities for landscapes and soil communities (Crews et al., 2018). But fundamental questions arise about whether human communities are willing to do the work of ecospheric care, and if so, how they can learn to do such care skilfully, collectively and with abiding love and respect for humans and non-humans alike.

No human being or community is a blank slate – care work and ways of caring

are profoundly shaped by society and economies, often in ways that are deeply unjust. Hence, as the '4Rs' framework insists, it is not enough merely to recognize unpaid human care work – people must also seek to reduce, redistribute and represent that work. Even further, as the diverse feminist inquiries of Hamilton, Puig de la Bellacasa and Piepzna–Samarasinha indicate, understandings of care must go beyond the human and place people in their ecological, relational context.

To learn new ways of caring for other beings – or remember ways that others have known but we have forgotten some humans may first need to unlearn. For instance, members of the dominant society in the US will need to let go of and dismantle certain things in order to care for the ecosphere. They will need to let go of the denial of crisis and harm, to let go of the domination of fellow non-humans and humans, to dismantle current systems and structures that actively reinforce domination and undermine the potential for equitable care, and to return homelands and make reparations to the Indigenous Peoples of the continent.

Ecospheric care work

It is hard to overstate what is at stake in attempts at ecospheric care work, and it is not possible to know the outcomes of experimental projects based on this approach. What can be known generally are the choices available about social, cultural and ecological practices and knowledges, such as: what to carry forward, what to leave behind, what to accept, and what to learn for the first time. Even as some options for human communities close down, other options are opening up, such as with the possibility of new perennial grain crops and new ways of feeding ourselves and relating to the more—than—human world.

One way that ecospheric care work may help people learn to come back 'down to Earth' (Latour, 2018), during and after the collapse of energy-intensive systems, would be to help build the community capacity needed to support a just transformation to diverse and

"Fundamental questions arise about whether human communities are willing to do the work of ecospheric care, and if so, how they can learn to do such care skilfully, collectively and with abiding love and respect for humans and non-humans alike."

perennial agriculture economies. Applied projects in perennial agriculture provide opportunities for people to engage in such ecospheric care work: to provide physical, emotional and ethical labour to build ecological relationships with plants, animals, land and water.

In 2019, the Ecosphere Studies programme collaborated with scientific colleagues at The Land Institute to launch a small civic science pilot community in which participants grow Silphium integrifolium, a native perennial North American prairie plant currently being domesticated for perennial oilseeds production (Van Tassel et al., 2017). As a case study in ecospheric care work, the Silphium civic science community could be understood as an invitation for people to learn to care for a plant, a future crop, who could someday care for people by feeding them while holding on to soil and supporting biodiversity. Since the prairie ecosystems of this continent have done exactly that - nurturing a richness of lives and lifeways in the long term – this domestication project necessarily involves a reminder of, and ecospheric commitment to, the importance of prairie restoration and care for the land.

More than 40 people in eighteen US states accepted our invitation to join the pilot community in 2019. They tend Silphium plants by watering, weeding and observing them in a variety of growing environments. They share their observations with us and respond to monthly surveys. They explain the project to their families, friends and neighbours. While the scientific information gathered about how Silphium responds is important, so is the social information gathered about how people respond. The civic science project allows participants and researchers to learn together about Silphium and perennial agriculture and about how their individual and community care work shapes their motivation and learning. Preliminary results are positive, and we look forward to further analysis and publication.

In its pilot stage, the *Silphium* civic science project has already prompted us to examine the reasons and strategies for pursuing equity and justice by involving a broader

representation of people in a domestication process (specific to this project) and ecospheric care work (more broadly). What economic and social incentives and support will help make it possible for people with different lived experiences and motivations to participate? How could this project and other experimental efforts be organized to distribute and share care work more equitably across participants and researchers? What are the best ways to recognize and represent the care work being performed by participants and researchers in this project?

I'm involving my son in this work — I want him to have the chance to learn how to care. But far more importantly, I want to do everything I can to collaboratively create a project and world in which all children have access to and the ability to care for plants who sustainably feed them.

Perennial agriculture is a long-term vision for positive human reconnection with the ecosphere that stretches across generations and geographies. My experience in this particular Silphium civic science pilot project has helped me to realize that this long-term vision can be aligned with now-urgent human tasks. I have learned that serving potentially radical and justly transformative longterm solutions is exactly what I need to persist at this moment in time. Through this work of caring for other people as we together in community learn to care for perennial plants, I have started to grasp my personal answer to the question Kathleen Dean Moore and her colleagues pose: "What would you be willing to spend your whole life taking care of?" (2016: 18).

Care work that is ecospheric involves many of the same tasks but feels different to me from earlier forms of housework; it feels alive with possibility. I can exercise what choice I have to struggle to divest my care from exploitative systems (patriarchy, white supremacy, settler colonialism, nature domination – the list goes on) and to support and join with others in their work to do the same. I can come back over and over again to the humble, imperfect, ancient labour of collaboratively creating

"Perennial agriculture is a long-term vision for positive human reconnection with the ecosphere that stretches across generations and geographies."

To cope and to transition, many humans will need to practice ecospheric care work both skilfully and collectively."

communities who care for each other and the land; and I can collaboratively help to make metaphors, experiences, relationships, opportunities, food systems and cultures that are new. I can slow down long enough to listen to what lasts, to remember what humans have come to know about care through much of the history of our species. And I can also move with the quick pace of courage, to face up to the consequences and choices now at hand.

I can physically and intellectually labour with books, notebook and a computer to write an essay that tries to conclude by situating my emotional efforts at self-care and community-care in critical proximity to unsettling ethical questions of privilege and equity, and social and ecological justice. I am one of the few whose care work is not unpaid, so I have a chance to question it and a responsibility to leverage it. Here is what I imagine and expect: to cope and to transition, many humans will need to practice ecospheric care work both skilfully and collectively.

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Series

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Human supremacy is as ugly and twisted as white or male supremacy and should be just as unacceptable.

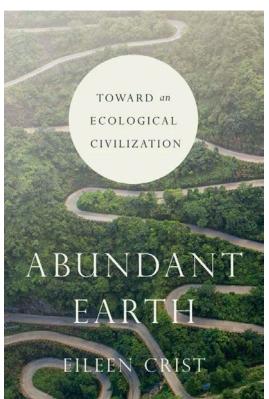




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doesn't necessarily mean a worse place to live if we reconnect with nature, rewild ourselves, and come to understand that we're just one of a gang of many diverse beings, *all* of whom matter."

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Eileen Crist is associate professor in the Department of Science, Technology, and Society at Virginia Tech. She is the author of Images of Animals: Anthropomorphism and Animal Mind and coeditor of a number of books, including Gaia in Turmoil: Climate Change, Biodepletion, and Earth Ethics in an Age of Crisis; Life on the Brink: Environmentalists Confront Overpopulation; Keeping the Wild: Against the Domestication of Earth; and Protecting the Wild: Parks and Wilderness, the Foundation for Conservation.

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ollectively, we have failed to sound the alarm adequately, and thus failed to prevent the existential threat of the ecological emergency, beginning with climate breakdown.¹ Had we been willing to tackle this terrible danger, we would have done so at least a generation ago. Now the hegemonic civilization we all participate in is in its endgame. Metaphorically, we're in a real last chance saloon. Those who wanted to preserve 'business as usual' have already failed.

Paris: Expectations and reality

It is appropriate to start with the 2015 Paris Accord. It has been widely cited as evidence of progress and as signalling hope; it was indeed a remarkable diplomatic and political achievement. It would have been unrealistic to expect anything better than the Paris agreement — which, incredibly, every participating country signed. The agreed proposals were reasonably bold (by comparison to what had been done previously) for reining in greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide.

The fact remains that what was agreed on was absolutely nowhere near enough. The Accord is now a few years old and, since then, matters mostly have gotten quite a bit worse. The world's weather systems appear to be spinning out of control. Evidence of new dangers has also emerged. For example, we have learned that a lot more excess heat is stored in the oceans than was previously recognized (Galey, 2018). This is a ticking time bomb in the global heating predicament that is not going to go away. It is heat in there for the long term, with surface, water and air temperatures poised to spike further.

Meanwhile, initial signs of compliance with the Paris Accord have faded — it is important to remember that it is merely a voluntary, not binding, agreement. The US has pulled out, and now the Brazilian president, Jair Bolsanaro, threatens to devastate the world's greatest green lung, Amazonia, which, along with its priceless biodiversity, stores immense amounts of carbon. Such developments reveal just how toothless the original Paris Accord really was.

Heat

In reality, the situation is worse. Consider the 2 degree 'realistic' target of Paris. Most scientists agree that, even if all the Accord's commitments were honoured, global temperatures would still rise by more

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"The IPCC process seriously underestimates — typically by assigning them 'low confidence' — the danger we are exposed to by feedback loops."

than 2 degrees over preindustrial levels. In other words, the science on which the Paris agreement was based – that of the IPCC assessments – is itself overly optimistic and unsafe (Greshko, 2017).

The main evidence base utilized in the IPCC reports is actually not solely the product of a scientific process. Rather, it's a scientific process that also builds into it a *political* process. IPCC summary documents – its most widely read outputs – are politically edited. And where such edits produce tensions with the underlying reports, there can even be pressure to alter the reports to harmonize. Like Paris itself, the IPCC typically achieves only a kind of lowest common denominator (Spratt and Dunlop, 2017). In other words, the Paris targets themselves, even if implemented, will not prevent a climate cataclysm.

But it's even worse than that: those wholly inadequate targets will themselves not be achieved. The actual commitments that countries have made regarding those Paris targets fall *well* short of what is required. If all those commitments are added up, they amount to considerably less than what Paris requires in order to work even on its own terms (let alone in terms of what would actually be needed to limit us to 2 degrees of overheating, let alone 1.5).

Growthmania

But our situation is more dire yet. Those (inadequate) commitments to meet those (inadequate) Paris targets stand in stark contradiction to what virtually every single government - with, possibly, the exception of Bhutan – is actually planning to do over at least the next decade. Virtually every country in the world plans to encourage further economic growth: agro-industrial infrastructure (including the more intensive, climatedamaging meat industry), more plantation forestry replacing old-growth forests, more transport infrastructure (including expanded aviation), more industrial infrastructure (utilizing high-carbon products such as cement), more energy infrastructure (including climate-damaging fracking) and so on.

These trends add up to a biodiversity disaster and climate disaster in one. Furthermore, these planned infrastructures will have long 'half-lives'; committing humanity to ongoing high-carbon pathways at the very time when those pathways need to be radically transformed. Powerful forces are pushing for more and more economic growth — including large sections of the public, not just big corporations. Parties promising to curtail economic growth get few votes.

Feedback

There is another factor that makes this already very dangerous situation still worse. The IPCC process seriously underestimates – typically by assigning them 'low confidence' – the danger we are exposed to by feedback loops that could cause the climate system to spiral completely out of control. Indeed, these loops may help to explain the disastrous and chaotic weather experienced in recent years. Among those feedbacks is albedo loss. Owing to the melting of Arctic ice, for instance, less heat is reflected back out into space, and is instead absorbed by the dark blue water that replaces the ice.

Most dangerous of all is additional release of another greenhouse gas, methane, which is roughly 25 times more powerful than carbon dioxide and, in the short term, more like 85 times more powerful (Vaidyanathan, 2015). Methane is beginning to be released in significant quantities, especially from the permafrost region (Shimek, 2016). If such releases accelerate, they would lock us into a full blown and truly catastrophic climate breakdown — indeed, a runaway climate change, with further vicious feedback loops triggered. Recent indications suggest that this may already be happening.

Planet fixers

An additional awful point about the Paris Accord is its assumption about the practicability of 'geo-engineering' technologies, including 'Negative Emissions Technologies' (cf. Read and Paul, 2019). These technologies assume that humans can seize the 'tiller' and benignly engineer

the climate of the entire Earth. There are, however, two major problems with the Paris Accord's dependence on such technologies.

The first is that geo-engineering technologies themselves are not developed in any meaningful way. Most are merely fantasies created on paper. The few techniques that actually exist have not been tried at scale, and there is no robust evidence that they would work.

The second problem is that even if geoengineering technologies were somehow made available, their use on a planet-wide scale would be profoundly reckless (Read and Paul, 2019). Such deployment would, in effect, be an experiment conducted on the entire globe, with enormous dangerous side effects all too likely. Mooted projects – such as huge space 'mirrors' or seeding the seas to generate enormous plankton blooms – are simply the most foolhardy gambling with the future of the Earth.

In reality, geo-engineering is an extreme manifestation of human hubris. We simply do not have the detailed knowledge of how complex ecosystems work and of all the interactions within them. Geo-engineering can be compared to trying to repair a watch by blindly shoving a screwdriver into its mechanisms. Given our collective track record to date, it would be foolish to believe that humanity has the wisdom to use geo-engineering with due care and responsibility.

A more 'down-to-earth' techno-fix is being widely touted, namely, 'bio energy with carbon capture and storage', or BECCS (Hickman, 2016). Essentially, this means growing lots of biomass which is then burned, with the resulting carbon sequestered and kept safe for hundreds (or preferably thousands) of years underground. To have any significant impact at all, this would have to be done on an enormous scale. Studies suggest that, "Such a feat would require growing bioenergy crops over an area at least as large as India and possibly as big as Australia – half as much land as humans already farm" (Rosen, 2018). Even if the process were to prove viable (which there is serious reason to doubt), it would devastate the Earth's ecosystems. Huge areas would have to be devoted to crop monocultures, all at the expense of remaining biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

In other words, the brutal reality is that geo-engineering would be irredeemably reckless, and almost certainly practised at heavy expense to the Earth's remaining ecological integrity. We must not let the future of biodiversity – of life – be gambled away on a wildly irresponsible bet on this, the ultimate of techno-fixes.

Futures

The conclusion can only be that the Paris Accord is doomed. Its (inadequate) aims will not be achieved; indeed, they will almost certainly be missed by a long way. This means that unprecedentedly dangerous climate change is coming and it is going to get a lot worse for a long time to come, accelerating broader ecological degradation.

A small but growing number of people are calling on society to recognise just how desperate the situation is (*e.g.* Bendell, 2018). If that recognition became widespread, then something unprecedented might be done to change the destructive course (Read, 2017). But it would be completely unprecedented: such is the scale of the challenge.

There are three major possibilities ahead. Possibility one is that we manage to transform civilization into what the Chinese government, with hubris but also perhaps with the germ of a great idea, calls an 'ecological civilization'. Its creation would require the radical alternation of almost everything that we do - and in ways undreamt of by the philosophy of the Chinese government. The resulting shift would certainly involve much more than just a large-scale conversion to renewable energy. Equally certainly, it would also require the radical reduction of the sheer volume of goods and people transported around the world: a radical relocalization of economies (Scott-Cato, 2013). It would also entail an agricultural revolution, including radical reductions in the amount and kind of meat consumed. There would have to be many more such changes.

"A small but growing number of people are calling on society to recognise just how desperate the situation is." We must be honest: it would be very risky to bet everything on what would be a completely unprecedented transformation. For it to have any chance of success, it would require the speedy overcoming of virtually all the vast vested interests as well as of ignorance, apathy and lethargy, amongst the other forces that stand in the way.

Possibility two is a 'successor' civilization after some kind of collapse. This appears more realistic than possibility one, and indeed is our best hope. Given the above climate—ecology scenarios, we need to think about what comes after the likely collapse of this civilization and plan accordingly. There are of course many sub-possibilities within this possible future, and some of them are very ugly. The successor civilization could, for instance, be largely a reign of brutal warlordism. We have to try to do what we can to prepare our descendants for survival and for one of the better sub-possibilities.

Possibility three is simply total collapse, which, again, could take different forms. It could mean eventual human extinction and extinction of most or all other mammalian life on Earth. It could even lead to the elimination of virtually all complex forms of life.

After the fall

Let us focus on what I am suggesting has become the most likely scenario: some kind of successor civilization after collapse. To date, the dominant assumption is that we can save civilization by pursuing piecemeal reforms. Big hopes have been placed on the possibility of mitigating strategies and comparatively modest forms of adaptation.

Reform, however, is no longer a viable option. This civilization is finished thanks to global overheating along with many other forms of 'synergistic' ecological shifts. The real issue, then, is what comes afterwards. Is it going to be a transformed version of our current civilization? Is it going to be some kind of successor civilization? Or is it going to be nothing at all?

And critically: how can we citizens influence that choice, here and now? What is to be done?

- We need, individually and collectively, to wake up to the dire emerging reality of the ecological emergency. In facing up to that reality, there is a danger of widespread despair, fear, sadness and indeed rage. Given the context, such responses are quite rational and could be a source of needed strength. As social critics such as Joanna Macy have argued, despair can be a great source of energy (Macy and Brown, 2014).
- 2 We need to *talk* about this. It is unhealthy to keep this state of unravelling in the confines of one's own mind. Instead of suppressing or holding despair at bay, we need to bring the issues to the light of day and work through them collectively. If we dare to face collapse together, then, amidst the unfolding horror, it might just become in a certain sense a liberating experience.
- 3 We must think seriously about the nature of a *successor civilization* of what it might look like, and then to start to act accordingly (Read, 2018a).
- 4 We need to build 'lifeboats' to carry as many as possible of us through the coming storms. We have to (re-)build community, the relations which we have with each other, as it is very fragmented in our 'individuated' culture. Community network relations will be absolutely vital even if there is only some kind of partial collapse. The 'Transition Towns' movement, for example, is a good model to spread and build upon. We need to work on how to preserve things that will be vital during and after a collapse. Seed banks are an obvious example, but we have to think about how to preserve seeds through climatic change – the Svalbard seed vault partially melted in recent years, owing to 'freak' Arctic temperatures. Additionally, we must consider what kind of seeds are going to be useful in future climatic conditions. So we should, for example, be planting native species. But we should also be planting some non-native species that will cope with higher temperatures and the changes to precipitation levels that global heating will bring. We need to take adaptation

"This civilization is finished thanks to global overheating along with many other forms of 'synergistic' ecological shifts." preparation seriously, as well as deepen and transform our concept of it. We need to shift far more resources of all kinds to it (while we still can). We need, in short, to rethink it radically.

Going deeper

The strategies sketched above are examples of transformational adaptation, which means adaptation that is not merely defensive, but also contributes directly to transforming our society in necessary and beneficial ways, and simultaneously prevents or mitigates further climate damage. However, the situation also demands what has been called deep adaptation (Bendell, 2018). Deep adaption is adaptation that is specifically premised on the thought that collapse is highly likely. The deep adaptation agenda says we need to be thinking and acting now in ways that take seriously into account the possibility that, in the future, we will not be able to undertake the kinds of interventions that we can do now.

Deep adaption would, for example, demand that we start preparing for sea-level rises now, rather than doing completely absurd things such as building nuclear power stations in coastal regions. In any case, if civilization does even partially collapse, how confident can we be that all the kinds of resources needed to keep those nuclear power plants (and the toxic wastes they produce) safe are going to remain intact? How, for example, can we keep the spent fuel rods from catching fire and burning if their cooling pools dry out? We've already seen at Fukushima a little bit of what can happen even in the middle of an intact civilization when something hits a nuclear power station hard. Remember that there are definitely going to be more and more such 'natural' disasters. Building nuclear power stations in the context of that is absurdly reckless.

5 We need to take *holding-actions*, ones that hold the damage at bay and slow it down. This includes everything from consumer boycotts and divestment campaigns, to lobbying and getting involved in electoral politics. Civilizational collapse in some form or

another seems likely to happen but that certainly does not mean we should give up on these conventional methods. On the contrary: they are absolutely vital right now. It is just that they are not enough by themselves any more. That is why they are primarily holding-actions – holding back the deluge, the potential catastrophe – rather than actually being able to stop it completely or fully ameliorate its consequences.

- 6 We need to do something more: we must *rebel*. The central example thus far is Extinction Rebellion. Such groups are saying that this really is an emergency, but they are saying more than that: they are saying that governments have failed us, so we should no longer accept their authority. Consumer boycotts, voting and so forth is not enough we must undertake non-violent direct action as well (*cf.* Read, 2018b). Small gestures of disobedience and defiance can create a spark that catches light and can ignite a much, much larger rebellion.
- 7 That brings me to the seventh and final action: stop. We need to slow right down and actually give ourselves a chance to take all of this in. And *really* think about it; *really* feel it. If we don't do that, then we won't wake up properly and we won't be in a good position to wake anyone else up. And only if we stop will we actually be able to undertake the dramatically courageous things that are now necessary.

Paul Kingsnorth (one of the founders of the 'Dark mountain' group) saw a lot of the way things were going some years ago; he argued that an abyss is opening up before us (Kingsnorth, 2018). We need to be brave enough *to look into that abyss*; and only if we do that will we then know what to do next...

Notes

1 Sincere thanks to Sandy Irvine for editorial assistance. This paper is based upon a talk given to the Institute of Leadership and Sustainability, at the University of Cumbria, Lancaster, UK (the transcript of which was published as Read, 2018c).

"We need to take holding-actions, ones that hold the damage at bay and slow it down."

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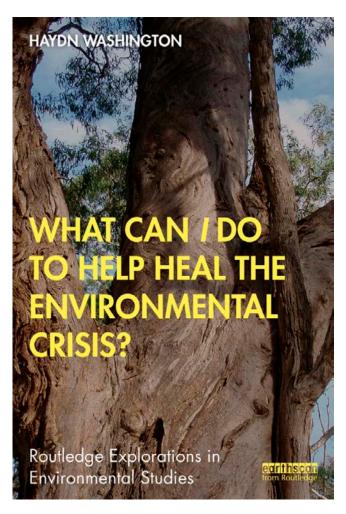


An ecocentric reworking of the Deep Ecology eight-point platform

Stan Rowe

- 1 The well-being and flourishing of the living Earth and its many organic/inorganic parts have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
 - 2 Richness and diversity of Earth's ecosystems, as well as the organic forms that they nurture and support, contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
 - 3 Humans have no right to reduce the diversity of Earth's ecosystems and their vital constituents, organic and inorganic.
 - 4 The flourishing of human life and culture is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The creative flourishing of Earth and its multitudinous non-human parts, organic and inorganic, requires such a decrease.
 - 5 Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
 - 6 Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
- **7** The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent worth) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
 - **8** Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes.

For more on this visit https://is.gd/eco8points



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Many of us know that something is wrong with our world, that it is wounded. At the same time, we often don't know why things have gone wrong — or what can be done. Framing the discussion around three central predicaments - the ecological, the social, and the economic - Washington provides background as to why each of these are in crisis and presents steps that individuals can personally take to heal the world. Urging the reader to accept the reality of our problems, he explores practical solutions for change such as the transition to renewable energy, rejection of climate denial and the championing of appropriate technology, as well as a readjustment in ethical approaches. The book also contains 19 'solution boxes' by distinguished environmental scholars.

With a focus on positive, personal solutions, this book is useful for students and scholars of environmental science and environmental philosophy, and for all those keen to heal the world and contribute towards a sustainable future.

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Ecodemocracy: Operationalizing ecocentrism through political representation for non-humans

Joe Gray, Anna Wienhues, Helen Kopnina and Jennifer DeMoss

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Keywords

Conservation; Earth jurisprudence; ecodemocracy; ecological empathy; ecological ethics The authors present a general argument for the political representation of non-humans that sits under the broad umbrella of ecocentrism but that does not rely on one specific non-anthropocentric ethical theory. As such, they hope to help move the debate towards a consensus on the need for such political representation. The argument itself has two main prongs. The first is an empirical one: It has the potential to give more effective representation of non-human interests than the alternative of simply having those interests accounted for through internalization within human needs and wishes. The second combines empirical and normative elements: It can add to the development of Earth jurisprudence by envisioning political decision-making processes that are broadly inclusive, so that the protection of non-human interests does not rely solely on legal protection in terms of, for example, tools employed during court hearings on a case-by-case basis. Two illustrative examples are presented, and the work of the the Global Ecocentric Network for Implementing Ecodemocracy (GENIE) is introduced.

he is on the point of exhaustion, having just completed an energysapping flight to the British coast from her wintering grounds in Africa. She has defied predation and numerous other life-threatening risks along a journey of many thousands of miles, but, on finally reaching her destination, she discovers something that is preventing her from completing the crucial last few inches. There is a fine mesh drawn across the nesting holes that she has used in previous years, the site she needs to be able to raise her next brood. She tries again to fly into one of the holes, with even more determination this time, but in so doing becomes entangled in the mesh. In her struggle to escape, she risks catastrophic damage to her wings.

* * * * *

The above example represents the type of fate that met some sand martins on the coast of East England in the spring of 2019. Netting had been put up on cliffs that the birds used for nesting each year in an attempt to reduce erosion, which was putting human property at risk (BBC, 2019). The species' legal standing, which

makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, or catch individuals or damage their eggs or nests (RSPB, 2019), did not protect the martins from having access to their nesting sites blocked. The incident led local campaigners to speak out and the netting was taken down, but only after the sand martins' breeding cycle had already been interfered with. Had the sand martins been considered, instead, as a stakeholder in the cliff-face and given political representation by human proxies in the deliberations that led to the netting's implementation, then this might well have been avoided.

In numerous other instances, across a wide range of political arenas, anthropocentric decision-making leads to irreversible harm to non-humans.¹ In the face of such outcomes, a major aspect of operationalizing ecocentrism – a worldview that finds intrinsic value throughout nature – must be the achievement of adequate political representation for non-humans. Decision-making processes in line with these ecodemocratic commitments can potentially arise at various geographical and institutional scales, from, say, the management board for a small protected



The sandmartins by Anna Sebastian

About the artwork: Gouache on paper (25×40 cm; 2019). Higher-resolution versions: https://is.gd/ecoartwork of non-human individuals as entities with interests underpins the need for their political representation as stakeholders."

area to a global panel of non-human rights advocates sanctioned by the United Nations.

For reasons of length, our focus in this paper is on representation for wild non-human nature, in terms of living beings, and the illustrative examples presented later are weighted towards conservation biology and concern, primarily animals in the UK and other parts of western Europe. This is not to say, though, that the consideration of domesticated beings is excluded from our thinking. Indeed, one of the examples shows how the needs of wild organisms and domesticated ones could (and should) be considered side by side.

From moral standing to representation

Philosophically, a defence of the moral standing of all non-human individuals can be made by a number of argumentative routes. One such means is to invoke a universal trait of living organisms, such as the bearing of interests (e.g. Curry, 2017; Donoso, 2017). This provides - as do other routes – a starting point for our main argument here: The moral standing of non-human individuals as entities with interests underpins the need for their political representation as stakeholders (e.g. Lundmark, 1998; Eckersley, 1999; Donoso, 2017). Attributing meaningful interests to species and ecosystems is more controversial (e.g. Smith, 2016), but, as a minimum, their (intrinsic) value still demands some kind of consideration within a fair multi-species democratic process, even if not as stakeholders. The importance of this latter point will become clear in an example on the Iberian lynx. Crucially, what we present here is a general argument in favour of the political representation of non-humans that sits under the broad umbrella of ecocentrism but that does not rely on one specific non-anthropocentric ethical theory. Rather, it is compatible with various nonanthropocentric perspectives and, as such, we hope, helps move the debate towards a consensus on the need for political representation of non-humans.

Related to this, it has been argued in the context of democracy, for example, that a qualification for such representation arises from "the potential to be subject to unfair outcomes" (Gray and Curry, 2016: 23), which would extend to both sentient and non-sentient beings. Here, as Robin Eckersley (2012: 251) noted in outlining her 'all-affectedness' principle, "all those potentially affected by ecological risks should have some meaningful opportunity to participate or otherwise be represented in the making of the policies or decisions which generate such risks." Yet, there are counter-arguments brought forward against different versions of this principle within democratic theory, including from non-anthropocentric perspectives (e.g. Donoso, 2017). An alternative route would be to argue that a democracy whose legitimacy is contingent on being grounded in justice should explicitly consider what is right for not just humans but non-humans too, particularly if we think that nonhumans should also be given their due in terms of justice (for non-anthropocentric accounts of justice see Baxter [2005], Schlosberg [2007] and Wienhues [2017]). We will put such questions aside, however, because they are not essential to the more pragmatic argument that we present here.

Based on the broad premise that (at least some) non-humans have interests that can be represented, our argument for the explicit representation of nonhuman interests within decision-making processes, in terms of ecodemocracy, has two main prongs. The first is an empirical one: It has the potential to give more effective representation of nonhuman interests than the alternative of simply having those interests accounted for through internalization within human needs and wishes. The second combines empirical and normative elements: It can add to the development of Earth jurisprudence by envisioning political decision-making processes that are broadly inclusive, so that the protection of nonhuman interests does not rely solely on legal protection in terms of, for example, tools employed during court hearings on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, such explicit representation of non-humans would contribute markedly to changing the anthropocentric or human-supremacist zeitgeist.

Beyond internalization

Political theorist Robert Goodin (1996) argued that non-human nature can be enfranchised by subsuming its interests into those of humans. He championed the internalization of interests of others as a realistic means of enfranchisement. The main alternative to simply internalizing interests is the supplementary implementation of discrete representation of others, but this is something that Goodin deemed impracticable. Internalization, of course, already happens to a degree. When nature lovers vote, for instance, at least some of them do so with non-humans in mind, as much as the options presented allow. While this appears to be the most 'realistic' means in terms of likelihood of implementation, it seems highly unlikely that it it would be the most effective means. At present, it remains woefully inadequate as a strategy for enfranchisement, as is evident in nonhuman nature's widespread exploitation and precipitous decline (e.g. IPBES, 2019). Furthermore, most existing political parties, with rare exceptions such as the Party for Animals, still represent singlespecies interests. Overall, we thus contend that there is an onus on human societies to strive to find ways to make practicable the discrete representation of non-humans.

As fellow political theorist Robyn Eckersley (1999: 45) has noted: "If we are to try in some way to 'represent nature's interest' then vicarious representation seems unavoidable if justice is to be done." This championing of vicarious representation need not imply that non-humans are inferior in some sense or merely passive beings outside of the scope of our communities and daily lives. Rather, non-humans do participate in communities, as defined in ecological rather than narrow anthropocentric terms, and they are incredibly active in life-making processes. They also express themselves to us, issuing

signals — the 'bad news from below', as Val Plumwood termed it (Plumwood, 1998: 579) — that humans can listen to if they so choose. It is just that they do not speak the language of human democracy (e.g. Eckersley, 1999; Meijer, 2017). This broadening of represented interests, as Gideon Calder (2009: 37) has commented, would shift the "dynamics of the human/nature relationship in a less colonial, less authoritarian, less instrumentalising direction," which would, in turn, make the decision—making process more inclusive.

Enriching legal mechanisms

At present, Earth jurisprudence discourse is strongly focused on establishing the legal rights of non-human nature (e.g. Borràs, 2016), strengthening animal rights law (Bisgould, 2008; Kopnina and Cherniak, 2016; Sykes, 2016) and criminalizing ecocidal acts (e.g. Higgins, 2010). A prominent realworld development is the well-described case of Ecuador, where constitutional rights for Pachamama have enabled anyone to sue on behalf of the rights of nature since 2008 (Hillebrecht and Berros, 2017). While the enabling of a judicial defence of nonhuman nature is certainly one key means of operationalizing ecocentrism, many decisions and developments of legislation made by human societies are not done in courtrooms but, instead, rely on democratic processes. Earth jurisprudence (in terms of legal representation) and ecodemocracy (in terms of political representation) are interlinked but separate domains.

Adding to the toolkit of Earth jurisprudence, the development of ecodemocratic decision-making processes also broadens the range of cases that it can effectively cover by introducing an additional procedural element where non-human interests can be considered alongside a range of human interests. In the context of conservation biology, for instance, judicial mechanisms lend themselves well to the seeking of prevention of ecocidal acts, as well as retribution and restorative action in their wake. However, they might not apply so neatly to determining the best course of actions in complex new cases

"There is an onus on human societies to strive to find ways to make practicable the discrete representation of non-humans."

such as the sand martins example, or in those relating to the reintroduction of long-ago-extirpated species or projects for rewilding landscapes. Here, democratic deliberations in which a broad range of interests are represented will be more fruitful. Approaching such complex cases with democratic means is also normatively important because, as we mentioned above, justice might influence how legitimate we consider a democracy to be; conversely, democracy is also "necessary to validate norms of justice" (Eckersley, 1999: 46).

Implementing representation of non-humans

In implementing political representation of non-humans, there are several key questions to address. As Alfonso Donoso (2017) argues, the primary questions that need to be resolved concern what entities should be represented and under which conditions. Here is where different non-anthropocentric theorists will diverge. Yet, all perspectives will also need to

answer a more 'applied' pair of questions (Eckersley, 1999):

- Who can speak for whom and on what terms?
- What kind of interaction counts as appropriate participation?

In addressing the first of Eckersley's questions, it is necessary to start by introducing the concept of human proxies for non-humans (e.g. Dobson, 1996) — simply 'proxies' hereafter. It would be the responsibility of such proxies to represent their best-informed understanding of the interests of the non-human or non-humans to whom they were assigned.

For reasons of pragmatism, proxies will often need to represent the interests of multiple non-humans. If a one-hectare woodland was scheduled to be felled, for instance, it would be an impossible task to find a proxy for each individual springtail – to cite just one group of organisms – that would be potentially affected. At a density of over 50,000 individuals per square metre, as might be the case (Fjellberg et al., 2005), there would be more than 500 billion individuals at risk. Instead, a proxy might represent the interests of all springtails, or even all litter-dwelling microorganisms, en bloc; or, alternatively, they might represent the 'aggregate' interests of the ecological community at stake. Where interests might be felt to differ within the 'bloc' (in this case, some microorganisms might favour the increased light levels in the felled forest while others would favour the greater moisture of the unfelled habitat), this would need to be factored into the proxy's contributions to the decision-making process. And, clearly, each individual case to which ecodemocratic considerations could be applied would comprise a different set of non-human interests in need of representation. While this poses institutional challenges (Lepori, 2019), they are challenges that must be tackled, considering what is at stake.

One method that has been proposed for the selection of proxies is "a random sample of people from the 'ordinary' electorate" (Lundmark, 1998: 52). Such an approach would address the important fear expressed by Mark Brown (2018: 33), who cautioned against "moral or scientific technocrats who attempt to shut down democratic debate with claims to speak for nature's objective interests." An alternative approach would be to appoint people with specialist ecological knowledge, who would have a strong epistemic starting position, and possibly a greater willingness to fully engage in the process, than a randomly chosen proxy. The knowledge level of proxies has relevance, too, for the legitimacy of representation of non-humans in the absence of explicit authorization. John O'Neill (2006) argued that the legitimacy can arise epistemically, through possession of the knowledge of the interests of the non-humans represented. This knowledge will never be complete or perfect (Eckersley, 1999), but we do all share a planet and the same basic constituents, which makes it reasonable to take a starting point of some understanding. Carina Lundmark (1998: 53) argues that "through science and experience [...] we can increase our understanding of other species and maybe even uncover what they want." Certainly, we can as a minimum be confident that some substantial non-human interests usually lie in the conditions for their survival and flourishing (Dobson, 1996). And the quality of representation will be further strengthened if the proxies are given time in preparing for their role not just to enhance their ecological knowledge but to develop an empathy for the nonhumans being represented (Gray and Curry, 2019).

Just as non-humans cannot explicitly authorize the appointment of proxies, they cannot object to the quality of their representation (other than by sending signals in the form of a failure to flourish). This means that a potentially important part of any ecodemocratic decision—making process is a human—run safeguard against inappropriate representation. For Eckersley (2012), the best such shield would arise from ordinary processes of public

democratic deliberation; alternatively, a watchdog could be appointed. The need for a safeguard mechanism does not imply that there is some reason to think that a typical proxy would have cause to subvert the process, but it is important that no proxy is above suspicion. The dual aim should be to provide appropriate representation of non-human interests while simultaneously fitting into, rather than circumventing, the deliberative democratic process.

The short answer to the second of Eckersley's questions is that a robust ecodemocratic process is likely to involve both representation in deliberative procedure and voting rights, depending on the institutional setting. A particular strength of voting rights is their explicit affirmation of the moral standing of the non-humans represented. A deliberative dimension is needed too, though, in order to fully infuse the decision-making process with the proxy-voiced needs and wishes of the nonhumans concerned, as well as to minimize the problematic potential of a technocratic infringement on the democratic process. It might be unrealistic to hope that such a system would satisfactorily represent all views. As Brandon Keim (2018) notes:

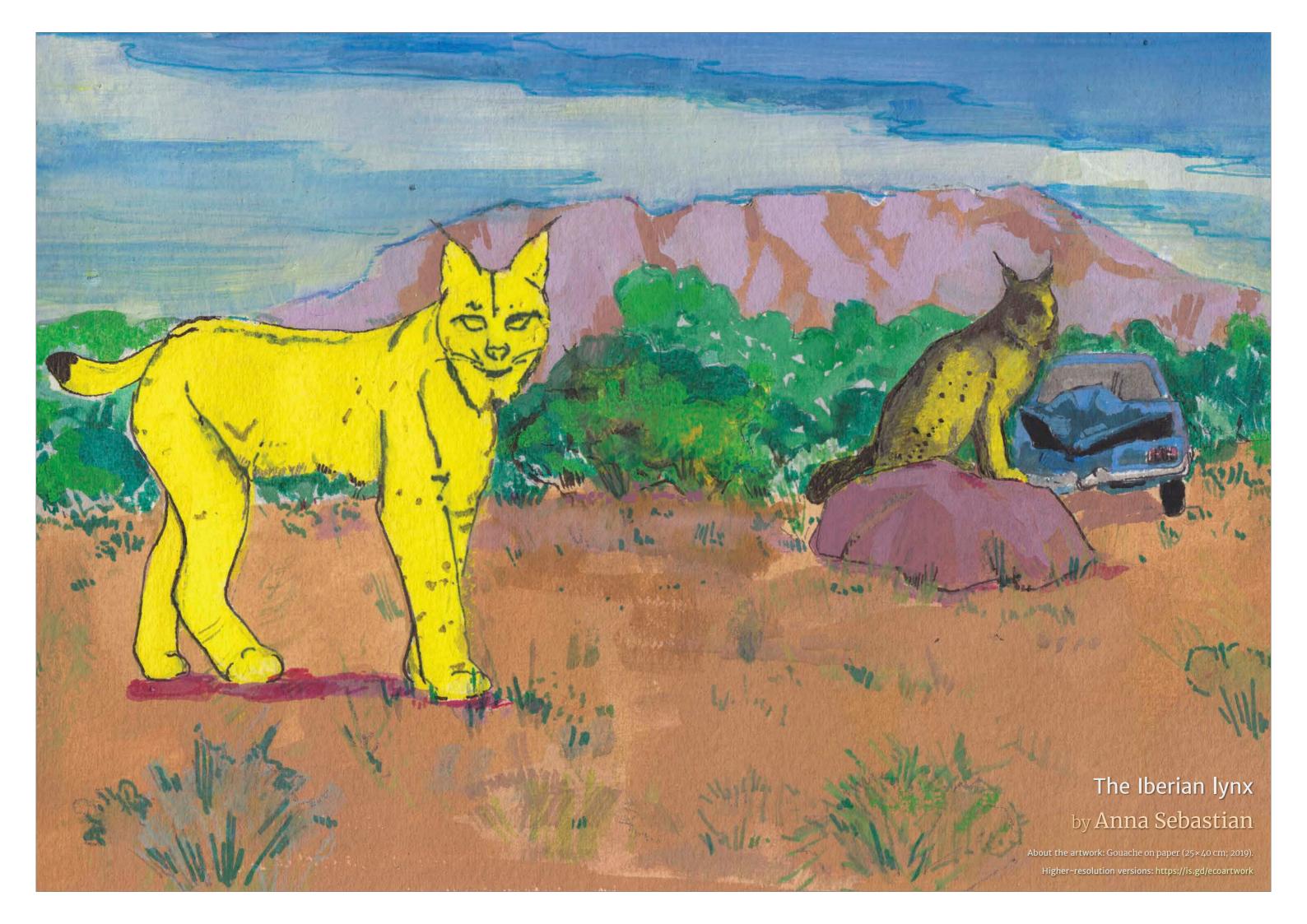
There's no assurance that every conflict would be solved equitably. Some tensions may be intractable. But that's the nature of politics. Democracy isn't a promise that everyone will end up with what they want; it's a system for working things out among every voice that has a right to be heard.

Yet, in supporting Earth jurisprudence, an ecodemocracy with all its imperfections would be a significant improvement over single-species democracy and signal a healthy movement towards deepening the human understanding of justice.

Illustrative examples

As mentioned above, decision-making processes in line with ecodemocratic commitments can potentially arise at various geographical and institutional scales. One suggestion for a global-scale

the dual aim should be to provide appropriate representation of non-human interests while simultaneously fitting into, rather than circumventing, the deliberative democratic process.")



implementation of inclusive decision-making processes is to form an 'Earth system council', which would constitute an ecological analogue to the UN Security Council security council (Burke and Fishel, 2016). At a more local level, to give one example, inclusive decision-making processes could be used to give identified non-human stakeholders a voice in the application processes for development projects (Winter, 2019). Below, we offer two further examples that together illustrate different, but far from exhaustive, potential contexts and scales for the political representation of non-human interests.

Translocations for species preservation

The Iberian lynx is the world's most endangered feline species. The plight of these cats has stemmed in part from loss to development of their favoured scrubland habitat and road-kill fatalities. Also instrumental in this lynx species' steep decline, on account of a strong dietary preference for rabbits, was the introduction of myxomatosis by humans

to Western Europe in the 1950s and the emergence and anthropogenic spread of rabbit haemorrhagic disease in the 1980s (Platt, 2011). A major part of the conservation strategy for this species involves translocating individuals from the stronger remaining populations to other suitable areas (Figure 1).

Beyond anthropocentric motivations, such an intervention might be focused on honouring the intrinsic value of the species, the moral standing of the individual lynx affected, some broader considerations about the value of biodiversity, or - all the more robustly – the combination of these rationales. If the moral standing of the individual lynx were the main motivation, the examination of whether such translocations are in their interest is something to which an ecodemocratic process could be applied. On this individual level, weighing against translocation would be the stress it would cause, while weighing in favour might be, for instance, the promise of a more abundant food supply. The representation of non-human interests by proxies would need to take these



Figure 1. The Mediterranean scrubland and forest of the Sierra de Morena, one of the last refuges for the Iberian lynx (photo: Romita Gray).

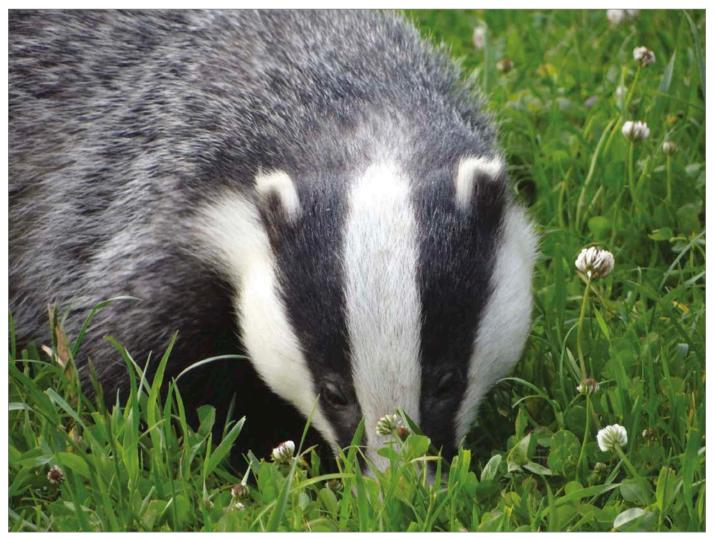


Figure 2. A European badger in the UK (photo: Peter Burnage [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0; https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/]).

issues into consideration and then have to engage in broader deliberations with a wider group of stakeholders that would introduce additional concerns and issues. Further impacts that would also have to be considered include the impact on non-humans in receiving ecosystems.

Translocation considerations are not unique to the Iberian lynx, and with rapid anthropogenic climate change and the fragmentation of landscapes combining to potentially trap many wild populations in increasingly unsuitable habitats (Lovejoy, 2019), the practicalities and ethics of this conservation intervention are only going to get increasingly pressing and complex. Inclusive decision-making processes offer a means of reaching decisions that take into account the interests of various non-human stakeholders.

Animal culling policies

In the UK, culling licences can be issued that obviate the legal protection of badgers (Figure 2), motivated by an aim to reduce the transmission of tuberculosis (TB) to domesticated animals. In the process of being culled, badgers might be trapped in cages with no water or shade, where they will experience terror and be at risk of dying from thirst or heat stroke (Dalton, 2018), while those who survive to experience gunshot execution might suffer for nearly a minute after the weapon is fired (Rahim, 2018).

An ecodemocratic decision-making process would give badgers a voice in order to uphold their interests. A proxy, representing badgers *en bloc*, could express the creatures' interest in survival and avoiding physical suffering and anguish

"There remains an urgent need to trial the implementation of inclusive decision—making processes at different scales and in a range of contexts."

caused by humans. The domesticated animals to whom TB might be transmitted should also be identified as a stakeholder meriting proxy representation, which might bring into the process, among other factors, a desire for a life free from the diseases that they are exposed to in their artificial confinement. There are various additional non-human interests that might be considered for representation, and farmers themselves would of course be among the other stakeholders. With a broadened pool of recognized stakeholders, the decision-making process could not just robustly cover government finances and human livelihoods but take a substantially more inclusive view on the lives affected by such a policy.

GENIE

Back in 2006, Saward called for the institutionalization of "multiple modes of representing a range of shifting human and nonhuman interests" in order to "test openly in argument varied representations of nature" (quoted in Brown [2018: 46]). More than a decade on, there remains an urgent need to trial the implementation of inclusive decision-making processes at different scales and in a range of contexts. To assist with this need, a group of volunteers founded the Global Ecocentric Network for Implementing Ecodemocracy (GENIE; www.ecodemocracy.net; Figure 3) in 2018. GENIE is a loose network of individuals, from a variety of backgrounds, who are united by an interest in seeing different modes of implementing inclusive decisionmaking processes trialled, refined and

built upon over the course of time. GENIE receives no funding and its limited resources are focused on serving as a hub for coordinating information on implementation efforts, developing toolkits to support implementation, and conducting targeted small-scale advocacy for inclusive decision-making processes.

Concluding remarks

By giving a human voice to non-humans, ecodemocratic procedures will help in widening the political community and have the broader potential to increase awareness of the interests, needs and lives of non-humans within a world all-too dominated by human societies. Such awareness would, in turn, create a more favourable environment for making ecodemocracy possible on several institutional scales and could thus foster a positive feedback between an appreciation of and respect for non-humans and their urgently needed political representation.

Notes

1 To give just one example, a Eurasian lynx named Lillith was shot dead in November 2017 after escaping from an animal park in Wales, following a unilateral decision-making process centred on the false idea that there was a threat to humans from this formerly native and very secretive species (Busby, 2017). No amount of protesting could bring Lillith back to life.

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Figure 3. The logo for the Global Ecocentric Network for Implementing Ecodemocracy (GENIE).

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The Global Ecocentric Network for Implementing Ecodemocracy

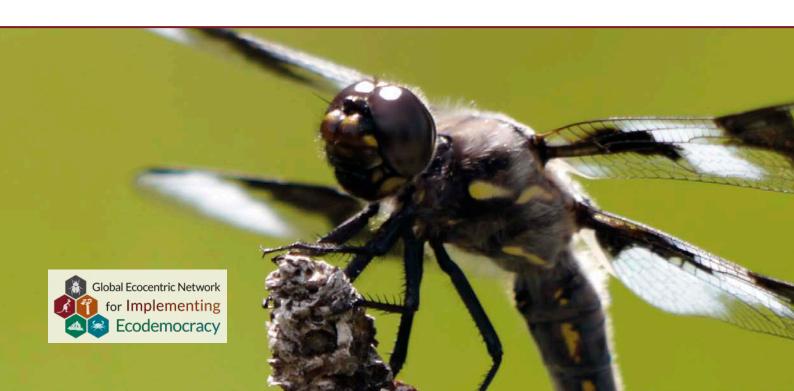


We are a new organization, established in 2018, with the mission of developing and expanding political, administrative, and legal initiatives to help adequately represent non-human nature within democratic processes and thus give voice to the 'silent stakeholders' in the more-than-human world.

We are currently seeking volunteers to help us trial implementation of ecodemocracy in their own localities. If you are interested in helping us in our mission, please get in touch with us via: www.ecodemocracy.net/contact.html

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Foreign Bodies series by Rachel Yurkovich

About the artworks: This series from 2019 focuses, in the words of the artists, on how man and nature "are interrupting each other." The photos were all taken in Ohio, USA, and they are titled, respectively, 'Dollar Tree', 'Wade Lagoon (Plastic Cup)', 'Wendy Park', 'Interstate 71', and 'Wade Lagoon (Thank You Thank You Thank You Bag)'.

Higher-resolution versions: https://is.gd/ecoartwork











Life in others — a review of Frog Pond Philosophy: Essays on the relationship between humans and nature

Sandra Lubarsky

About the author

Sandra is an emeritus professor in Sustainable Communities (Northern Arizona University), living in Flagstaff, AZ, USA.

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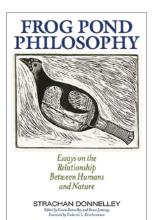
> **Keywords** Nature

About the book

Author: Donnelley S
Editors: Donnelley C
and Jennings B
Year: 2017
Publisher: University

Press of Kentucky
Hardback ISBN:
978-0813167275
Paperback ISBN:

978-0813176697



trachan Donnelley (1942–2008) believed that nature is alive and that one of the great purposes of life is to foster aliveness. The essays in this collection are infused with his own vivacity as a thinker who embraced the wildness, beauty and goodness of the natural world.

In an early essay, Donnelley recalls the moment he became a "frog pond philosopher," sitting by a pond at the end of a day of trout fishing in northern Wisconsin, USA. A frog croaked and suddenly "a philosophic lightning bolt shuddered through my body" (p 33). What had been ordinary, vague background noise was transformed into the crystal clear sound of "so much value ongoingly bursting forth into being" (p 34). It was a fierce green fire moment, reinforcing Donnelley's belief that nature is alive with individual organisms, each with its own value and importance and every one dependent on the other. Human divas to the contrary, there are no solo performers - only one orchestra that is "the locus of ultimate moral and civic responsibilities"

Donnelley admits to being drawn to "Louisville Slugger ideas." Ideas matter, he insists, and big ideas — cosmological ones — matter a lot, orienting us in the world, shaping our values and driving our decision—making. Wrong ideas result in wrong behaviour and the fact that humans have become the great destroyers of nature is a sure sign that we don't yet have the right philosophical "rack" of ideas.

Identifying himself as a "marginalist," Donnelley turns to a roster of thinkers, many of whom have been side-lined for their repudiation of physical monism and the Cartesian tradition of dead matter: philosophers Hans Jonas, Alfred North

Whitehead, and Spinoza; biologists Darwin and Ernst Mayr; conservationist Aldo Leopold; and writer Boris Pasternak. All share the philosophical convictions that life and value pervade the natural world, that entities are constituted by relations, and that life is a dynamic affair. With them, Donnelly maintains that we humans are "interactively involved with the world up to our ears" (p 27), and it is this context that gives rise to ethical responsibility. Rejecting both the amorality of a Darwinian Blind Tinkerer and the imposed morality of a Cosmic Designer, Donnelley proposes that "life in others" - and the corresponding idea of life-in-support-oflife – is the basis of a moral ecology. Our ethical responsibility to the "ongoing, mutual, interdependent, and vulnerable goodness of conative individuality and worldly community sets the fundamental terms of the moral landscape" (p 125).

As previous president of the Hastings Center, and founder and president (until his death) of the bioethics think tank Center for Humans and Nature (www.humansandnature.org), Donnelley's search for a conservation ethics that could put human-nature relations on new philosophical ground was anything but theoretical. Wary of totalizing systems, he promotes a set of principles to preserve and celebrate the value and dynamism of nature. Does the action preserve the integrity, wholeness and "intactness" of individuals and their worldly communities, or does it lead to the "impoverishment" of nature's creativity? Donnelley is pluralistic in his sources and practical in his aims. "Sometimes it will be Mayr's naturalist's vision of becoming that will better help us to see our duties and moral failures. Sometimes it will be Jonas's ethics of natural and moral *being* that may better move us into doing what we know, however imperfectly, is right. We need all the help we can get, from whatever quarter" (p 128).

Nonetheless, Donnelley enjoins us to lean less on "bookish" thinking and more on direct experience - in particular, on our human experiences of purpose and value. This is not simply a methodological suggestion. With Jonas and Whitehead, he believes that any philosophical theory that attempts to explain away our experiences of purpose and value - either by way of physicalism or epiphenomenalism - is both "a scandal from the perspective of primary experience" (p 191) and an obstacle to the development of an ecological ethics. Instead, Donnelley makes the important argument – and the only one that takes seriously both evolutionary theory and human experience – that these dimensions of human experience point to the presence of purpose and value in the structure of life. From such a perspective, nature thus becomes the site of "ought," and human "ought-to-do" an objective response to nature's demands.

Donnelley has a remarkable capacity to explicate the central insights of complex philosophical systems. His summary of Jonas's thought is particularly lucid. His overview of much of Whitehead is likewise clear, except for his oversight of the important distinction Whitehead draws between compound individuals (or regnant societies) and aggregate societies (Whitehead, 1968: 27–8; 157). This error leads him to make too much of the difference between Whitehead and Jonas when, in fact, their philosophies are very much aligned on the issues he addresses.

There is much to admire and emulate in the way Donnelley works as a philosopher: his insistence that philosophy ought to help us to live principled lives in coordination with the lives of others; his zest for the adventure of ideas and the generative conversations he kindles; his humility as a thinker and writer; and, above all, his reverence for life in all its forms. The editors of this volume, Ceara Donnelley and Bruce Jennings, have contributed an eloquent testimony to his life and work. Though included as an editors' afterword, it is well worth reading early on, both as a guide to Donnelley's philosophy and as an evocative introduction to his personal vitality and joy in being a member of the orchestra of life.

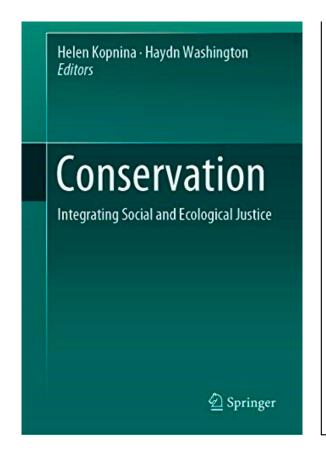
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"There is much to admire and emulate in the way Donnelley works as a philosopher."

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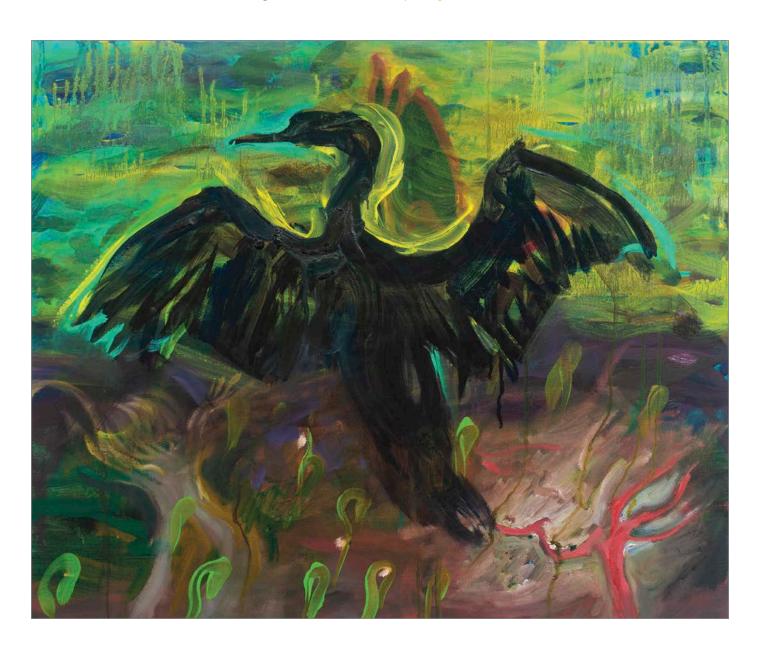
What is conservation – and what **should** it be? Do we seek to protect nature for herself ... or just for the benefits it gives humanity? Is conservation currently dominated by anthropocentrism and neoliberalism? Is the only justice that for humans, or does nature deserve justice also? Has conservation 'lost its way?'. Can we rejuvenate conservation by adopting an ecocentric worldview and ecological ethics? Is it now time to integrate both social and ecological justice? This book examines such issues, and considers the debates and ethical approaches within conservation. It canvasses ideas such as ecosystem services, the 'rights' of nature, rewilding, ecodemocracy, population impacts, and the idea of 'ownership'. It is a book for all those interested in how we can reach a just world for all life.

Springer, ISBN 978-3-030-13905-6

Images from the Archipelago Project by Ruth Calland

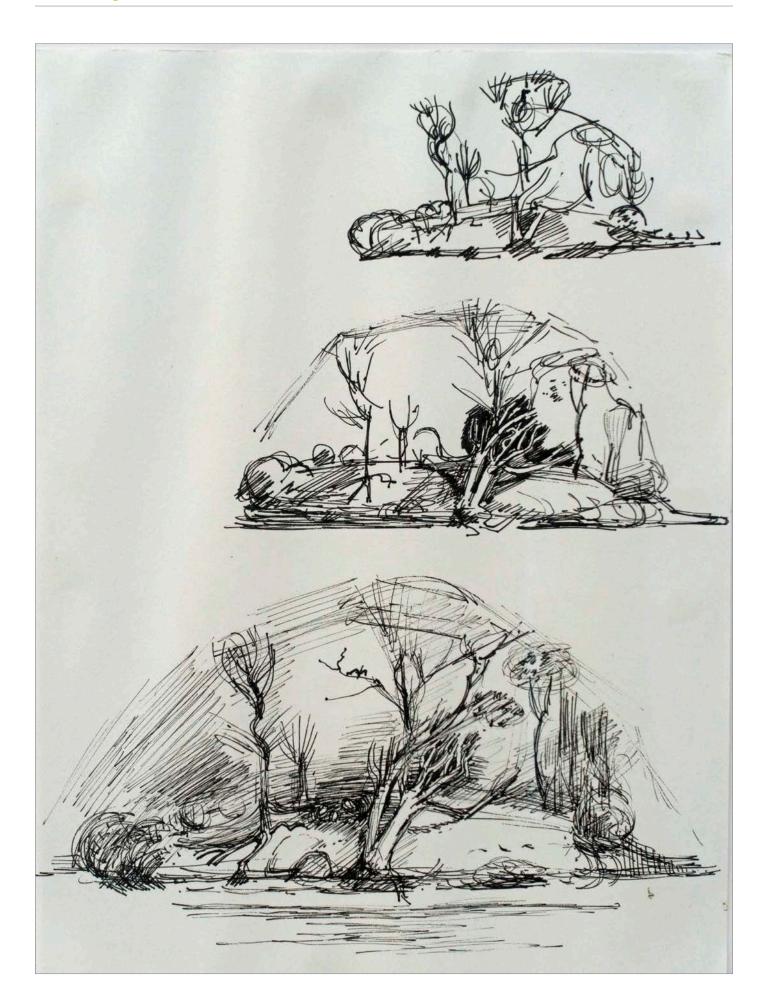
From the artist: Against a backdrop of Extinction Rebellion protests in Central London in 2019, I decided to bring nine artists together to make artworks at the Walthamstow Wetlands. The Wetlands simultaneously feel both wonderful and like an 'end times' experience. Throughout two chilly April days, we sought to connect meaningfully with the place, its history, soul and inhabitants, and with each other. The images shown here were made in my studio from studies I made onsite. They are a mixture of oil on canvas, gouache on paper and ink on paper.

Higher-resolution versions: https://is.gd/ecoartwork















Call for Artists

Stephanie Moran, Art Editor, and Salomón Bazbaz Lapidus, Art Advisor

We are inviting artists to submit artworks to *The Ecological Citizen*. We are seeking full-page spreads across 2–4 pages, single-page artworks and individual smaller drawings and images. We are looking for a range of artworks that fit with the ecocentric ethos of the Journal.

Artworks may relate to the Journal's topic areas (see www.ecologicalcitizen.net/about.html), or be images of animals and other nature including but not limited to: observational drawings, landscapes of all kinds, macro and cosmic perspectives, and animal vision.

We are also looking for artists to respond to written articles with smaller drawings; please contact the Art Editor, via the contact form linked to below, if you would be interested in making work specifically in response to submitted articles.

Artworks must be suitable to place in an online journal format, to fit onto A4 pages, and should be provided in high resolution (300 dpi) at intended size for the A4 page.

Contact us about making a submission: www.ecologicalcitizen.net/contact.html

Mayflies, Midges and Goddess by Victoria Rance

From the artist: This work was made for the Archipelago Project, an exhibition in 2019 in Walthamstow Wetlands curated by Ruth Calland. I was making work around Otherworld and Celtic mythology. My particular obsession was with punishment of those who harmed the environment (I created a character called Thorness who cursed those who did so). The goddess here is carrying out a Celtic curse on her enemies. The midges are also immortal souls. My premise is that every tiny piece of life matters. It all makes up the larger whole. Midges in swarms can be powerful, even though minuscule. And Extinction Rebellion were just beginning to meet on mass and to use that very term: swarming.

Higher-resolution versions: https://is.gd/ecoartwork











Landscapes of defiance: A review of Benjamin Vogt's A New Garden Ethic

Bill Vitek

About the author

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Citation

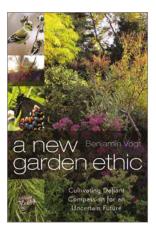
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'n the beginning was a garden – at least according to one well-known origin story Lin which the first human couple is well provisioned, commanded to be vegetarian and to till and care for a garden in which they were placed, and warned against eating the fruit of one tree prominently placed in that garden's centre. It was fruit so dangerous to them that, should they be tempted to eat it, they would surely die. The fruit, alas, was consumed. The couple survived, but they were banished from the garden to live a life of pain and toil, expending sweat of the brow confronting thistles and thorns while provisioning their own food beyond the garden gates.

The rest is history. Much of agriculture around the world today requires toil and fossil energy, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and contributes to climate change, species extinction, and hardship and misery for too many who continue to provision food for others.

And still the garden remains: an image, a metaphor, a place of practice and opportunity to renew relationships with the living Earth. Gardens are places where we can engage with and participate in the other-thanhuman world; where we can feel the soil, discover the myriad creatures, and - as all gardeners must – make life and death decisions in our weeding, thinning and 'pest management'. Where we see up close the beauty, cooperations and competitions of the living world – what philosopher Alfred North Whitehead called "tragedy" and defined as "the remorseless working of things." And that is just what is going on up top, not below. In the words of Rainer Maria Rilke:1

Though the planter toil and care he cannot reach down to where the seed becomes summer. Earth confers.

Benjamin Vogt's A New Garden Ethic contributes to the long and valued tradition and ecological impulse to return to the garden, the desire to connect to the living Earthly fabric too long denied, denigrated and destroyed by hegemonic cultural norms and practices. The 'New' in the book's title takes its cue from Aldo Leopold's land ethic. Like Leopold, Vogt urges his readers to use the 'garden' - a term that in his book is as multifaceted and large or small as one imagines it – to connect to a community of life and to become, in Leopold's words, citizens and plain members of this community. As Vogt points out, this was a radical claim when Leopold wrote it in the middle of the last century, and remains, sadly, radical today, rather than common good sense.

Part memoir, part history, part ethical deep digging, A New Garden Ethic offers readers an honest and big-picture view of what is possible when we think of the garden as a place to practise compassion, resistance, protest and advocacy. A place where communities of plants, animals and fungi mix with soils, sunlight, water and human choices; and where growth brings bounty, awareness and - with some luck - transformative and radical (at the root) change to institutions and ideologies. Vogt offers an impassioned defence of native plants, and claims that every garden (or lawn) is an ideology, a reflection of values buried deep within us and in our cultures. And as the world is now faced with cascading climate and social-justice emergencies because of an ideology - or many - that sought to tame the natural world for human benefit, let our new gardens be landscapes of defiance, and let those who tend them begin to reflect, imagine and create living, rooted and diverse social and ecological systems.

Let these gardens become incubators of social transformation "that will shape our response to climate change and extinction, and the social justice issues they call up, like classism and racism" (p 95).

This may seem to some like a tall order for the weekend gardener who ventures out for some sun and physical labour, who enjoys the rhythms of the seasons, the tending of plants, the harvest, natural beauty and the neighbourliness. These were my delights in 30-plus years of maintaining small backyard gardens where I have also toiled digging up sod, weeding and fencing out critters while cursing and thanking rain, heat, frost and drought. I never liked thinning young plants, refused to do it, even if doing so would increase the overall harvest. It felt wrong somehow. And I battled old grapevines in one plot for two decades with anger and vengeance in my heart. I did not win; I moved. That was a lesson in resilience and in nature's wisdom and tenacity, something that took me too long to learn.

Gardening, as Vogt so clearly demonstrates in his book, brought me closer to Leopold's land ethic, and it helped me better appreciate what nature does so effortlessly even while the gardener too often must work at it. Over time, perennials like berries and asparagus slowly replaced annuals in my raised beds. And I became more tolerant of plants and creatures I was not intentionally growing. But I never thought I was creating an ideology, nor did I want to. And except for the grapevines and rocks the size of small boulders heaved by last year's frost, I did not think getting "angry, mad, and pissed off" – the fuel for Vogt's 'defiant compassion' of the book's subtitle (p 67) – were particularly useful virtues for a gardener.

I do think the work and love of the garden teaches lessons increasingly unavailable in daily life. Benjamin Vogt's lovely book does that, too, connecting the gardener's work of cultivation with the prosperity of wild things; with what that ancient creation story called The Tree of Life, and what Henry David Thoreau named Wildness and declared as necessary for the preservation of the world. Down to Earth, in place, just outside our windows: the garden awaits.

Notes

1 Die Sonette an Orpheus, XII (1923): "Selbst wenn sich der Bauer sorgt und handelt, / wo die Saat in Sommer sich verwandelt, / reicht er niemals hin. Die Erde schenkt." Translation by Robert Hunter

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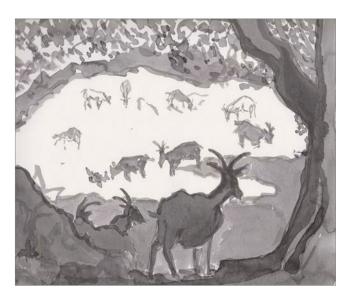
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Swallowhead, Pan and Goats

by Victoria Rance

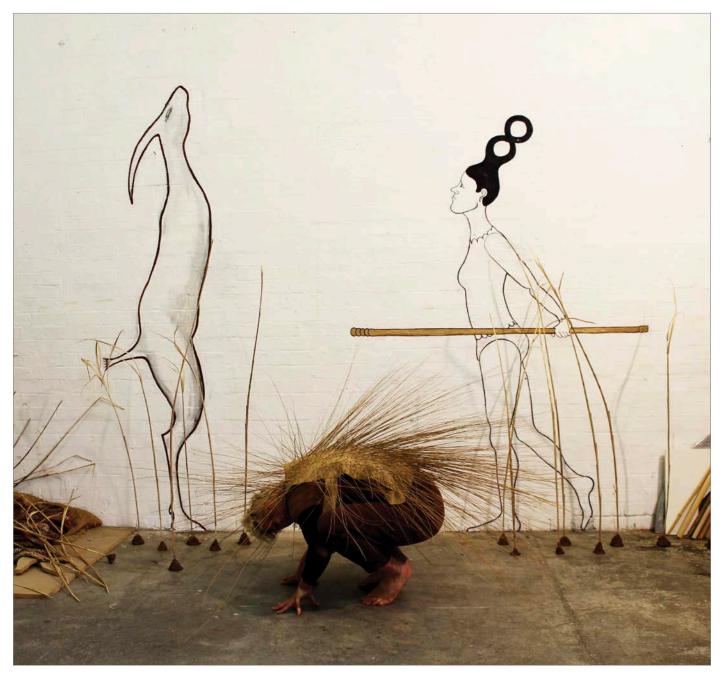
From the artist: The Pan series (2019–20) began after a visit to a house my great grandmother lived in, in which she had built an altar to Pan. The current owners told me she had been part of an early ecological, anti-urbanization movement. I started my own search for Pan in rural Normandy by communing with goats. I then made a mural/installation in my studio and following that work for two performances — Pan and the goddess and Swallowhead — both collaborations with sound artists. The first was based on early Sumerian poetry about Inanna and Dumuzi. The second about the Osiris, Tammuz and John Barleycorn myths of death and rebirth.

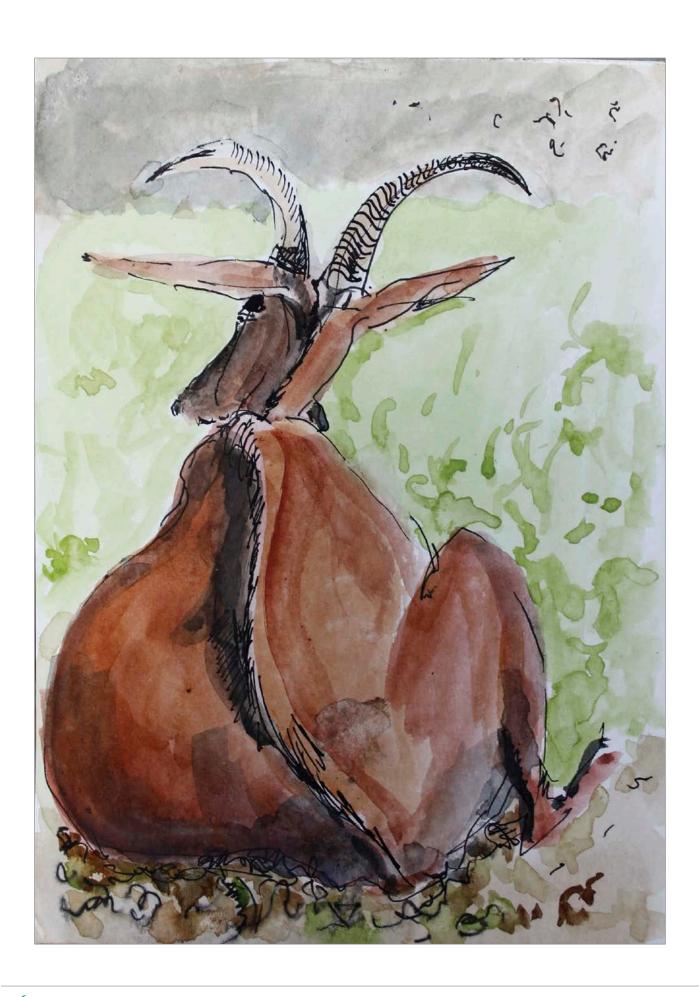
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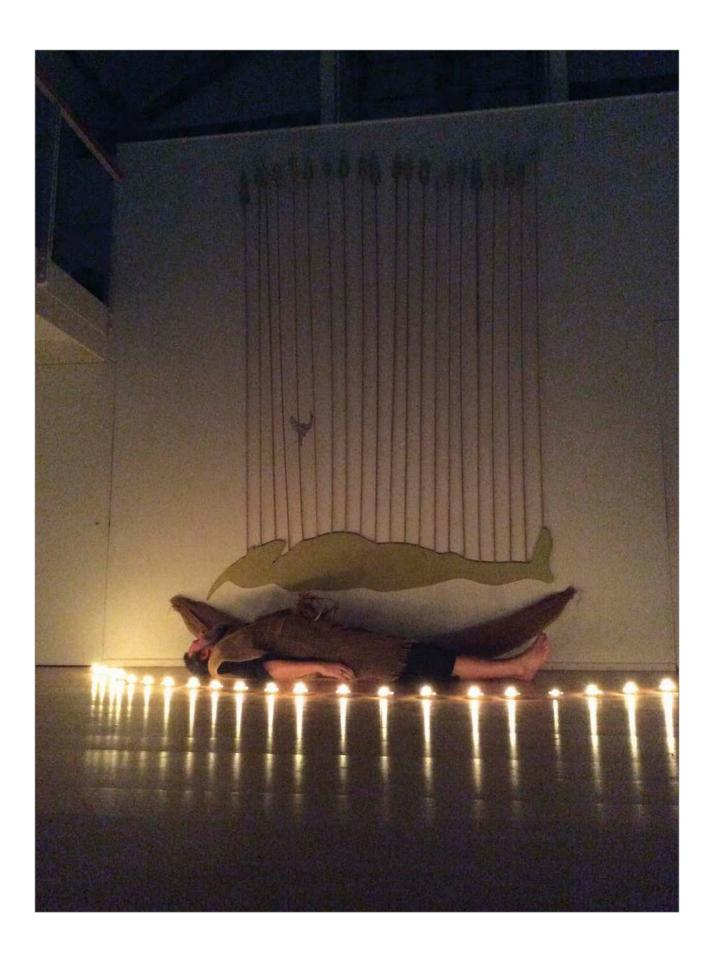












Poetry section

Life far exceeds humans. For millennia, ecopoets have understood it as a far greater enterprise. In their poetry, we can hear the voices of those who came before us and those who live alongside us. Now, however, they face extinction and die in silence, deafened by the roar of civilization. The time has come to renew the old understanding that all life, including humanity, speaks a common language. Thus, the mission of ecocentric poetry, or ecopoetry, is to help us empathize with non-human entities, be they a whale, a tree or a mountain. For we are all kin. Through metaphor and imagery, it speaks directly to our hearts and genes. We begin to realize that we have evolved together and share a common fate.

Selected by Victor Postnikov

Victor is a poet, essayist and translator based in Kiev, Ukraine.

CLASSIC POETRY

Darkness (1916)

Lord Byron

I had a dream, which was not all a dream. The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars Did wander darkling in the eternal space, Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air; Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day, And men forgot their passions in the dread Of this their desolation; and all hearts Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light: And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones, The palaces of crowned kings—the huts, The habitations of all things which dwell, Were burnt for beacons; cities were consum'd, And men were gather'd round their blazing homes To look once more into each other's face; Happy were those who dwelt within the eye Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch: A fearful hope was all the world contain'd; Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black. The brows of men by the despairing light Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits The flashes fell upon them; some lay down And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smil'd; And others hurried to and fro, and fed Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up With mad disquietude on the dull sky, The pall of a past world; and then again With curses cast them down upon the dust, And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd George Gordon (Lord) Byron is an English poet who lived from 1788 to 1824. He was a revolutionary and one of the leading figures of the 19th century Romantic movement. And, terrified, did flutter on the ground, And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd And twin'd themselves among the multitude, Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food. And War, which for a moment was no more, Did glut himself again: a meal was bought With blood, and each sate sullenly apart Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left; All earth was but one thought—and that was death Immediate and inglorious; and the pang Of famine fed upon all entrails—men Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh; The meagre by the meagre were devour'd, Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one, And he was faithful to a corse, and kept The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay, Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead Lur'd their lank jaws; himself sought out no food, But with a piteous and perpetual moan, And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand Which answer'd not with a caress—he died. The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two Of an enormous city did survive, And they were enemies: they met beside The dying embers of an altar-place Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things For an unholy usage; they rak'd up, And shivering scrap'd with their cold skeleton hands The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath Blew for a little life, and made a flame Which was a mockery; then they lifted up Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died— Even of their mutual hideousness they died, Unknowing who he was upon whose brow Famine had written Fiend. The world was void, The populous and the powerful was a lump, Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless— A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay. The rivers, lakes and ocean all stood still, And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths; Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea, And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd They slept on the abyss without a surge— The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave, The moon, their mistress, had expir'd before; The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air, And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

Source: public domain.

Excerpt from Ways of Cain Maximilian Voloshin

REBELLION

4

The world's a staircase Man has tried to climb: Beasts, stars, the slag of flesh... -They served him as ascending steps While he clutched high Along the path Of his rebellious mind.

Rebellion or adaptation? From these two ways That creatures earnestly beseech, The former is sheer madness (for nature never yields); Yet, who can stop a madman from His craze? Some've choosen adaptation - thus They're hushed forever on a trodden step. The beast is fit for nature's bends, But man rows stubbornly to chaos: He worships war, Creates through doubt, And gains a firm hold through negation. He is an architect, But chisel he employs is death, His clay - capricious mind inside him.

Once, in the ancient dark, A shaggy beast Went out of mind, And turned into a Man -Most evil and perilous beast on Earth, Insane with logic, And obsessed by faith; Intelligence became a cursing of Creation. Man left his stains across the way: Dissected life and put it into numbers, Laid bare the nature's roots, And probed the substance; Like a parasite, He sucked the earth Until it suffered inextinguishable pain; He searched the keys for sacred truths, Released the titans, dressed them into iron, Maximilian Voloshin is a Russian poet, watercolor artist, art critic and translator who lived between 1877 and 1932. (The excerpt has been taken from his Ways of Cain, a poem published in the early 1920s.)

He harnessed them for an exhausting work; He changed the world but could not change himself; He's gotten lost in his own caves, He's turned into a slave of his own servants.

7
The time has come for new rebellions
And madness, catastrophes and falls.
The prudent ones, "Return to flock!"
The rebels, "Re-create your being!"

Source: Translation by Victor Postnikov of a public-domain original.

CONTEMPORARY POETRY

Under it All

Gigi Marks

Where the rotten tree falls and hollows out the snow, where feathers miss the bird that they belong to, have broken away and stay where the low trail holds them, in the rut we've made while walking, there, small rivulets of snowmelt reach the large stream and run like nothing else does: fluid over every stone and dammed-in stick, over the half decay of darkened leaves while the entire dug-out bank goes white with ice and snow. Below that, I haven't gone: I only know of rocks that cling together, the heavy soil's reassuring weight and pressure, the roots of trees that haven't fallen yet, growing towards other life that buries itself and is safer there than here.

the western edge of Cayuga
Lake, in New York State,
USA. She has worked as
an educator, independent
scholar, editor and
conservationist. Her writing
centres on the sustained
relationship of family in
and around the countryside
of the Finger Lakes region,
Gayogohó:no', the lands
of the Cayuga people.

Gigi Marks lives with her family on a small farm near

Evidence and Absence

Gigi Marks

We have outlasted the daffodils of these spring days, except for those late ones who swing their flowers in the breezy day, and outlasted all the maple flowers that are fallen on the ground. There is no sign of bees on a cool day, and morning birds singing has passed. Where

is the sun behind the clouds, where is water when it leaves the creek bed to travel underground, and where is the seed before it forms after the flower is gone? Here-- the answer is the absence that holds us when there is more of it than the evidence of our growing days

An Augury of Experience

Guy Essex

I confess: I killed a thing in that grim spinney.

Even at a distance, I remember a bored Wolds mardy backend day – not anything of loss.

From here, loss is a dim vision of black-water Where slack trees propped on shaken ground,

Surround, lean in, encroach and leer like a crowd at a scene; those horrified

Voyeurs of a hole swamping down dusk light. All around flows down; sluicing bent cans

Through ladders of limbs, buckling will across shards, rumbling crumpled bottles;

A deflation, a loss of urge surges to that black water to be nuzzled

By slick city rats whiskering at the bent Backed ring pulls and bleached fag-packs.

I learned late how lightness once Lived in a bone-purse of breast

Now slugged and lead-heavy Where my stunned thumbs pressed.

There, it swung, under-slung. Slugged on that cleft twig:

Feathers unfurled, claws clinging, Clung, song-less, swinging,

swinging, swung.

The swansong of Malta

Guy Essex

So the voices of birds are finally silenced. No more mercurial songs and refrains. Too late to record the replayed phrasing Of avian hosannas, hallelujahs, airs – Those solar celebrating revelations that Song is existence, radiance, essence – Guy Essex, a scholar in English literature, at present lives in Muscat, Oman, and works in an international school. His childhood was spent in Malta, and in both Yorkshire and Cornwall in the UK – the places that often form the backdrop for his writing.

That ecstatic moment, epiphany wrung Over and over until the eternal force and urge Might be rinsed in song.

Now, laud the bells of the angelus
Solo. That dawn chorus order
For those who feel in the phonemes of Arabia
And write in the alphabet of Rome,
To hear their daily mortuus lingua
Return in the run out of a recording.
What they mishear, what some feel they miss
Is the incantation of incarnation
Is the holy word-song.

So now the birds have gone; now they come to ask?

Now they won't know the song all poetry sings:

How all are errant until their Troy –

Us, the birds, the mites in the down,

All are first Odysseus,
then Aeneus, then the underworld awaits

Her prodigal children

To return, down to be birthed and out again
Cleansed anew in the fugue of the earth.

In the catacomb choirs

Where her gestating minerals

Sing from the source, to bid

Each living thing to dig to her core,

To her egg –

Animals burrow wombs and we are In flood, blood and soil, earth born To return with a song.

song.

See how the Maltese trees offer Their empty dry cradles, their Orphic song Gone. In memoriam, we might listen, ears flat to cold hard bark To hear them sustain Themselves on the fertile fat of the earth's returned. Or, when paused above The spade thrust - caught undecided between The horizon's twin gifts of cold earth fact And imagination, We are shod and searching for the source of fire In the flames; the body, then the fire, the embers, then the glow gone and no more

Ode to the desert Aspa D Chatziefthimiou

That desert that desert with such wondrous physique she invites me to walk her to taste her to take her all in

That desert that desert that fiery wild beast she cooks me she burns me she eats me with her sharp teeth

That desert that desert that playful lunatic she blows sand in my eyes she moves the wave from under my feet she exposes her tree roots and buries her creatures in hypoliths

That desert that desert that afternoon deity she gives me her lizards and foxes her camel stampedes she gives me her mangroves and dunes her rocks and the seas

That desert that desert that magical fairy she gives me the pink of her sunset the cool of her breeze she gives me the majestic silence of her vast scenery

Oh desert oh desert you take me all in you capture me you captivate me you efface my past

Oh desert oh desert I am here at last! Aspa D Chatziefthimiou is an ecologist, a visiting research scientist at Weill Cornell Medicine, and a talks coordinator for the Qatar Natural History Group.

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Patrick Curry is the Journal's Editor-in-Chief.

Winnipeg Patrick Curry

I.m. Robinson Jeffers

All this detritus left behind when capital last roared through – strip malls, jumped-up jeeps, drug marts and cheap fast food – the prairie, crouched, is waiting to reclaim:

The tawny scrub, African in its dry soul
The spindly trees, shaved off at mid-height by a giant hand of cold
The dishevelled ice, in stately sail down the sullen brown river
And the crows, mob-handed, shouting

Not long now, not long now

Victor Postnikov is the Journal's Poetry Editor.

Birds of Bliss Victor Postnikov

I walked –
The snow was gone
Displaying rotten leaves,
The crows gaily tossed
The decomposing heaps
(Perhaps the smell of leaves
Was dear to their nose);
The youth were piercing trees
In synchronizing spurt;
I thought the crows were bleak
Harbingers of the woe –
I saw the Birds of Bliss
Forgetful of the snow.

For details on submitting poetry visit: www.ecologicalcitizen.net/call-for-poetry.html

Last Word

The basic attitude towards the non-human has not even been challenged in the rush to embrace utilitarian conservation. By basing all arguments on enlightened self-interest the environmentalists have ensured their own failure whenever self-interest can be perceived as lying elsewhere.

Neil Evernden

From The Natural Alien: Humankind and environment (University of Toronto Press, 1985)

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