

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach,  
Mădălina Diaconu (eds.)

Environmental Ethics:  
Cross-cultural Explorations

VERLAG KARL ALBER 

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### Environmental Ethics: Cross-cultural Explorations

*Environmental Ethics: Cross-cultural Explorations* offers insights into the significance of cross-cultural inquiry. The volume's rich explorations illustrate how the hitherto narrow, subjective character of value judgments in environmental ethics and aesthetics can be rectified and extended by drawing on non-Euroamerican philosophical positions. This modification could, in turn, abet the establishment of those norms that facilitate a sustained protection of endangered environments on a global scale.

#### The Editors:

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach is professor of philosophy at University Konstanz, Germany. She is founding editor of the international, peer-reviewed *Journal of World Philosophies* which is currently published by Indiana University Press (USA) as an open-access journal. The journal was run by Verlag Karl Alber from 2014-2016 under the title *Confluence: Online Journal of World Philosophies*. Kirloskar-Steinbach serves as editor-in-chief of the new, primer series *Bloomsbury Introductions to World Philosophies* too. She works on world philosophies, political philosophy and social philosophy.

Mădălina Diaconu is *Dozentin* for philosophy at the University of Vienna, Austria. She is editor-in-chief of *polylog. Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren* (Vienna) and member of the editorial boards of *Contemporary Aesthetics* (Castine, US) and *Studia Phaenomenologica* (Bucharest). She has authored nine monographs, more than 150 papers and (co)edited fourteen volumes on phenomenology, the aesthetics of touch, smell and taste, urban sensescapes, sensory design and philosophy of animality.

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, Mădălina Diaconu (Hg.)

### *Umweltethik: Interkulturelle Erkundungen*

*Umweltethik: Interkulturelle Erkundungen* bietet Einblicke in die Bedeutung interkultureller Perspektiven. Die umfangreichen Untersuchungen des Bandes veranschaulichen, wie der bislang enge, subjektive Charakter von Werturteilen in der Umweltethik und -ästhetik durch u. a. die Bezugnahme auf nicht-euroamerikanische philosophische Positionen korrigiert bzw. erweitert werden kann. Diese Änderung könnte wiederum dazu führen, dass Normen festgelegt werden, die einen nachhaltigen Schutz gefährdeter Umgebungen auf globaler Ebene ermöglichen.

#### Die Herausgeberinnen:

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach ist außerplanmäßige Professorin an der Universität Konstanz. Sie ist Gründungsherausgeberin der internationalen, referierten Zeitschrift *Journal of World Philosophies*, die bei Indiana University Press (USA) erscheint. Unter dem Titel *Confluence: Online Journal of World Philosophies* erschien diese Zeitschrift von 2014-2016 beim Verlag Karl Alber. Kirloskar-Steinbach ist auch Herausgeberin der neuen Lehrbuchserie *Bloomsbury Introductions to World Philosophies*. Sie forscht zu Weltphilosophien, Politischer Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie.

Mădălina Diaconu ist Dozentin für Philosophie an der Universität Wien und Lektorin am Institut für Romanistik der Universität Wien. Doktoratsstudien in Philosophie sowohl an der Universität Bukarest als auch an Universität Wien, Habilitation für das Gesamtfach Philosophie an der Universität Wien. Chefredakteurin von *polylog. Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren* und Redaktionsmitglied von *Studia Phaenomenologica* (Bukarest) und *Contemporary Aesthetics* (Castine, US). Forschungsprojekte über Ästhetik und urbane Sinneslandschaften. Neun selbstständige Monographien und (Mit-)Herausgeberin von neun Sammelbänden. Publikationen zu Rumänien und Osteuropa.

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## Content

<b>Environmental Ethics and Cross-Cultural Explorations:</b> <b>An Introduction</b> . . . . .	9
— <i>Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach and Mădălina Diaconu</i>	
 <b>Creative Explorations</b>	
<b>Ethics of Care and Responsibility:</b> <b>Bridging Secular and Religious Cultures</b> . . . . .	29
— <i>Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, Arizona State University, USA</i>	
<b>Christliche Umweltspiritualität als Antwort auf die Umweltkrise.</b>	58
— <i>Ingeborg G. Gabriel, Universität Wien, Österreich</i>	
<b>Rituals as Environmental Skills:</b> <b>Inhabiting Place, Fabricating Meaning, Enhancing Morality</b> . . . . .	79
— <i>Sigurd Bergmann, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway</i>	
<b>The Self-with-others and Environmental Ethics</b> . . . . .	101
— <i>Roman Pașca, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, Japan</i>	
<b>Climate Apocalypticism and the Temporal Sublime</b> . . . . .	115
— <i>Ted Toadvine, Penn State University, USA</i>	

**Cross-cultural Explorations**

Umweltethische Ansätze in der afrikanischen Philosophie . . . 135  
 —*Silvia Donzelli, Berlin*

Von prämoderner Naturliebe zum (trans)nationalen  
 Umweltaktivismus: Der Fall Rumänien . . . . . 155  
 —*Mădălina Diaconu, Universität Wien, Österreich*

Planetarische Integrität – Was Umweltethiker und interkulturell  
 interessierte Philosophen voneinander lernen können . . . . . 171  
 —*Stefan Knauß, Universität Erfurt, Deutschland*

**Socio-political Explorations**

Environmental Ethics and Environmental Security:  
 Specifics of the East-European Region . . . . . 187  
 —*Tatiana Mishatkina, International Sakharov Environmental  
 University, Minsk, Republic of Belarus*

Ecological Civilization and Ecological Aesthetics in China:  
 An Overview . . . . . 209  
 —*Cheng Xiangzhan, Shandong University, China*

Rewilding and Neoliberal Territorialities after the Anthropocene:  
 Cybernetic Modelling of the Oriental Stork as Critique . . . . . 220  
 —*Dean Anthony Brink, National Chiao Tung University,  
 Hsinchu, Taiwan*

**Environmental Ethics and Cross-Cultural  
 Explorations: An Introduction**

Recent burgeoning debates on environmental ethics and aesthetics in the German-speaking countries look back on a long and prestigious tradition within German philosophy on the philosophy of nature. Remarkably, a sustained engagement with the intercultural aspects of these debates is conspicuous by its absence. In a first attempt at bridging this gap, the *Viennese Society for Intercultural Philosophy* and the *German Society of Intercultural Philosophy* organised an international workshop in Vienna in February 2018. Some of the articles in this volume were workshop presentations; others have been solicited by the editors for this collection with a special purpose: we intend to initiate a more sustained debate about issues of cross-cultural significance, especially in German academic philosophy. Given the scope of this present book, we can, however, only restrict our focus to environmental ethics.

Cosmological reflections are an inherent part of philosophical ruminations in different socio-material settings. In academic philosophy, however, environmental philosophy—and in particular environmental ethics—could establish itself as a discipline only in the last half century. North American, German and Scandinavian scholars, who were the initial pioneers in the field, drew on conceptual sources from Europe and North America in ameliorating the effects of what they perceived to be a grave environmental crisis. However, given the ubiquity of the environment in our lives, there is no plausible reason as to why this status quo has to be maintained.

Environmental ethicists began their critique of the intensive exploitation of nature by focusing on the short-sighted instrumental rationality, which drove this exploitation. In this self-critique of Euroamerican culture and modernity, they often tended to trace a simplistic linear relation between worldviews and economic developments, attributing the contemporary environmental crisis to Judeo-Christian thinking and Euroamerican metaphysics inspired by it. In

their analysis, several Euroamerican societies underwent a Weberian »disenchantment« of the world. As a result, anthropocentric world-views took the place of theocentric ones. However, the former worsened the destruction of the environment in the name of humanism, civilization and technological progress.

Some of these early proponents of environmental ethics linked up the environmental crisis to a methodological individualism propounded in the humanities too. In their view, many of the Euroamerican philosophers, who are traded as belonging the core of the philosophical canon, promoted a conflictual relationship to nature. While these figures indeed allowed for humans to possess rational faculties which would (potentially at least) bridge the ontological gap between themselves and nature, environmental ethicists saw a direct link between this conflictual relationship to nature and the relative neglect of environmental concerns. They pointed to how individual human subjects were presumed to be the sole adequate objects of philosophical analysis. Their interlinkage between each other and to the non-human environment were simply deemed to be impertinent for scholarly analysis. One result of such a methodological individualism was that the environment itself faded from view; as a result, the analysis was not geared to register the effects of a synthetically-altered environment on human life. Environmental destruction continued unabated. Developments like deforestation, pollution, the negative effects of large-scale industrial production etc. forced environmental ethicists to rethink this standard model. They increasingly began to realise that faith in one's own technological prowess was not only naïvely self-congratulatory; it was also methodologically erroneous.

It was, thus, only a matter of time before a search for conceptual alternatives began, beyond the modern equation between knowledge and power, as well as the biblical legitimation to extend human domination over all other species. Specialists started to turn towards Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, etc. in an attempt at uncovering useful resources through comparisons. However, these specialists were suspected of dabbling with »mystical« sources that were beyond the ken of academic philosophy. Eugene Hargrove (1989) notoriously argued against the »intrusion« of such influences, endorsing a return to a more balanced view of Euroamerican values. Positions like those of Hargrove, albeit being pioneers in the field, soon faced criticism too. In their correction of such simplistic views

of world philosophical traditions, their critics underscored the need for solid analyses of these traditions.

In particular, the »comparative enterprise of external appropriation« met with heavy opposition, at least of some colleagues specialising in cross-cultural studies (Larson 1987: 153). Gerald J. Larson drew attention to the historical continuity of comparative endeavours since colonialism: »The needed »ideas« for environmental ethics are presumably in short »supply« in our own environment, but we recognise that there is an increasing »demand« for some new intellectual commodities«. Pushed by the global demand of our own work, we tend to construe non-Euroamerican ideas and concepts as »»things« or »entities« that can be disembedded from their appropriate frameworks and then processed and made to fit into our own frameworks«. Such a method, he concluded, is »one-dimensional, overly selective, forced, anachronistic, sociologically unsophisticated, and, perhaps, worst of all, unpersuasive« (Larson 1987: 151, 153).

Although research in the ensuing decades has not been sufficiently attentive to Larson's concern, it has in other aspects indeed moved away from its initial essentialising tendencies of segregating the largely »irrational«, »emotional«, »mythical« and »natural »East« from its very opposite, the »rational«, »cultivated« »West«. In this regard, another significant development has to be noted too: Easy compare-and-contrast exercises with Euroamerican positions are being increasingly abandoned; the latter is not automatically deployed as the default lens through which such a study should be conducted.

Since 1939, when the first East-West Philosophers Conference was held in Honolulu Hawai'i, and till today, conferences and publications contributed to the emergence of so-called »comparative environmental philosophy« (Callicott 2014: 377). A notable contributor to the debate, J. Baird Callicott, strove to establish environmental ethics as its own separate discipline, and not as a derivative branch of applied ethics. For this purpose, he sought to develop a »non-anthropocentric axiology«, with which an »incipient paradigm shift in moral philosophy« could be initiated (Callicott 1984: 299–300). Callicott not only defended Aldo Leopold against John Passmore, who had disqualified the land ethic as a supposed regression to a less-sophisticated moral view, he also authored and (co-)edited a series of publications on non-Euroamerican—mainly Asian—contributions to environmental philosophy (Callicott and Ames 1989; Callicott and McRae 2014). As a

result, he outlined a spectrum of alternative concepts of the self, ranging from interpretations of Euroamerican Rational Individualism to Hindu Universal Essentialism, Daoist Dao-de Individualism and Buddhist Internal Relationalism (Callicott 2014: 386).

Notwithstanding these attempts at establishing a space for both, environmental ethics and cross-cultural ruminations, ongoing debates in environmental ethics and aesthetics, especially in the German-speaking countries, continue to, in general, circumvent these positions. Partly, this has to do with one particular issue at the core of environmental ethics: the value of non-human nature. As is well known, axiology or *Wertlehre*, which was established as a philosophical discipline at the end of the nineteenth century in the post-Kantian German philosophical landscape, is based upon tacit, non-universal assumptions regarding the relation of a subject to an object. These tacit assumptions continue to remain uninterrogated, epistemic anthropocentrism continues to be the standard position in the main environmental moral theories in the German-speaking countries. Attempts at critiquing this anthropocentrism are met with reservations, sometimes even hostility. Arguments which underscore the inherent, or even objective, value of nature, as well as those that attribute rights to non-human living beings or ecosystems are, in general, not regarded as serious philosophical alternatives.

Moreover, at least two factors seem to hamper a sustained discussion on environmental concerns: typical, entrenched distinctions between a moral, aesthetic, scientific and religious attitude to nature, which is again rooted in modern Euroamerican philosophy, and a reductive view of aesthetic value, which bases it on positive human emotions. Arguably, such distinctions may indeed serve theoretical purposes. They are, however, counterintuitive and contradict our common experience of nature in our everyday lives. Finally, one could ask whether environmental ethics is necessarily bound up with a teleological model of action which imposes norms and obligations.

If publication output and conference attendance are an indication, scholars located in Asia and Africa and/or those with links to these regions seem to show an increased interest in environmental ethics and aesthetics. Their participation has yet to be reflected in German publications on environmental ethics. In addition, German literature on intercultural philosophy tends to focus on issues of ontology, history of philosophy, aesthetics, logics, political philosophy, and general ethics. One upshot of this trend is that the discussion of

environmental issues in Europe is restricted either to the continent's own past (e.g. Paracelsus, Spinoza, the Romantic philosophy of nature, etc.) or to an analysis of models developed in Europe and North America. As a consequence, environmental ethics is characterized by an asymmetry between debates on moral-philosophical theories in the Euroamerican academy and information related to other cultures, hereby continuing the trajectory of a decidedly Eurocentric anthropocentrism, even if inadvertently.

As feminist theorists have been arguing for some time now, this anthropocentrism is closely related to androcentrism. Early feminist literature on environmental philosophy tended to underscore the interconnections between women, animals and nature. These early reactions to the nature/nurture, nature/culture divide were soon confronted by the critique that the »universal woman« who informed these writings was an able-bodied, upper-class, white, academic female speaking for (or claiming to represent) the rest of womankind.

By decentring her perspective as the sole female perspective of scholarly worth, the ensuing methodological correction opened up the field to a host of pertinent issues. The list of possible oppressive factors to women were not simply restricted to those which were experienced by these privileged women in their affluent (welfare) states. It also brought into scholarly focus new ways of conceptualising the relationship between (female) human beings and their environment. One upshot of this recalibration has also been research on new materialisms. Some work in this area draws attention to how a corporeal self itself is constituted by relations to other non-human selves. Not only are we not singularly male or female, we are a mass of swarming microorganisms within the coordinates of a single body. Some postcolonial STS scholars go further and argue, if beliefs in a »universal man« or a »universal woman« have been effectively debunked, why not open oneself up to the possibility that analogously there could perhaps be more than one understanding of matter which constitutes the body?

The scale of our environmental crises is undeniably global. Environmental problems do not seem to respect conventional boundaries drawn by nation-states or communities. In fact, there are indications that some such problems (plastic pollution in the seas or even climate change) can be dealt with effectively only through international cooperation. In addition, this cooperation seems to be necessary in solving thorny issues of biopiracy, setting up national parks and

wildlife reserves across state borders, investments in the development of an environmental-friendly technology, and the protection of Indigenous traditional knowledge that would limit the profit of multinational corporations. A mutual dialogue is needed especially when humans' needs are pitted against the protection of threatened environments or non-human species, like in less-affluent countries, where economic growth has to cope up with demographic issues. In particular, a new thinking is necessary in order to share the responsibility for climate change and perhaps even assign more tasks to more-affluent countries. In addition, the sheer scale of our environmental crises suggests that dominant patterns of living and consumption may urgently need radical rethinking in the decades to come. On all these fronts, an international participation of philosophers seems to be warranted for a more nuanced philosophical reflection about global solidarity and global justice.

As papers in this volume indicate, this work is already underway. They illustrate that a much-needed, novel, more daring way of reconceptualising our relationship with nature is indeed possible. These papers also highlight how positions from other traditions may provide theoretical frames that would help to overcome the subjective character of value judgments. These, in turn, could be fruitful in establishing norms on a global scale that could possibly enable a sustained protection of endangered environments. Let us turn to these individual papers now.

## 1 Creative Explorations

In rethinking issues pertinent to environmental ethics, one could argue that our current environmental crisis is so grave, that all resources available to humanity should be harnessed in offering a fine-grained analysis of the crisis as well as developing viable responses to the same. Scholarly engagements will be broad in scope only by drawing upon these resources. Additionally, such engagements will be able to appeal to those located outside the bounds of the academy too. One way of doing so would be through an integrative analysis which focuses on hitherto occluded aspects within an approach or understudied similarities between approaches.

Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan turns to this task in her ›Ethics of Care and Responsibility: Bridging Secular and Religious Cultures‹. Ar-

guing against the claim that the Judeo-Christian tradition licenses an unbridled domination of nature, Tirosh-Samuelsan offers an ecological reading of the biblical message. By revisiting the Judaic ethics of responsibility, she sketches the inter-relational aspect of all life. Human beings have duties toward all creatures on account of being a human created by God. The principle underlying this ethical stance places human beings in the unique position of caring for God's creatures and being responsible to God for this care. As we see, this position seems to offer an account of environmental justice which is grounded in duties. But this is not all. Tirosh-Samuelsan directs our attention to the link between the Judaic ethics of responsibility, Zionism, an experience of the outdoors in Israel and the development of a secular understanding of Jewish environmentalism in Israel and North America today.

Despite having bridged the gap between the Judaic narrative and more secular concerns, Tirosh-Samuelsan notes one lacuna: Early Jewish environmentalism did not fully engage with philosophical accounts of care ethics, although these were partly developed by secular Jewish feminists and philosophers, and vice versa. Despite the common focus on relationality, vulnerability, responsibility and care, both these factions worked in relative isolation from each other. The succeeding generation of Jewish-born eco-feminists were indeed able to bridge this gap. In their interpretation, women tend to be portrayed as paradigmatic care-takers of the Earth. In addition, these eco-feminists understand Earth-care as a spiritual task. A Judaic grounding of ethical values, and their inculcation, would be one viable way to adequately tackle the global dimension of the environmental crisis, she argues.

In her ›Christliche Umweltspiritualität als Antwort auf die Umweltkrise‹ [Christian Environmental Spirituality as an Answer to the Environmental Crisis], Ingeborg G. Gabriel complements Tirosh-Samuelsan's discussion from the Christian perspective. Her article explores and problematises certain interpretations of biblical precepts, which in a standard interpretation have been made culpable for the derailment of modern economy, technology, and ethics. One salient precept in this regard is God's commandment to the first human beings to ›be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion [...] over every living thing that moves on the earth‹ (Gen. 1:28). Placing this command in its historical perspective, Gabriel criticises the simplistic notion of a linear development and



continuity between the epoch of the Bible and our times. This notion, in her view, is simplistic insofar as it ignores the process of our gradual alienation from nature as well as the exegetical distortions of the aforementioned commandment. Like Tirosh-Samuels, Gabriel too underscores that the Judeo-Christian tradition perceives human beings as preservers (or carers, as Tirosh-Samuels puts it) of a divine creation which is in perpetual change. From their different perspectives, both authors home in on virtues highlighted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, like humility, moderation, deliberate abstention, simplicity, self-control, as also thankfulness. These virtues form an important link to debates on green virtues in environmental ethics.

However, virtues remain abstract without developing skills and being materialised into practices. In his ›Rituals as Environmental Skills: Inhabiting Place, Fabricating Meaning, Enhancing Morality‹, Sigurd Bergmann makes a case for using the power of rituals to initiate hitherto unexplored ways of relating to the environment. Bergmann attempts to show that the encounter between ritual studies and aesth/etics has the potential to transform, or rather initiate a transition toward a more environmental-friendly »ecocene«. As place-based social acts of normative significance, rituals can transform the broader environment in which they are carried out. Their normative power derives from their ability to thematize ultimate concerns, which, in turn, are expressed through ultimate sacred postulates. These postulates have the power to deflate the human *hybris*. Inasmuch as they link up the local with the cosmic, the rituals symbolising them work best with a synthesis of rational, ethical and aesthetic dimensions. However, Bergmann argues that it would be far-fetched to claim that all rituals per se promote so-called green virtues.

Rituals which revolve around modern economic and technological power tend to impact the environment negatively. In fact, these rituals seek to maintain the status quo, and with it, human domination of nature. Only with an embodied perception, only with an »aest/ethics«, can we obtain a deeper awareness of what is morally demanding. Only through this awareness can we deepen common understandings, provoke new ones, and critically transform the ways in which we as communities relate to the natural environment, even in the ritualised spaces of our daily lives.

How would cross-cultural explorations in environmental ethics help to enable the radical rethinking alluded to above? Arguably, a conceptual analysis which deconstructs basic concepts like ›ethics‹,

›nature‹, or ›environment‹ would be one way to begin. Their standard rendition in academic philosophy tacitly takes over assumptions of European philosophy, hereby not adequately taking into account the Greek, Latin or French origin of such concepts. Additionally, this work can be complemented through the introduction of concepts from other cultures, which can enrich, put into perspective or even replace the conventional, academic understanding of the so-called ›natural environment‹. Such work can illustrate alternative ways of reconceptualising the relationship between a human being and the environment. Roman Paşca's ›The Self-With-Others and Environmental Ethics‹ does precisely that. Paşca engages with the relation of *hito* (human being) and *shizen* (realm of energy) as was developed by the Japanese philosopher Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益 (1703–1762). In this interpretation, each human being is an ontological combination of man and woman. One *hito* is in this manner also related to another; being interrelated, we are all mutually interdependent. Shōeki's *hito* is ontologically linked with the universe too.

In a pristine, primordial state, all manifestations of energy and life are uncorrupted. This is the *shizen no yo*, which is distinct from the *shihōsei*, the world made by human beings. Through our male-female *hito*, we partake in the *shizen*. More precisely, we, as human beings, are related to the *shizen* through the *gosei* (互性, »mutual natures«). Narrowly understood as nature, *shizen* in this interpretation is to be understood as a kind of spontaneous being and becoming. It is the way in which the world presents itself to us. Seen from the perspective of *shizen*, human beings are ahistorical and timeless; we are all part of that one, eternal energy. Within its realm, it would be meaningless to postulate hierarchies. Paşca then goes on to develop Shōeki's novel way of harnessing human potentialities. With a creative understanding of *chokkō* (»straight cultivation«), Shōeki intends to channel human activities and align them with the creative energy of *shizen*. The idea here seems to be that through such a ›straight cultivation‹, every mundane aspect of our lives would be infused by the primordial energy, which connects all beings. Living, or rather in striving to live, such a life, we would realise that there is no ontological, or even epistemological, divide between us and our environment. We are all one and the same. Shōeki's interpretation of eternal energy and life would be one way of reconceptualising the relationship between a human being and the environment. Put in our own terms, it

offers a non-anthropocentric, non-androcentric perspective on this relationship.

Ted Toadvine's ›Climate Apocalypticism and the Temporal Sublime‹ complements some aspects of this discussion, albeit from a different perspective. Toadvine invites us to radically rethink our conceptual frameworks. Especially, in societies dominated by Judeo-Christian thought, Toadvine sees a tendency to adopt the apocalyptic structure in thinking about climate change. However, insofar as this structure is wedded to the narrative of a future catastrophe, it fails to exploit the creative tension engendered by apocalyptic thinking. In the linear understanding of time this thinking adopts, the crisis leads up to Judgement Day. This day is projected as that specific moment in an unforeseeable future at which the larger ramifications of our actions will be made clear to us. However, this projection seems to rob us of our potential for action here and now. Its rhetoric proves to be ineffectual and deterministic; it is unable to galvanise us to undertake appropriate measures to combat climate change now.

Toadvine is determined to refuse the rhetorical power of Judgement Day. Reading Jean-Luc Nancy's call to think the »ever-present« along with Potawatomi scholar Kyle Powys Whyte's proposal of »time-spiraling«, he seeks to develop a more holistic perspective of the present. Should we be able to locate the crisis in our present, he argues, this would appeal to our human yearning for »transcendental significance«, for the »deep temporal sublime«. By bringing the future in the present, as it were, we would be able to break the linearity of time, which is commonly understood as a chain of ever-substitutable moments. Foregrounding the temporal sublime, we would then make ourselves aware of the unique and non-substitutable moments which constitute our lives. We would then realise how our own temporal materiality binds us with an inter-species past, and future.

This is where Whyte's ruminations of temporal justice become relevant. Indigenous experiences of ›spiraling time‹ set the protagonists in an ever-present dialogue with ancestors and descendants. Such experiences are important reminders of the fact that our world of colonial violence and climate change are not outside our own time. In our singular present, they bind our pasts with our futures.

## 2 Cross-Cultural Explorations

Cross-cultural explorations in environmental ethics can bring to light broader issues of significance for specific societies too. As a common charge will have it, the environmental crisis is directly related to the subject-object dichotomy and to the forgetfulness of human beings to their own »nature«. As a result, there is a tendency for humans to act as if they were separated from their living environment, including other people, and behave as if they could act intentionally without being affected bodily. One alternative would be to retrieve an awareness of one's own finitude and a relational thinking in a universally interconnected world. A relational self acknowledges its interdependence with the physical and social environment, in which humans, animals, plants, physical landscape, and weather forces are interwoven and sometimes animated. The awareness of an extended kinship—with living beings or even with cosmic forces and elements—and the replacement of anthropocentrism with a thinking in terms of sym-biosis and interrelatedness are two answers to the ecological crisis that can be found not only in Asian philosophical traditions, but also in other cultures. In the present volume, Silvia Donzelli's and Mădălina Diaconu's papers on African and Romanian traditions respectively bring to light unintentional overlappings that make visible more general problems of cross-cultural explorations into environmental philosophy. Two of these problems regard the ambivalence of ethnophilosophy and the discrepancy between theory and praxis. The former sets up an opposition between idealised folk traditions and colonial hegemonic cultures and/or Euroamerican modernization in order to support a politics of identity and liberation; the latter deals with the clash between traditional environment-friendly worldviews, as emphasised by ethnophilosophy, and real economic needs and practices.

Silvia Donzelli's ›Umweltethische Ansätze in der afrikanischen Philosophie‹ [Approaches to Environmental Ethics in African Philosophy] begins by noting the link between African environmental philosophy and *Négritude*. The latter, as we know, began as an active form of pan-African resistance to colonial domination in the urban spaces of colonial Paris in the early 1930s. The ensuing debate on environmental ethics in Africa picked up some themes that had already been broached by the thinkers associated with *Négritude*. One such theme was a pristine and harmonious relationship between hu-

man beings and nature in precolonial Africa. This was, in Donzelli's analysis, related to the development of a so-called ethnophilosophy—considered to be an autochthonous way of philosophising of the African peoples. In both cases, the precolonial past was perceived to be free of the evils of the present. In the initial debates on environmental ethics, African scholars tended to attribute an instrumental view of human rationality and the domination of nature to the onset of colonialist practices on the continent.

This way of premediating the relationship of a present-day African to nature through colonialism is shifting gradually. To underscore her point, Donzelli briefly sketches the work of three contemporary environmental ethicists: the Ethiopian philosopher Workineh Kelbessa, the Nigerian philosopher Segun Ogungbemi and the South African-American philosopher Thaddeus Metz.

In different ways, all three authors seem to distance themselves from the erstwhile romanticised view of precolonial Africans' relationship to nature. Their distinct approaches operate with a relatively normative view of nature. Kelbessa does not seek to develop one, overarching principle driving environmental ethics. He argues that we should respect the local groups' (like the Oromo) attempts to deal with modern technology. Ogungbemi does indeed attempt to work out an overarching principle drawn from traditional African ethics, which could however be applicable to today's environmental concerns. This principle of »nature-relatedness« is said to be independent of any particular ethico-religious grounding. The last in the trio, Metz, attempts to chart a territory between holism and individualism. Leaning on *ubuntu*, Metz attempts to show how its descriptive-moral quality can be used to ground a larger argument about an attribution of intrinsic moral status to entities. Donzelli concludes the paper by briefly sketching how these positions would relate to some aspects of the environmental devastation caused in the Niger delta by the production of crude oil.

Mădălina Diaconu's paper »Von prämoderner Naturliebe zum (trans)nationalen Umweltaktivismus: Der Fall Rumänien« [From a Premodern Love of Nature to (Trans-)national Environmental Activism: Romania as a Case] continues Donzelli's discussion about the ambivalence of what is called ethnophilosophy and the discrepancy between theory and praxis. Diaconu's paper sheds light on how a cross-cultural environmental philosophy may pose a dilemma for non-Euroamerican philosophers associated with the traditions they

engage with as scholars. In some cases, they have to tread a fine line between praising their own cultural traditions and working to increase an awareness for environmental issues using debates established in Euroamerican philosophy. While they strive to avoid nationalism in their praise of their traditions, they have to, equally, circumvent the onto-theological background of the Euroamerican tradition.

Diaconu's paper argues for a greater awareness of the situated character of philosophising and of the difference between an inner and an outer perspective in cross-cultural debates. The latter is meant to capture the view of those who, not standing in a concrete relation to the non-Euroamerican tradition, still use it to question the hegemony of the Euroamerican tradition. The former captures the perspective of those organically related to the non-Euroamerican tradition studied. Given the current asymmetry in cross-cultural philosophical explorations, these scholars are usually expected to present non-Euroamerican traditions in a favourable light, which however weakens from the start any possible efficient self-critique of their country of origin. Moreover, non-Euroamerican scholars have to work with polyvalent messages, one for the in-group and one for the out-group. Diaconu uses the example of Romania to make this point.

A holistic and basically premodern environmental-friendly worldview is essential for the self-understanding of Romanian culture. A major contribution in this respect is owed to Ovidiu Papadima (1909–1996) and Mircea Vulcănescu (1904–1952) before WWII, followed by Constantin Noica (1909–1987) during national communism. For example, Vulcănescu and Noica emphasised the polysemy of the Romanian word for »nature« and reconstructed the popular (for Papadima also Christian) representation of an interconnected living universe in which the visible communicates with the invisible, and the real is surrounded by the possible on the basis of language and folk traditions. However, their ontology influenced by phenomenology remained without consequences for the Romanian economy on its way to modernization, and the blatant divergence between theory and practice is still a blind spot in Romania. Despite the intensive reception of anglophone philosophy and the explosive development of applied ethics after the fall of communism, environmental philosophy and environmental ethics continue to be neglected, even in feminist philosophy. The intensified degradation of the environment in

the context of the confused transition to a new political order as well as the recent protests against the selling of Roşia Montană to a Canadian mining corporation catalysed the maturation of the civil society, yet in the flagrant absence of corresponding philosophical debates. Against this background, the reception of Euroamerican environmental ethics may be assigned a positive role in raising awareness for environmental issues before the emergence of context-specific theories. Adrian Miroiu, who positions himself outside the divide between the so-called environmental ethics and Indigenous or other »exotic« worldviews, as he calls them, has already made a beginning in this regard. Arguing against an undifferentiated rejection of Judeo-Christian thinking, Miroiu emphasises the potential of Eastern Christianity for grounding a virtue ethics that avoids prescriptions imposed by the state (that would be less acceptable in a society that suffered for a long time from authoritarian regimes) and postulates the intrinsic value of nature.

Stefan Knauß' paper »Planetarische Integrität: Was Umweltethik und interkulturelle Philosophie voneinander lernen können« [Planetary Integrity: What Environmental Ethics and Intercultural Philosophy Can Learn from Each Other?] is a good example of the so-called outer perspective identified by Diaconu. Knauß attempts to take forward the project of German-speaking intercultural philosophy against the backdrop of international legal developments, in which rights have been attributed to nature. If, he asks, courts have been open to, and accepted, particularistic groundings through which natural entities have been attributed rights, why cannot philosophy dock onto these developments in its role of being part of »western science?«

In his ambitious sketch of a »planetary integrity« (*planetarische Integrität*), Knauß uses phenomenological sources to ground the experience of unfamiliarity. In our encounters with members of other cultures, we, according to this argument, may experience similarity, but also moments of stark difference. The challenge is to strike a right balance between the two. To maintain this balance, it seems, a normative position is necessary, which can seriously take into account the embodiment, the exteriority (»Exteriorität«) of the other person. Knauß locates this position in the philosophical debate on integrity. Through our respect for other embodied persons and their specific cultures, we can arrive at the notion of a planetary integrity. This notion would allow us to conceive of Earth as a shared space, a com-

mon *Lebensraum* for all (living) beings. In this manner, Knauß hopes that German intercultural philosophy will serve as a vehicle to pave the way for a more inclusivist understanding of nature in German-speaking debates about environmental ethics.

### 3 Socio-political Explorations

Tatiana Mishatkina's paper »Environmental Ethics and Environmental Security: Specifics of the East-European Region«, provides an overview of developments in the field of environmental philosophy in the Post-Soviet Space, which includes Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and the Republic of Moldova. Mishatkina enumerates the activities of key institutions involved in environmental research and education in these states. This much-needed overview sets in with an analysis of political, ideological, and psycho-moral factors that hindered the reception of Euroamerican environmental ethics during the Soviet era. These factors range from a deep suspicion toward theories emanating from the capitalist world to the trauma left behind by the explosion at the atomic plant in Chernobyl in 1986.

Mishatkina argues that a »post-humanity«, perspective which involves care of all species, is necessary for the whole world, including states located in Post-Soviet Space. But how is this need perceived within these states themselves? Using the grounding of environmental centres at universities and other state research institutions, international conferences, publications, scholarly journals, as well as projects carried out by NGOs as points of orientation, Mishatkina reconstructs the history of environmental ethics in this space over the past twenty years. She also familiarises us with the pioneering work of R. G. Apresyan, whose take on general and practical principles of the environmental ethics mirrors those circulating in international literature, be these respect for all forms of life, biodiversity, sustainability, environmental justice, the precautionary principle, etc.

Mishatkina's paper does more than summarise debates on environmental ethics in post-Soviet regions. She uses the overview to ground her own position on environmental ethics. This position seeks to charter a middle course between theoretical principles on one hand and practical guidelines on the other. Her endorsement of »subject-subject relationships« parallels Toadvine's argument for grounding the future in the present. For the sake of future generations, we have

to move away from a human-centred perspective, she argues. Ecosystems have an inherent value. Mishatkina holds that her conceptual model is appropriate even for post-Soviet states like Belarus, which for historical reasons did not have an extensive debate on environmental ethics in the past. She concludes her paper by focusing on educational projects, which work toward establishing an environmental-friendly view in Belarus.

Cheng Xiangzhan's paper ›Ecological Civilization and Ecological Aesthetics in China: An Overview‹ endeavours to enunciate the concept of an ecological civilization. Drawing on Iring Fetscher's work, Chinese scholars began to use the term in the 1980s to warn about an over-optimistic view of economic development from the perspective of ecological consciousness. In 2007, the Chinese government proclaimed ecological civilization, in Chinese ›shengtai wenming‹ (生态文明), to be a development goal. Cheng Xiangzhan notes how Chinese political documents explicate this concept and embeds it in international literature on environmental ethics. Keen to emphasise the originality of contemporary Chinese approaches in the field, he sketches the history of ecological aesthetics in the United States and its late reception by Chinese scholars.

Referencing his own work, as well as that of Zeng Fanren, Cheng Xiangzhan works out two salient perspectives on ecoaesthetics in the Chinese context. Zeng Fanren, Cheng Xiangzhan notes, initially reconstructed the ›postmodern‹ context in which the debate on ecological aesthetics emerged. At this stage, he outlined a so-called ›aesthetics of ecological existence‹ based upon the work of Martin Heidegger. However, since 2005 he, like Cheng Xiangzhan himself, explicitly seeks to relate ecological aesthetics to the concept of ecological civilization. Unlike environmental moral philosophers who reject humanism due to its anthropocentric ›arrogance‹ (David W. Ehrenfeld), Chinese authors working on ecological aesthetics do not give up the claim of humanism. Rather, they aim to construct a ›civilization in harmony with nature‹, in which humans, conceived as embodied subjects, respect nature, act according to it and protect it. As Cheng Xiangzhan notes, this understanding of eco-aesthetics, which he distinguishes from environmental aesthetics (a concept coined by Arnold Berleant in the US), is both scientific and philosophical. In addition, it draws upon philosophical sources located within China, Europe and North America which highlight the consonance between humans and nature.

Issues of conservation and preservation, which are alluded to by both Mishatkina and Cheng Xiangzhan, are at the centre of Dean Brink's paper ›Rewilding and Neoliberal Territorialities after the Anthropocene: Cybernetic Modelling of the Oriental Stork as Critique‹. Critiquing conservation attempts of the oriental white stork (*Ciconia boyciana*) in the Japanese Hyogo Prefecture from a Deleuze-Guattarian perspective, Brink endeavors to illustrate the merits of foregrounding ›posthuman cybernetic dependencies‹. According to this analysis, extant Japanese attempts at rewilding the oriental white stork are bound to fail given that these attempts are part of the complex neoliberal enterprise of exploiting nature and hereby increasing goods for human consumption. Brink observes that this neoliberal dimension is papered over by the conventional understanding that they, members of Japanese society, have a long history of preserving an intact relationship with nature; past malformations of the beauty of the Japanese landscape are generally attributed to foreign influences, thus paralleling Donzelli's remarks about ethnophilosophy in the African context. This naïve view further occludes the neoliberal impact on nature.

In this densely-argued paper, Brink rests his argument for a radical rethink on a posthuman perspective, which alone can take a clear stand on nonhuman-human-nonhuman relations. The ›species interaction‹ afforded by this perspective would be one viable way out into a post-Anthropocene world. Brink envisions cybernetics—meaning, a multi-channelled recognition of inter-species needs as well as human affects—as mitigating the effects we, human beings, have on other species. Brink views Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of cybernetics as having the potential to decentre human beings from the pyramid of life and enable a deliberate taking-back of human importance such that non-human entities can relate to each other too.

One interesting point of contrast to Tatiana Mishatkina's and Cheng Xiangzhan's papers has to be noted here. Brink does not endorse an uncomplicated going back to philosophical roots, if you will. He attributes the overemphasis on human intentions and needs to idealism borne in the period of imperialist expansion in Japan, a discourse supported in various ways by Watsuji Tetsuro as well as the idealist tendencies of the influential Kyoto School. Such philosophers, writes Brink, leaned too heavily on theories of human intentionality developed by the likes of Kant, Hegel and Bergson. For Brink, the long-term results of adopting this perspective, which does not contain

a vision of a non-human centred world, are upon us today. Philosophical positions from the Kyoto School, he implies, may not be sufficient to adequately address the rice-destroying activities of the stork.

A relational self, relational virtues, relationality among species, interdependency, the intrinsic value of nature, Earth-care, ethnophilosophy, time in-between, a posthuman world etc. are some of the threads running through this volume dedicated to a cross-cultural exploration of environmental ethics and aesthetics. We hope that it will be able to initiate a more nuanced perspective on global solidarity and justice as these relate to our relationship with the environment.

—Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach and Mădălina Diaconu

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## Creative Explorations