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For a Nietzschean introduction to Economology

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With respect to the future, there opens out to us for the first time a mighty, comprehensive vista of human and economic purposes engirdling the whole inhabited globe. At the same time, we feel conscious of a power ourselves to take this new task in hand without presumption, without requiring supernatural aids.

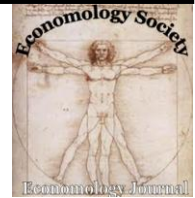
Yes, [...] at any rate we need render account to no one but ourselves, and mankind can henceforth begin to do with itself what it will.
(Mixed Opinions and Maxims, 179¹)

The inscription is Nietzsche's writing in 1878. The state of things in the year 2000 is quite different: it is not about mankind *being able* to do what it wants with itself: it *must*, it is inevitable, it *cannot help it* – thanks to technological developments (see McNeill, 2000). Moreover, god being dead, the Homeland Earth (Morin, 1980) is left “to render account to”: the human *not being able to do with itself what it will* of Nietzsche coincides with the *not being able to do to others* (the world) *what it can do with itself*. But the human “strength” which Nietzsche talks about can be understood, as the Enlightenment would, as *critical ability*; a critical ability which is the core of Kant's “liberation of man from his self-caused state of minority”. Nowadays, for example, bigness is “smallness” and “minority” is owning a yacht (see Schumacher, 1973). Obviously, as Marx would point out, technology is not the only thing that counts; or better, technology is not just made of technology but also of politics, society, workmanship. It is the

whole principle of being in this world. We can/must constantly reconsider, *criticise* and change this principle, if we do not want to incur the risk of taking as absolute those conventions that incidentally qualify the expression of our humanity (see Rorty, 1998). This reconsideration, (self)criticism and change are valid as an *a priori* method and even more so *a posteriori*, when the organisation and criterion become disorganisation and foolishness. Unfortunately, historically speaking, every community has a tendency to remain faithful to its vision of the environment, even when the situation changes (Ortalli, 1997). Every community and every individual behave the same when confronted with change. It is the end of the becoming, of the playful handling of strategies and conventions that is the drive of epistemology and politics from Nietzsche to Wittgenstein to Kuhn². But is it so for *everything*? It is undoubtedly so for what is called “ecology”. The ‘lack of perception’ is now an endemic component

² After asserting (in *Daybreak: Reflections on Moral Prejudice*, 103), with reference to ethics (our *customs*), the denial of both what the world-convention currently denies and what it accepts (although there are things correctly accepted and denied), Nietzsche maintains that he is using this radical denial (nihilism) to: 1) perform actions “*from motives other than those which have prevailed up to the present time*”; 2) “*think differently*”; 3) and thus “*feel differently*”. What is needed for an ecological revolution (in a Kantian, gestalt and Kuhnian sense) is therefore a new epistemology and a new pedagogy – which can give man a new “sensibility” (from which new *customs*, new politics).

¹ This and other quotations of Nietzsche are taken from Lexido – a portal dedicated to the works of Friederich Nietzsche, Copyright 2009 Mr S. E. Quayle.



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in social systems: people just do not perceive the consequences of their actions; this fact is probably at the basis of many contemporary environmental problems (Dryzek, 1987). And this is a serious obstacle to the development of a democracy of scientific and technological knowledge (Gallino, 2007). Our society would seem more obscurantist than the 17th century's, and it works the same way as nonlocality in quantum physics: a purchase here means exploitation somewhere else, at the other end of the world. Not knowing what happens at the other end of the world when purchasing something here is the worst aspect of globalisation. For what concerns consumables, our information society is at the mercy of the lack of information (for this and other aspects of the problem see Bauman, 1998 and Beck, 2005). No-one can truthfully guarantee that consumer goods are not produced through exploitation of labour or torture of animals; not even if they wanted to. And in the West we are surrounded by objects like nowhere else and never before. Taking an item from a shelf, parents decide the life or death of their children.

The ecological tragedy of the average family causing much of the current pollution by having one steak per day (see Rifkin), is the political economy problem of the exploitation of one half of the world to sustain the standards of the other half.³

³ We are un fair towards the environment as much as we are un fair towards other people: an example (*the* example) is the exploitation of the South of the world, which has made the wealth of the North possible. In the same way, the low environmental impact of the South (caused not by will but by impotence), has allowed the indiscriminate polluting of the North. If the South had polluted and exploited as much as the North, the world would be soon *literally* worn out. There will be (human) social-political justice once there will be ecological justice (i.e. not anthropocentric, not *too* human): the South

Ecology should therefore mean widespread self awareness. That is why it is so hard to achieve ecology: because it is hard to spread awareness and responsibility (see Jonas, 1979). The problem of polluters is thus not polluting itself, it is rather not being aware of it. The thing we lack most is not the knowledge of what we ignore but the ability to think about what we do know (Morin, 1980). In theory, the philosophy of ecology does not imply being conservationists *a priori*. Otherwise ecology would be an ideology instead of a philosophy and it would be called ecologism instead of ecology. It is possible to promote environmental science despite being in favour of environment exploitation. It can be justified. The office worker that keeps the lights on at all times does not think ecologically and acts without being aware of his/her actions. The office worker probably does not think philosophically/linguistically/artistically either. That is why philosophers exist. But the ecological philosophy needed here should be widespread, and nowadays it is not even common among philosophers. However, the point is that, for the sake of the individual and the environment alike, having one or the other philosophy of art or language has *less* of an effect than being in favour or against nuclear power, or being in favour or against energy waste, and acting accordingly. It would be fair to be environmentally aware even in a non-

should not become like the North (and this would be impossible anyway); both North and South should find a third alternative – an ecological one – which is far from both the current exploitation and the under-development. Nowadays we are torn between the South trying to resemble the North and the North stubbornly standing its ground. Because of this – and not just because the population is increasing, which is its effect – “the earth blows up” (see Sartori, 2003).



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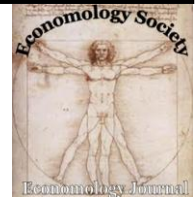
polluting society, because ecology is like the greenhouse effect: it may or may not be a problem, but it is inevitable. It is inevitable that the atmosphere contains greenhouse gases, otherwise the Sun would burn us. Ecology is inevitable because it is inevitable to live in an environment. To think about ecology would mean adopting a more intimate, conscious approach to our consumables and daily actions, to our life; without this approach it is impossible to understand a passive, compulsive, ignorant life. “We must once more become *good friends of the ‘everyday matters’* and not, as hitherto, despise them and look beyond them at clouds and monsters of the night. [...] In forests and caverns [...] man has lived for aeons [...] There *he has learnt to despise* the present, his neighbours, his life, and himself” (Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, 16). Environmental science is phenomenology because it requires the concrete appreciation of every state (thing, action) of daily life. Ecology is pedagogy because it educates behaviour. Pedagogy is future because it looks at those who will have to adopt a way of life that was not known or necessary before development.

Any biology book will state the equation between life and ecology: Life is therefore active balance between the living organism and the surrounding environment; a balance that can be maintained only if the environment is convenient for the animal that therefore feels “suited” to it. If an animal is put in an environment that is too different to the one he is used to, the balance is altered; a fish out of water dies (Maynard Smith, 1958). It is the same for a plant without sunlight; or a stone, which is

melted by lava.⁴ The point is not to find a community between mankind and the “other living beings” – which would be limiting and not resolute, as well as distortive⁵; what is needed is a continuity between a random element of nature (in this case mankind) and the whole. Only an ecology that respects nature as matter (and not as *living* but as *existent*) can be satisfactory and methodologically sound. It is not about opposing Descartes (as Voltaire used to) and asserting the community between mankind and animals, between sense and sensibility, against the inanimate world; it is about going beyond Descartes (as La Mettrie did) and building an unavoidable continuity among humans, animals, plants and inanimate objects. It is true that animals are like machines, like objects – they represent disjointedness; but that is because we also are like machines, like objects – we are that disjointedness. Death itself (or destruction in general, i.e. rocks hollowed out by water) is not internal inefficiency, but incapacity to deal with demands/situations that were being dealt with until then, or new demands/situations for which there has been no preparation (this includes the so called “accidents”; dying after a 20-metre leap could be ecologically interpreted as a lack of

⁴ Biologists too often forget about *stones*, hence their defective, biocentric ecology (and since ecology is legitimately the biologists’ field, the modern ecology *tout court* is faulty): an ecology where anthropocentrism is not overcome by but only translated into biocentrism. Darwin himself was interested in geology, not *per se* but in view of his interest in life.

⁵ Both the Kantian Regan (1983), with his “value” (living beings have an “inherent value”), and the utilitarian Singer (1975) with his “suffering” (only living beings have value because they “suffer”) are wrong, because they refer to levels to be reduced or perspectives to be widened: they are still anthropocentric, still far from ecological “liberation”.



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adaptation to such jumps or to flying; *adaptation being the core of existing and not vice versa*)⁶. We have weighed upon the environment much beyond inevitability. So far the environment has suffered the greatest harm; at some point it will be our turn to end up like a fish out of water – “if the creature destroys its environment, it destroys itself” (Bateson, 1979)⁷. The difference is that if the fish jumps out of the water, it commits suicide but leaves the water clean. By killing ourselves we kill the environment with and before us: the human ecological suicide is homicide, genocide, ecocide. Those who do not consider the environment live as though they believed they could live in emptiness⁸. Industrialists, politicians, housewives and philosophers believe this and behave accordingly. This is the origin of the first ecological crisis (a philosophical crisis that requires a philosophical solution). The erroneousness of this belief can be shown even from a metaphysical-Aristotelic point of view. Let us agree that nature is the matter that acts as *substratum* of every object (*Physics* II 193 a 27); the object (as subject and actor) that retroacts negatively to its own matter is literally pulling the ladder from under its feet. It destroys itself. Mankind could blow up the Earth or several other planets, but it could not destroy the universe (being the universe not logically destroyable) and therefore could not destroy nature (whose Aristotelic dimension of *substratum* or

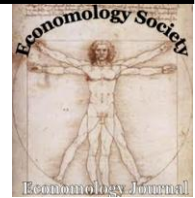
inevitability would be thus confirmed). And we should not be ecologists because of the fear of this *a priori* impossible destruction. Even if mankind managed to artificially recreate a reverse big bang, it would at most destroy the universe that we know but not nature as an Aristotelic (and Parmenidean) substance. Nature must logically have been there before the universe existed as we know it, beyond space and time (It would be an absurd and inconceivable ontology of nothingness, to believe that nature could be destroyed – nothingness producing nothing and nothingness being a non-meaningful category)⁹. We should be ecologists precisely because it is silly and useless, illusory and inadequate to destroy. And if it is not possible to destroy nature – the inevitable *substratum* – what could be destroyed? Ourselves (and our pessimism). And this would be stupid: suicide and homicide are foolish. The ecological thinking believes in the philosophical stupidity of suicide (and of homicide, of the *alteration* that is not strictly necessary – and deceptively annihilating), from the logical and phenomenological observation of material inevitability. We must respect the environment because we cannot live without it and we kill ourselves and the people close to us by damaging it. We must respect the environment because even taking our own lives (or the lives of others) we do not kill ourselves (or others), we do not annul ourselves: we ourselves exist *because we are substratum-nature*. This is what physicists call “indissoluble cosmic fabric” (Capra, 1982), or Pessoa describes as everything exists because something else exists. Nothing is, everything co-exists “Man is in fact generated by man, but also by the sun” (*Physics* II 194 b 13). In non-

⁶ It is not true that *as humans* we cannot have wings, but that we are humans because we do not have wings. Not having wings or gills comes first (and having those things or not is in relation to the environment), and then comes the being human; otherwise it would be an Aristotelic essentialism.

⁷ The argument could/should be developed existentially.

⁸ “That a vacuum or space in which there is absolutely no body is repugnant to reason” (Descartes, *Principia philosophiae*, 1644).

⁹ According to what Severino (1972) maintains (in a rather neo-parmenidan fashion).



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ecological contexts we can admit, with Aristotle, that the “bodies” are “somewhere” (*Physics* IV 208 a 30), but this is untenable ecologically: 1) because of nature’s monism¹⁰; 2) because even from a classical perspective (of the identity principle, of “bodies”) the “somewhere” is overcome by the “happening”, which constantly connects a “somewhere” with other somewheres (infinite others), annulling them. If the “power station” body is “somewhere”, it conveys its effects, its “being”, to those “somewheres” reached by affecting the environment, and which eventually coincide with the whole world. It is thus that pollution, and what comes as a result of it – the first, real, literal “globalisation”¹¹, by annulling the accurate spatial location, overcomes/annuls both the “body” and the space itself. Aristotle was able to say that “the place does not perish, while the things that are in it destroy themselves” (*Physics* IV 209 a 1). With pollution we can observe that “place” and “things” are so related that the disappearance of the first means the disappearance of the other (and vice versa). This relationship is noticeable in pollution

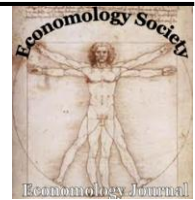
because it is an ecological principle: the principle of the fundamental lack of distinction between the whole and the part, which the Aristotelian metaphysical essentialism (and millenary tradition that followed – and still operates) had not grasped. “Now that they [place and body] are different in respect of their essence is evident; for ‘that in which something is’ and ‘that which is in it’ would be differently defined” (*Physics* IV 210 b 17). Under the ecological perspective “place” and “body” are not separated; they exist because the being – *a priori* for definition – is place and body at the same time: it has a non-particular identity, or has no identity in the traditional Aristotelic sense of the term. The very categories of “what contains” and “what is contained” become misleading – as every dualistic approach does. Things have no more “limits”, “borders”, “shapes”, and they are thus not so much “things” (individuals, independent or *per se* existences). The boundlessness is (and comes from) the inter-dependence; it comes with the absence of self-referentiality (which can be attributed only to the universe, tautologically).

¹⁰ Darwin considers “the term species as arbitrarily applied” and not “substantially differing from the term variety”; there are varieties of a same thing. In the theory of relativity “the absolute ether, space and time [...] leave way to a *continuum* in four dimensions” (Gulmanelli, 1965, italics not on original text). In quantum physics it is “difficult to separate any part of the universe from the whole”; “subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities” (Capra, 1982). “Here is how modern physics reveals the fundamental unity of the universe. It demonstrated that we cannot dismantle the world in minimal units that exist independently. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not reveal its isolated building bricks, but it appears to us as a complex fabric of relationships among the various parts of a unified whole” (Ibidem).

¹¹ Here is how we can ecologically speak of a “global” or “globalised ontology”.

According to Severino, the “fundamental tendency of our times” would be such that (in a Heideggerian fashion)¹² “the

¹² Heidegger, with his categories of “world-environment” (*Umwelt*: this is paradoxically the same term used by von Uexküll), “Being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-sein*), “Comportment” (*Befindlichkeit*) and similar, is not referable to the ecological realm. For him (anthropocentrically) things serve/should only serve man, which is the only self referring thing, or non-thing (everything else is in the category “bodies different from *Dasein*”). A unifying ecological perspective should instead establish the *natural* respect towards and relationship with living beings through the



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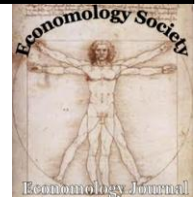
‘ideological’ organisation of existence increasingly leaves space to the scientific-technological organisation” (1988). Attending a local authority meeting is enough to notice that this is not so. The ideological dimension still prevails – “ideology” as “political prejudice”, “conservative mentality”, prevalence of *habit*, understood as *thinking* habit. Science and technology, if anything, degenerate alongside their compulsive application, which constricts them and prevents them from being truly autonomous ideologies. The ideology of science is not political prejudice, it is not ideology but epistemology. And the post-positivistic scientific epistemology goes towards an intellectual democracy which cannot be severed from fruitful research¹³.

relationship with and respect for non-living beings (which must come as a continuum). The Heideggerian “Concern” (Besorgen) for things is therefore hypocritical. Moreover, he ends up equating nature with history with the principle that “being is time” (as Hegel did). Not a natural history (Darwin), but a human history – or a history of Being (or of Spirit, for Hegel). Everything else does not quite count. In “*The Wanderer and his Shadow*” (12), Nietzsche speaks ironically about the man that “calls *his* history the *history of the world*”: in his time there was a need to do this (in an anti-anthropocentric and naturalising manner). Nowadays – and this is *the* ecological issue – our own history is really the history of the world; planet Earth’s fate depends on our history. This does not legitimate anthropocentrism, because Earth is part of the infinite universe; it increases our responsibility, and the responsibility of our choices.

¹³ “The concepts that came useful in arranging things easily become so authoritative that we forget their human origin and accept them as absolute. Thus they become ‘thinking necessities’, ‘given *a priori*’. Scientific development is therefore hindered by these mistakes. It is therefore not an empty exercise to get used to analyse current notions and highlighting the conditions on which their justification and usefulness depend, and the way they became important, especially given factual data. It is thus that their exaggerated authority is

According to Severino “science dominates the world only because there is social recognition of such power”. The ecological issue shows how this is completely wrong. If anything, science (or better, technology) dominates the world *despite* there is no social recognition of such power (see Pirsig’s *Bildungsroman*) The problem in the relationship between man and science (technology) is precisely the fact that the average man does not know what he is doing when he uses a technological object. Each and every one of us is like the aviator who threw the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, interviewed by Anders: between innocence and guilt. The current scientific-technological knowledge or awareness is not too widespread, it is rather not widespread enough. Each and every one of us is a “technological decision-maker” (Gallino, 2007), because we have almost existentially incorporated the possibility of choosing among technological devices (e.g. a computer or a pen to write a document). The importance of being “technological decision-makers” lies in the fact that we are also “ecological decision-makers”. And nowadays the crucial cultural problem is, or should be, “to create willingness in the technological and/or ecological decision makers to modify their own behaviour” (technology being nowadays a manifestation of ecology). But the people who have the power to make some changes, our politicians, are more interested in entertaining the masses and are the least interested (and least qualified) to lead the reforms.

broken, and they are removed, if they cannot appropriately demonstrate their legitimacy. They are corrected, if their correspondence with things had been established approximately. They are substituted, if it is possible to develop a new system that is preferable for good reasons”. It feels like reading Nietzsche, but it is Albert Einstein, as quoted by Gulmanelli, 1965.



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Therefore Severino's judgement is doubly wrong: 1) because science/technology does not dominate the world *in those terms* (if it did, that is to say if men were more interested in science – and the ecologist is a scientist – there would be no pollution because: a) the protection of the natural environment would be an acknowledged scientific value; b) technological progress would already have produced sophisticated tools designed to reduce our impact on the environment: these tools are there already, but they are not marketed because of political-ideological-financial reasons – not for scientific reasons);¹⁴ 2) because even if science dominated, nowadays it would dominate despite people's ignorance: if I have a rifle that is more powerful than another and I know how to use it (even if I know nothing about how it is made), I will prevail on the people who do not own this rifle; through my victory I allow the science behind it to triumph (this is the necessary condition – the sufficient condition being my willingness to offend). The fact that everyone nowadays wants to buy the latest mobile telephone is not a symptom of interest towards science, or of the dominance of technology. It is simply fashion, as it has been from time immemorial. It is fashion and ideology that exploit science/technology, not vice versa. Nowadays there would be the means to abolish one of the worst forms of pollution

(worst as hypocrite): books. But people are preventing e-books to take off for ideological reasons (tradition, habit, indolence etc.): what you are reading now is written in a book because otherwise you would not have read it and it would not have reached you; in the balance of cost and benefit it is convenient to print the umpteenth book if this, the lesser evil, is instrumental for a greater good – for the promotion of ecologically intelligent behaviours and thoughts. Nowadays there would be knowledge and opportunity for everyone in the West to be vegetarian – the meat-producing industry being one of the most polluting, and delegating the killing of animals to third parties being morally hypocritical. But this does not happen for ideological reasons, because science (its epistemology) does not dominate, and neither does the technological ethics which leads to sudden gestalt revolutions. It is *he who owns or can purchase* science that dominates, but despite himself. The bigoted country leaders appeal to scientists when it is convenient – wars etc. – but they easily discard them to gain the favour, for example, of a pope. If science dominated, democracy would also dominate; but this does not happen, although science today is a democratic epistemology and without methodological democracy there would be no research. We could even define “truth as democracy”, thus acknowledging the achievements of experimental research, *à la* Newton (or despite Newton). It is a sign of the times that the author of *Democracy: crisis and renewal* has not picked up on this. Severino has also proclaimed the “end of capitalism”. Something highly desirable but very unlikely indeed. Even “left-wing” politicians believe in the illogical principles of “growth” and “consumption” (earth is not *infinite*). Economy will never become a science, until it will remain

¹⁴ As Diamond summarises – in a Nietzschean fashion – these ideological-economic reasons, which vary from the instant profit to the widespread mediocrity and laziness, hinder progress (for example, we all write with an irrational keyboard designed in the 19th century to overcome some technical difficulties with typewriters. We could say the same about the perseveration in using non-ecological energy, in building non-ecological houses etc. There is a complex (cultural, economical, psychological etc.) problem behind the “acceptance of new technologies” (see Ortalli, quoted above).



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growth and consumption, and it will never be ecological (and humanitarian).¹⁵ That is why Nietzsche warned us that: “there is even more genius needed for laying out wealth than for acquiring it!” (*The gay science*, 21). Now the real growth is non-growth, or a different growth: an ecological (and wiser) growth. Growth is not about “profiting” (as economy has been aiming to for centuries), it is about “spending”, and spending wisely: investing wisely, ecologically, using new environmental schemes that gravely jeopardise our well-rooted traditions (traditions towards which we are still passive even in our *everyday life*).

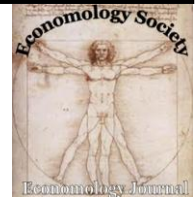
Capitalism is just a name and it has been demonstrated by history that it is useless to hypostatize it as the communists did. The real enemy is simply our wrong habits: from the thinking habits to the inappropriate behaviours. Precisely because some behaviours have become *traditional*, we should at least revise and refute them.

¹⁵ We, the West, have so far exploited all the world's resources, from the geological to the human ones; other countries have been exploited and then, once they could partly emancipate from this exploitation, they found that they cannot make use of the world's resources as we – the West – did, because those resources are not there anymore. If all Chinese people had a car, they would not be able to buy petrol because we have already used all of it. Without an ecological *reason* there is no democratic and humanitarian *reason* either: carrying on exploiting the planet for our own luxury prevents (mathematically!) others from using it for their survival. *Democracy in the home country and imperialism outside of it is not democracy if the home country is planet Earth*. The re-distribution of wealth is or will be first and foremost democracy/equanimity with respect to the Earth. (Planetary) ecology, democracy and equality go alongside, as the respect of the environment and the respect for other people do. Other people are intended as the inhabitants of the South of the world and the future inhabitants of the planet.

To accept traditional behaviours without criticism is slavery; it is, *à la* Wittgenstein, not improving the linguistic-epistemic games¹⁶.

To refute what has been argued so far can involve three realms: scientific, ontological and ethical. As Pievani reminds us, “extinction [...] is part of the ‘economy of nature’, together with the other adapting expansions and the normal environmental selection. If for *absurdum* extinction never happened, the genealogical shrub of animal and vegetable species would soon become an entangled “willow”, close to saturation because of the uncontrolled ramification of diverging forms of life” (2005). And yet: 1) man – as an environmental selection agent for other species – is perpetrating not just *an* extinction, but *the* extinction; 2) in this he includes himself in a sort of suicidal extinction or suicidal adapting expansion. Moreover, as a *natural* carrier of free will and an agent of this indiscriminate destruction, he does something not only philosophically untenable, but also and equally not necessary and not inevitable, different from, for example, what glaciations or the fall of a meteorite do. It is also true that in the Darwinian programme (closer than he believed to Nietzsche's “will to power”) “evolution hardly recognises what is “good” for the species or the ecosystems, while it constantly measures what is good for the individuals on the basis of their surviving skills and ability to pass on the genetic pool to the offspring” (Pievani, 2005); therefore one could say that it is not *natural* to think

¹⁶ “To accept a belief simply because it is customary implies that one is dishonest, cowardly, and lazy” (Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Reflections on Moral Prejudice*, 101).



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about “future generations” (although an integral part of this natural egoism is precisely the transmission of the genetic pool to the offspring), or the “others” (people living in poor countries, animals, ecosystems: and the first objection here regards the inconceivability of existing without “others”, in a de-contextualised way). However: 1) ecology has also an “egoistic” value because the destruction of the world (e.g. nuclear weapons, but also the destruction of quality of life i.e. acoustic pollution) means destruction of the individuals; 2) without a long term plan (Nietzsche’s “human-ecumenical goals”) that contemplates the future as a category, the civilised historical animal, man, cannot organise itself in a non nihilistic way.¹⁷ As Nietzsche had already observed in his “critique of modernity” in the *Twilight of the idols* “In order that there may be institutions, there must be a kind of will [...] to responsibility for centuries to come, to the *solidarity* of chains of generations [...] The whole of the West no longer possesses the instincts out of which institutions grow, out of which a future grows [...] One lives for the day, one lives very fast, one lives very irresponsibly: precisely this is called ‘freedom’”; and it is in our case the housewife’s freedom not to recycle, the industrialist’s freedom to produce plastic bags or purchasing the legal right to pollute as much as he likes the state’s freedom to neglect the environment in order to protect its own economic-social interests. Even if it was true (or natural), as the constructivist interpretation (in biology) asserts, that “organisms and [environmental] niches make and destroy one another: every organism simultaneously generates and

destroys the conditions of its existence. Organisms build their environment as much as the environment transforms the organisms. The living beings select their environment, manipulate it, they transform the features that are relevant to them, they change the physical parameters” (Pievani, 2005), man-made pollution is global, generalised and indiscriminate. It does not modify just the human niche/environment (supposing that there are organisms able to affect just their own niche and not – inevitably – other organisms’ niches; especially since an organism’s niche should be inevitably made of other organisms), but every other organisms’ environment, and the inorganic matter as well. If by polluting man promotes, consciously or unconsciously, the destruction of himself and the others (of the *whole* world-biosphere)¹⁸, then he promotes a literally nihilist condition – and then refuting pollution has to mean refuting nihilism (here lies the central role of philosophy even for what concerns pollution). The contemporary nihilism is therefore an ecological nihilism and not the existential, alienating nihilism of the 19-20th centuries. If it is true that a scientific approach to ecology, which takes into account

¹⁷ Ecology is therefore on one side a symptom of civilisation, and on the other side the overcoming of nihilism – but the two things go along side.

¹⁸ Destruction and subsequent nihilism are not to be understood, as previously said, in an *absolute* sense (which would be impossible), but *relatively* to a series of features that are present today and that are at risk of not being there ever again. In the entropic terms of the second law of thermodynamics: Once our planet had vast reserves of ferrous minerals, which are slowly decreasing. Does this mean that iron is about to run out? Certainly not there is the same quantity of iron as there was before. The issue is that it is increasingly scattered here and there as rust (ferrous oxide molecules) and as other materials of lesser quality, where the iron concentration is lower. In principle, we could recover it all, but to do that we would need an enormous quantity of energy (Dennett, 1996).



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“evolution as state of incessant transformation”, must be aware that “facing the thoughtless exploitation of nature as if it was an inexhaustible “resource”, it is impossible to defend the opposite perspective, centred on the mere conservation of ecosystemic balances; rather, the evolutionary and unstable nature of those ecosystems when under human inference must somehow be accepted” (Pievani, 2005). And if, in agreement with logic and Lovelock’s “Gay hypothesis”, “if our actions will continue to damage the environment, sooner or later some new environmental circumstances will be established, which will be more suitable for life” even if “not necessarily our form of life” – polluting still remains nihilism as suicide (self destruction of man as destruction of his environment) and it is also (and not too paradoxically: Christianity for example is nihilist precisely because it is anthropocentric) anthropocentrism, believing that man has the “merit” to make the drastic changes he makes). Nihilism and anthropocentrism are united in the illusion that man can make a real difference, but this is not true – as cosmology and some evolutionism show.

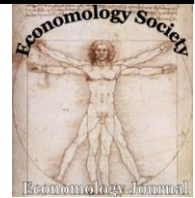
Strictly speaking, the smallest object should not be even touched, because touching is altering and it would testify the nihilistic and anthropocentric illusion that things can be altered, when actually they cannot. Not even cosmic matter can be altered, in the sense that it cannot be totally annihilated: it must exist (in whatever form). It is its inevitability, that not even the big bang as mere event (similar to a *big crunch*) can have *logically* changed. Finally, it is paradoxical or hypocritical to claim a human right to affect the environment, when it is the human organism that affects it more than all the others! Moving to an ontological ambit, when Lynn Baker (2007)

argues against the Darwinian gradualism, for which human animals are not “essentially different from non-human animals”, he presents what Nietzsche would unmask as a specious argument: because our “first person perspective” makes us develop “types of mental states” that animals do not have, we are not like them. What is wrong here is that: 1) the expression “first person perspective” is scientifically not meaningful or at least semantically very arguable; 2) like a cheetah does not have the mental states we have, we do not have the cheetah’s spring¹⁹; 3) the assumption that – and here comes Nietzsche – that “mental states” are something more valuable than a spring or some fins.

We cannot conclude from the fact that we think (philosophically or scientifically), and birds do not, that we are fundamentally²⁰ different from them, otherwise the cat that does not swim and the pike that swims could not be included in the animal kingdom. Our way of being animals is to think. But that is our way of being animals, not people, otherwise even the only right thing that Aristotle said would not stand. Ecological reductionism does not say that men are *identical* to other animals. We are different, but the differences do not make a

¹⁹ Of course there are levels on which human “thinking” is *superior* to the cheetah’s spring: but they are not the ones Baker mentions. Thinking allows men to produce the weapons needed to defeat the cheetah “in war”. *In this sense* the thinking is superior. It goes without saying that thinking also produces religion, nihilism (from which suicide) and the ecological crisis – I kill the cheetah but he kills me because killing him I kill my environment.

²⁰ I am insisting on this point because according to Baker “people” exist in an ontological sense. So in the list of existent things there would be: cats, humans – biologically understood – and people – anti-reductionistically or anti-naturalistically understood: a bit like angels in St. Thomas’ world.



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difference (contrary to what anti-reductionists think); they do not make a difference such that we can put ourselves above all other animals (and the same for all other animals compared to plants, and plants compared to stones).

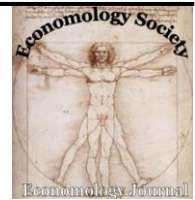
It is the question of the half-full/half-empty glass: do we highlight the differences between humans and animals, animals and plants, or the similarities? Even ignoring everything that science and logic say, we should insist on the similarity, even if just for the sake of history or to avoid repeating the mistakes made by men, among which is having thought to be *different*²¹. In this sense religion, wars and pollution are “unnatural”, because they imply meta-natural, axiological, metaphysical presumptions in the perpetrators²². Some environmental ethics (whose position is summarised by Bartolommei, 1989) together with Leopold’s *Land Ethic*, seems to have achieved Sidgwick’s objective of 1874; an objective that is exclusive of the moral enterprise: to take the universe’s point of view when formulating ethical judgements. But this radically non-anthropocentric vision, based on the intrinsic value of the “biotic community”, would produce results that are 1) socially absurd (drastically reducing the human presence in the world); 2) morally

paradoxical (by de-anthropologising, the moral agent would be taken out, which would make the ethics theory superfluous: from an ethics without environment we would go on to an “environmentalism without morality”). Moreover, “nature continues to depend on man for its “value” and “meaning”. The assertion of the value of something is solely based on the possibility of human conscience to give it, and it must be presumed that the life of those who can give a meaning to life is qualitatively different from the life of those beings that can only just live it. By applying the principle of the organic unity to the role of man in the universe, we lose sight of the human “transcendental” aspect compared to the rest of nature, and we fall in to the paradox of asserting the value of something (nature as ecologically understood, intact and undisturbed), while we are denying the value of the only beings that can give value to something” (Bartolommei, 1989). The objection does not concern us because it is completely inherent to an anthropocentric logic: no-one talked about “intrinsic value”; and for what concerns the “value” and the “meaning” – the anthropocentric categories *par excellence* – it is up to the anthropocentrics to demonstrate that they are important outside the human mind that elaborated them: it is captious to say that since man has devised these categories he is superior to those who have not devised them (and it should be proved that these categories are *good*). Ethics, finally, is behaviour. Who said that there is no behaviour without “value” and “meaning” (at least in the traditional sense of the terms)? Nietzsche’s philosophy shows the opposite²³. Starting

²¹ Abandoned, as the category of person has been exposed to all forms of abuse and coercion (there is no other concept in the western tradition that has been used as much by the religious and secular currents), it turns to the category of “impersonal”.

²² It is notorious that, contrary to what Hobbes believed, in nature humans fight (like animals), except when they are in society. To give importance to, for example, the “home-country”, and fight for it, is hypostatising meta-natural, metaphysical values. Care should be taken not to make ecology chauvinist towards Earth and widen the scope to the cosmos (if anything, for epistemological reasons): it is good to watch the sky; the important thing is to see nothing else but the sky.

²³ “[...] reality is considered as valuable only to the extent that it is a symbol. Hence a man who is under the influence of the morality of custom comes to despise [...] reality, and weaves all his higher



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from the reflection that “despite preserving its quantity²⁴, energy degrades itself irreversibly²⁵: it loses a portion of its “availability” to convert again into work”, Russo (2000) bases on this the paradox for which “ethics must defend life and therefore the availability of energy, but life itself is dissipation of energy and is therefore immoral! Ethics is pursuing and maintaining the possibility of immorality”; “the ethics of the entropy slowdown, which should support and justify the environmental effort in defence of nature and life, reveals itself as radically *against nature!* *If the universal and life’s natural tendency is towards the entropy increase, why should we try to inhibit it?* If life is dissipation, why should ethics be conservation? (Ibidem). Therefore the choice of a non-scientific ecology and an

ethics based not on what exists, but on what, anthropocentrically, should exist: if we focus on what is there, according to Russo, we automatically fall into immorality²⁶. The answer is: life is not *just* dissipation/entropy²⁷ and in any case for a true ecology the most important thing is not life but the existing matter; and this, aside from its realisations, is inevitable (as the logic observation demonstrates – since nihilism is logically untenable – that there must have been *something* even before the big bang). Ecology means just to take note of this inevitability. Ecology is not promoting life or conservation, but the awareness described, from which then life and conservation can be promoted – as denying it is useless or illusory, because it does not take into account the awareness of this inevitability.

feelings [...] into an imaginary world \ the so-called higher world. (*Daybreak: Reflections on Moral Prejudice*, 33). The radical immanentism (which becomes phenomenology of perception) of ecology leads to “holding the amount of value” according to how it “can be symbol”: it leads to welcoming it as much as possible *sic et simpliciter*. The so-called “higher world” is logically or *a priori* inconceivable for ecology; and with it the symbol, as it would serve as cross-reference from one level to another. As we speak of “levels”, we cease to understand (ecologically and phenomenologically) what we are talking about, because the only conceived level is the indistinct immanent of the material continuum. To understand the relationship between subject and context, between the so-called species and the so-called environment, the category “indistinction” or non-continuum is the only useful one. Life (more generally, existence) is not the animal or the plant (or the stone), but the animal or plant (or stone) plus their environment, context and place where they are, where they unload gravity. From here comes the Nietzschean dissolving the substances, the essences and everything else in a network of relationships like Quine, Goodman, Wittgenstein, Bergson, Whitehead and many other philosophers of the 20th century (Rorty, 1998).

²⁴ First law of thermodynamics.

²⁵ Second law of thermodynamics.

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²⁶ For Heideggerian Russo “technology is degrading anyway because it degrades the meaning of nature itself, making it mere resource, capital, fund”. And without technology doesn’t man degrade himself? And is man not nature? And without technology doesn’t nature degrade itself?

²⁷ Strictly speaking, it is actually the opposite: Based on the second law, an isolated system’s entropy increases with time” but living things are precisely “things that defy and avoid this falling apart, at least for a while, because they do not live in isolation – thanks to the fact that they take from the *environment* what is needed to survive (Dennett, 1996). Therefore the second law of thermodynamics (held as the physical-cosmological law *par excellence*, is ecological law, in that it makes an exception for life.

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