

# Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy\*

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The idea inspiring the eco-phenomenological movement is that phenomenology can help remedy our environmental crisis by uprooting and replacing environmentally-destructive ethical and metaphysical presuppositions inherited from modern philosophy. Eco-phenomenology's critiques of subject/object dualism and the fact/value divide are sketched and its positive alternatives examined. Two competing approaches are discerned within the eco-phenomenological movement: Nietzscheans and Husserlians propose a naturalistic ethical realism in which good and bad are ultimately matters of fact, and values should be grounded in these proto-ethical facts; Heideggerians and Levinasians articulate a transcendental ethical realism according to which we discover what really matters when we are appropriately open to the environment, but what we thereby discover is a transcendental source of meaning that cannot be reduced to facts, values, or entities of any kind. These two species of ethical realism generate different kinds of ethical perfectionism: naturalistic ethical realism yields an eco-centric perfectionism which stresses the flourishing of life in general; transcendental ethical realism leads to a more 'humanistic' perfectionism which emphasizes the cultivation of distinctive traits of Dasein. Both approaches are examined, and the Heideggerian strand of the humanistic approach defended, since it approaches the best elements of the eco-centric view while avoiding its problematic ontological assumptions and anti-humanistic implications.

## I. Introduction: Uncovering the Conceptual Roots of Environmental Devastation

What happens when you cross phenomenology with environmental philosophy? According to the editors of *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*, you get an important interdisciplinary movement. Although this 'eco-phenomenological movement' has been gaining momentum for thirty years in the literature on environmental philosophy (as a select 'Bibliography in Eco-Phenomenology' suggests (pp. 239–48)), it is only 'now coming to awareness of itself as a theoretical movement among philosophers and

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\*Charles S. Brown and Ted Toadvine, eds, *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003, xxi + 255 pp., ISBN 0-7914-5622-6, pb. \$22.95. Unprefixed page references are to this work (with chapter authors specified when unclear from context).

ecologists' (p. xx). Despite this description, eco-phenomenology is not a narrowly 'theoretical' movement. For, by focusing on the conceptual roots of real-world environmental problems (pollution, global warming, our destruction of the ozone layer, forests, native habitats and species, and so on), eco-phenomenology undermines the theory/practice distinction. Eco-phenomenology's guiding idea, put simply, is that uprooting and replacing some of our deeply-entrenched but environmentally-destructive ethical and metaphysical presuppositions can help us heal the earth, combating environmental devastation at its conceptual roots, as it were.

This 'radical' or 'deep' ecological approach is moving from the margins to the center of the environmental movement, thanks both to its inherent philosophical appeal and to the recognition that, although environmental destruction continues to accelerate, '[p]hilosophy has yet to find an effective voice in our struggle with the environmental crisis' (p. x).<sup>1</sup> On the basis of recent UN and WorldWatch reports, Erazim Kohák assesses the stakes of the environmental crisis starkly: 'our civilization – originally European, then Euro-American, today global – appears to be well on its way to self-destruction' (p. 19). Christian Diehm summarizes a few of the relevant statistics: 'More than half of the earth's forests are gone, and they continue to be leveled at the rate of sixteen million hectares [or 39.5 million acres] per year, accompanied by an anthropogenic extinction rate nearing one thousand times the natural or "background" rate' (p. 171). Many eco-phenomenologists maintain a desperate optimism despite this massive erosion of global biodiversity, believing that we finally have not only the correct diagnosis of, but also the necessary treatment for, our environmental crisis. The 'radical ecological' diagnosis holds that 'environmental destruction and crisis are caused by core beliefs within our worldview that sanction, legitimate, and even encourage the domination and technological control of nature' (p. xiii), and the eco-phenomenological cure suggests that these core beliefs can be changed, since 'the insights of eco-phenomenology hold the promise of bringing about a dramatic shift in our current understanding of ourselves and of our place in the natural world' (pp. xx–xxi).

*Eco-Phenomenology's* editors believe that a pro-environment transformation of our self-understanding, and so of 'today's practical decision making, ... will likely begin with steady and insightful clarification of our *ethical and metaphysical assumptions* about ourselves and the world around us ... [which] underlie all our current behavior, both individually and culturally' (p. x, my emphasis). Given this call for a recognizably 'analytic' approach, some may wonder why phenomenologists should respond, and what we may hope to contribute. The answer appeals to the idea that the underlying, environmentally-dangerous assumptions in question are 'ethical and metaphysical'; the offending assumptions most frequently singled out

in *Eco-Phenomenology* are mind/world dualism and the fact/value divide. The phenomenological tradition has been working for over a century to help us think beneath and beyond these conceptual dichotomies, entrenched in our habits of thought.<sup>2</sup> Although mind/world dualism and the fact/value divide seem obvious when one is theorizing from within the modern tradition (in which they have functioned as axioms since Descartes and Hume at least), phenomenologists argue that these conceptual dichotomies fundamentally mischaracterize our ordinary experience. By failing to recognize the integral entwining of self and world that is basic to our experiential navigation of the lived environment, modern philosophy effectively splits the subject off from objects (and other subjects), thereby laying the conceptual groundwork for the modern 'worldview' in which an intrinsically-meaningless objective realm ('nature') is separated epistemically from – and so needs to be mastered through the activities of – isolated, self-certain subjects. This worldview functions historically like a self-fulfilling prophecy, its progressive historical realization generating not only the political freedoms and scientific advances we cherish, but also unwanted downstream consequences such as our escalating environmental crisis. While environmental devastation is a predictable side-effect of our collective historical effort to master such a 'meaningless' world of objects, we tend to ignore the conceptual connections between our modern worldview and the environmental crisis. This is because the modern worldview is so deeply entrenched that it passes unnoticed (Heidegger's 'first law of phenomenology' – the 'law of proximity' or 'the distance of the near' – states that what is closest to us in our everyday worldly environment is, like the prescription on the glasses through which we see, furthest from us in terms of our ability to attend to and comprehend it explicitly), but also because modernity's definitive divorce of mind from world creates a number of irresolvable pseudo-problems (including most species of skepticism) which distract philosophers, diverting our intellectual efforts away from pressing real-world problems like our mounting environmental crisis. Eco-phenomenologists are not suggesting that we abandon abstract thinking in the name of concrete problem-solving, but rather that a certain kind of abstract thinking – a thinking which ignores phenomenology and so is insufficiently attentive to the real-world consequences of its guiding metaphysical presuppositions – is ultimately responsible for some of our most pressing environmental problems.

The phenomenological critique of modernity just sketched (much too quickly) remains controversial, of course, but eco-phenomenology is not primarily a critical movement, content to uncover environmental devastation's conceptual roots; its more important, positive aim is to undercut and replace them. Indeed, this critique of modernity serves primarily to motivate and guide eco-phenomenology's positive project, its elaboration of what

we could call (restoring meaning to the term) a ‘post-modern’ relationship to the environment. In this vein, *Eco-Phenomenology*’s editors maintain that ‘phenomenology, as a contemporary method in philosophy, is particularly well-suited to working through some of the dilemmas that have faced environmental ethicists and philosophers of nature’ (p. xi), because it ‘is set apart from other theoretical methods by its unique capacity for bringing to expression, rather than silencing, our relation with nature and the experience of value rooted in this relation’ (p. xii). Here the editors make two linked claims: first, that a phenomenological approach to environmental philosophy can work through long-standing dilemmas in the field; and second, that phenomenology enables us to work through these environmental problems because of its ability to allow the values inherent in nature to speak. Now, both claims sound implausible when thus baldly asserted. Is mind/world dualism ultimately more responsible for our environmental crisis than, say, greed, ignorance, shortsightedness, and apathy – let alone industrial capitalism and its reigning free-market ideology? Can phenomenology truly give voice to intrinsic environmental values – without falling back into some myth of the ethical given? Eco-phenomenologists answer ‘Yes’ to both questions, but such worries rightly suggest that the editors’ claims are better understood as pointing us back to eco-phenomenology’s own alternative ‘ethical and metaphysical assumptions’, the basic phenomenological principles meant to undercut and replace our environmentally-destructive mind/world and fact/value divides.

What, then, are the ethical and metaphysical principles with which eco-phenomenologists hope to undercut and replace the conceptual roots of our environmental crisis? The ‘metaphysical’ principle holds that phenomenological approaches reunite mind with world, or, more precisely, that phenomenology’s descriptive approaches begin from – and so return us to – the experience of a pre-differentiated, mind-world unity. The ‘ethical’ principle is linked to this metaphysical one. *Because* phenomenological methods undercut mind/world dualism, phenomenology is able to recognize the reality of environmental ‘values’, the alleged ‘fact’ that certain pro-environmental values are ‘always already in the world’ and so simply await the appropriate phenomenological approach in order to be discovered and made the basis of a new environmental ethics. How, then, do we to understand and evaluate such radical claims, which seek to undercut and replace views near the core of the modern philosophical tradition? What kinds of arguments can be given in support of these eco-phenomenological principles, and what problems do they bring in their wake? How significant are their different formulations in competing eco-phenomenological approaches? These are some of the difficult and interesting issues raised by *Eco-Phenomenology* and the broader eco-phenomenological movement, and they will be our primary focus in what follows.

## II. From Ontological Method to Eco-Phenomenological Ethics

Let us begin with eco-phenomenology's 'metaphysical' principle, according to which a basic methodological agreement obtains across the phenomenological tradition: all phenomenological approaches seek to undermine the mind/world divide. It is potentially misleading to call this principle 'metaphysical', because phenomenologists since Husserl have sought to describe experience without pre-filtering it through metaphysical lenses. Indeed, Husserl's characterization of phenomenology as a *descriptive* enterprise refers precisely to this attempt to explicate our most basic experience without recourse to artificial theoretical lenses.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent phenomenologists were critical of Husserl's inaugural attempt in various ways (criticisms which include the Heideggerian charge that Husserl cements rather than escapes mind/world dualism, a charge most contemporary Husserlians reject), but these post-Husserlian phenomenologists also initially sought to unearth a pre-theoretical level of experience that would allow them to undercut the mind/world divide. Thus such methodological points of departure as Husserl's 'life-world', Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world', Merleau-Ponty's 'motor-intentionality', and Levinas's "*il y a*" (the 'anonymous' existing not yet differentiated into an individual 'existent' and its 'existence' or world) were formulated precisely in order to capture and express a mind/world unity, a basic level of experience at which mind and world remain integrally enmeshed.<sup>4</sup> Rather than calling this important point of methodological agreement in the phenomenological tradition 'metaphysical', then, it is less prejudicial (since most phenomenologists consider their own views anti- or post-metaphysical) and also more precise (since different phenomenologists mean different things by 'metaphysics') simply to characterize the first of eco-phenomenology's competing claims as *methodological*.<sup>5</sup>

What is crucial here is that when phenomenologists recognize a pre-theoretical level of experience in which we do not yet distinguish ourselves from our worlds (a dimension of practical, everyday experience eclipsed by the modern tradition's emphasis on detached, theoretical contemplation), and when they attempt to do justice to this fundamental layer of experience by incorporating it into their own methodological points of departure, they are seeking thereby to transcend the dualistic mind/world divide. (One could thus say, only slightly tongue-in-cheek, that eco-phenomenology seeks to get the *mentalism* out of environmentalism.) This is precisely the point, to take the most influential of the above examples, of Heidegger's recognition that a human being is always a 'being-in-the-world'. For, in this famous formulation, 'in' signifies pragmatic involvement rather than spatial inclusion ('being-in-the-world' means 'being-in[extricably involved with]-the-world'), and 'world' refers not to the totality of physical objects, but rather to the holistic nexus of intelligibility organized by our identity-constituting

life-projects (a sense of ‘world’ conveyed in such expressions as ‘the world of the parent,’ ‘the runner’s world,’ and ‘the world of the tree-sitter’).<sup>6</sup> There are, of course, important differences and disagreements between the competing approaches that constitute the phenomenological tradition (Langer, p. 106). To wit, a Heideggerian would likely question the applicability of *this very methodological principle* to Husserl, Sartre, and Levinas, on the grounds that their phenomenological approaches still presuppose the concept of ‘subjectivity’ and so tend to ramify rather than undermine Cartesian dualism. Yet, the fact that most contemporary Husserlians, Sartreans, and Levinasians would take such an argument as a *criticism* shows, I think, that the methodological principle is as uncontentious as any substantive generalization concerning such a broad and diverse living tradition is likely to be.<sup>7</sup>

If the methodological principle concerning phenomenological approaches to the environment is thus relatively uncontroversial, at least for phenomenologists characterizing their own schools, the same cannot be said for the eco-phenomenologists’ competing ‘ethical’ principle, which represents a more original development of the phenomenological tradition. Recall that this ethical principle, stated broadly, holds that phenomenological approaches undercut the fact/value dichotomy, enabling eco-phenomenologists to recognize the non-subjective reality of environmental ‘values’.<sup>8</sup> In order to stop begging questions concerning the metaphysical baggage attendant on the concept of ‘value’, however, let us instead specify that eco-phenomenologists are all committed to some type of *ethical realism*. I say ‘some type’, because we can discern a significant disagreement within the eco-phenomenological movement concerning how best to articulate and defend the ethical realist view, a disagreement which – reactivating pre-existing fault lines within the tradition – implicitly divides the eco-phenomenological movement into two different, competing approaches. Put simply, and so perhaps controversially, but in anticipation of much of what follows, we could say that Nietzscheans and Husserlians gravitate toward a *naturalistic* ethical realism, in which ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are ultimately *matters of fact* (hence their *naturalism*), and our ‘values’ should be grounded in and reflect these proto-ethical facts (hence their *ethical realism*). (Now, one may, again, have difficulty recognizing *Husserl himself* in any *naturalistic* ethical realism, given his notorious antipathy to ‘naturalism’ as he understood it; nevertheless, we will see that this moniker aptly describes the *Husserlian* or, if you prefer, *neo-Husserlian* perspectives developed in *Eco-Phenomenology*.) Heideggerians and Levinasians, on the other hand, articulate a *transcendental* ethical realism, according to which we can indeed discover what really matters (hence *ethical realism*) when we are appropriately open to the environment, but what we thereby discover is neither a ‘fact’ nor a ‘value’ but rather a transcendental source of meaning that cannot be reduced to facts, values, or

entities of any kind (hence *transcendental* ethical realism). As we examine these two eco-phenomenological species of ethical realism, moreover, we will notice that they generate two importantly different kinds of *ethical perfectionism* (by which I mean views that hold that ethical flourishing, broadly conceived, is best served by identifying, cultivating, and developing the distinctive traits or capacities of those entities deserving consideration), and that these competing views have conflicting practical implications. The naturalistic ethical realism leads to an *eco-centric* perfectionism which stresses the need to acknowledge and develop *universal* traits of nature, even at the expense of human concerns, while the transcendental ethical realism results in a more *humanistic* perfectionism which emphasizes the cultivation of *distinctive* traits of *Dasein*, and so, I will suggest, yields more acceptable ethical consequences.

### III. The Meaning of the Earth

In order to understand these two eco-phenomenological approaches to ethical realism, as well as the roots and implications of their differences, let us take the slightly roundabout but revealing approach of tracing these differences back to an ambiguity implicit in *Eco-Phenomenology's* subtitle: *Back to the Earth Itself*. This subtitle gives us a clever twist on the famous battle-cry of Husserlian phenomenology – ‘Back to the things themselves!’ (*Zu den Sachen selbst!*) – in which the crucial *Sache*, the phenomenological ‘heart of the matter’ or ‘sake’ (Llewelyn, p. 59), has been replaced by ‘earth’. This substitution, a specifying instantiation that delimits the horizon of phenomenological concern, implies both that *the earth* is the heart of the matter for eco-phenomenology and that eco-phenomenology is for the sake of the earth. ‘Earth’ is problematic as a singular term, however, because eco-phenomenologists are not simply referring to the third planet from the sun in our solar system. Rather, as *Eco-Phenomenology's* contributors emphasize, ‘earth’ is a philosophical term of art for both Nietzsche and Heidegger. Unfortunately, none of them point out that the term has almost completely opposed senses for the two thinkers. As we will see, the basic divergence in the eco-phenomenological movement can be traced back to and illuminated in terms of this basic philosophical disagreement between Nietzsche and Heidegger over the meaning of ‘the earth’.

In Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra repeatedly urges his audience to ‘*Remain true* [or ‘*faithful*’, *Treu*] *to the earth.*’<sup>9</sup> The precise meaning of ‘earth’ in Nietzsche's slogan can best be understood from the term with which it is contrasted, namely, the ‘otherworldly’ (*überirdischen*, that which is above or beyond the earth).<sup>10</sup> In Nietzsche's conceptual vocabulary, the *otherworldly* is something impossible for human beings to attain, our vain

desire for which leads us to consider even the best we can achieve insufficient and unsatisfying. Nietzsche's main examples of the otherworldly are the Platonic 'forms' (according to which, for instance, nothing we ever encounter or create in this world will be as beautiful as the perfect 'form' of beauty) and the Christian 'heaven' (conceived as a place some will go to after this life, compared with which our world is a mere 'veil of tears').<sup>11</sup> According to Nietzsche, this unfulfillable desire for the other-worldly generates the nihilism of 'resentment' (*Ressentiment*). The exact inverse of the 'sour-grapes' phenomenon (in which something desired but out of reach is deemed undesirable), nihilistic resentment denigrates what we living human beings can attain in the name of something we cannot; our 'earthly' aspirations are devalued by comparison to unfulfillable 'otherworldly' dreams.<sup>12</sup> It is precisely in order to root out this source of nihilism that Zarathustra will 'beg and beseech' his audience:

Remain faithful to the earth, ... serve the meaning of the earth ... Do not let your gift-giving love and knowledge fly away from earthly things and beat with their wings against eternal walls. ... Lead back to the earth the virtue that flew away, as I do – back to the body, back to life, that it may give the earth a meaning, a human meaning.<sup>13</sup>

'Remain true to the earth' is, in other words, a *naturalistic* slogan. Nietzsche calls for us to aspire to that which is attainable (albeit attainable in principle, not easily attainable). His philosophical goal, stated simply, is to *revalue* the world (that is, to give it new values and, in so doing, restore its value) by recognizing and (in a post-Kantian, neo-Darwinian spirit) embracing the limits of possible human knowledge. We 'remain true to the earth', then, by maintaining ourselves within the bounds of the knowable.

For Heidegger, to put the contrast sharply, 'earth' refers to something cognitively unattainable, something that can never really be *known*. In his famous essay on 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1935), Heidegger maintains that for a great artwork to *work*, that is, for it to 'gather and preserve' a meaningful 'world' for its audience, it must maintain an essential tension between this *world* of meanings and something he calls 'earth'. *Earth*, on his analysis, both sustains this meaningful world and resists being interpretively exhausted by it, thereby allowing the artwork quietly to maintain the sanctity of the uninterpretable within the very world of meanings it conveys.<sup>14</sup> 'Earth', in other words, is one of Heidegger's names for that which gives rise to our worlds of meaning without ever being exhausted by them, a dimension of intelligibility we experience primarily as it recedes from our awareness, eluding our attempts finally to *know* it, to grasp and express it fully in terms of some positive content. Heidegger contends, nevertheless, that we can get a *sense* for the 'earth' from great works of art such as van Gogh's painting of the peasant shoes, where, in the worn opening of one shoe and in the hole in



the sole of the other, thick dark paint conveys the insides of the shoes, interior spaces we cannot see because they are hidden by what the painting conveys: not just the visible exterior of these shoes, but the entire *world* of the peasant. Admittedly, Heidegger's rather poetic way of putting these crucial points makes them easy to miss:

From out of the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth ... In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain [i.e., 'earth' makes 'world' possible] and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field [i.e., it is also constitutive of 'earth' that it resists 'world'].<sup>15</sup>

On Heidegger's reading, van Gogh's painting teaches the very 'truth' of the work of art, the essential tension in which 'earth' simultaneously makes possible and resists being fully expressed by 'world'.<sup>16</sup> This notion of earth is thus very close to the later Heidegger's central conception of 'being [*Sein*] as such', a phenomenological 'presencing' (*anwesen*) that makes historical intelligibility possible without ever being exhausted by it. (These are difficult notions, obviously, but ones which, I will argue later, remain crucial for an eco-phenomenological appropriation of Heidegger.)

In sum, then, Nietzsche's conception of 'earth' leads in a *naturalistic* direction, while Heidegger's points toward his phenomenological understanding of the *transcendental* condition of historical intelligibility (and so of all meaning and, more broadly, all *mattering*). Beneath the ambiguity implicit in *Eco-Phenomenology's* subtitle, we thus discover two completely opposed understandings of the meaning of 'the earth'. This difference, we will now see, makes itself felt in the two different approaches implicitly competing within the eco-phenomenological movement.

#### IV. Naturalistic Ethical Realism in Eco-Phenomenology

We can recognize the influence of Nietzsche's conception of earth on those eco-phenomenologists who tend toward a naturalistic ethical realism by adopting an ecological framework within which the good is ultimately a matter of fact to be discerned by the appropriate phenomenological approach. In the name of Husserlian eco-phenomenology, Charles S. Brown contests the scientific divorce of 'the Good' from 'the Real' and so seeks to re-naturalize ethics (or 're-ethicize' nature, an equivalent locution Husserlians may prefer) by recognizing the non-subjective reality of the good. For, when we abandon the idea that there are moral facts of the matter to be discovered and realized, Brown complains, procedural issues in ethics take the place of substantive ones, and 'the good' thereby becomes 'secondary to the right' (p. 9). Brown thus rejects the long-standing trend by which ethics has become an increasingly formal, proceduralist endeavor (in which, reversing the old

consequentialist slogan, *the means come to justify the ends*); he protests that ‘the Good has been so conceptually severed from the Real that goodness itself is often dismissed as an empty concept reflecting only personal preference’ (p. 7). To avoid this relativistic reduction of ethics to personal preferences, Husserlian eco-phenomenologists like Brown suggest we must recognize the importance of a dimension of ‘lived moral experience’ (p. 9) in which we discover our ‘prereflexive axiological consciousness’ (p. 11), the fact that ‘[w]ithin our pre-reflective experiences, we regularly find the world and the things within it to be infused with value’ (pp. 10–11).

Now, within the phenomenological tradition, there are at least two ways to take the claim that, as Lester Embree puts it, ‘the world in which one finds oneself is always already fraught with *values*’ (p. 39). Taken as an *ontic* claim (concerning our everyday experience of entities), the idea is that, for example, ripe apples show up looking *good* to us, clear-cut forests looking *bad*. Taken as an *ontological* claim (concerning what such ontic facts reveal about the structures conditioning the way reality is disclosed to ‘Dasein,’ that entity whose being is an issue for it), the idea is rather that entities only show up for us at all because we *care* about them in some way (as Heidegger argues in *Being and Time*). This latter, ontological claim complicates the ethical realism assumed by the former, ontic one, however. For, if entities only show up within the horizons of my concerns, then unless there is some universal concern, the values entities possess when encountered pre-theoretically cannot be made the basis for a non-relativistic ethics. The ripe apple, for example, may not look good to someone who has eaten too much, or who simply dislikes the taste of apples, and Brown himself maintains that ‘[c]lear-cutting large tracks of old-growth forest may appear as good from the perspective of business and profit’ (p. 11).<sup>17</sup> Thus, although entities and events show up within our worlds as already mattering to us in various ways (our pre-reflexive experience is always-already infused with ‘value’, if you will), appealing to these ‘pre-given values’ will not help us escape the charge of ethical relativism unless these values are both universal and substantive. There may well be ‘no separation of factual information from meaning and value’ in our ordinary experience of the lifeworld (Marietta, p. 122). Nevertheless, among the values that show up in this ‘pre-thetic’ lifeworld, we still need to be able to distinguish between the entrenched sedimentations of pernicious traditions, on the one hand, and truly universal values (if there are any), on the other. Given the *conflicting* values embedded in our lifeworld, and the fact that pre-reflexive experiences are often shaped by, and so tend to reinforce, all manner of pre-existing *prejudices*, Brown’s own faith that the ethical wisdom ‘pre-given’ in the lifeworld will eventually resolve all of our conflicts seems rather optimistic.<sup>18</sup> The next two questions, then, are, first, whether there are any universal horizons of concern, and thus any ‘values ... that actually do hold for all subjects’ (Embree, p. 40), and if so, second,

whether these universal ‘values’ are substantive enough to ground an eco-phenomenological ethics.

The neo-Husserlian eco-phenomenologists answer ‘Yes’ to both questions. What makes their *naturalistic* ethical realism so interesting is their further contention that our pre-given world of ‘background values’ can itself be peeled back to reveal ‘an axiological transcendental’ (p. 13), that is, a proto-ethical substrate of nature which they believe can function as the ground for a new eco-phenomenological ethics. According to naturalistic eco-phenomenologists such as Brown, Kohák, Diehm, Ted Toadvine, and David Wood, the very notion of something’s being ‘good’ is ultimately rooted in the objective conditions required to sustain and enhance the life of an organism, while the ‘bad’ comes from those conditions which diminish or eradicate such life. Hence, Kohák maintains, ‘good and evil does have an ontological justification: some things sustain life, others destroy it’.<sup>19</sup> Brown suggests how one might develop Kohák’s view of the intrinsic value of life into a full-blown ethics: ‘Why are we so sure that dishonesty, fraud, rape, and murder are evil? Because they each, although in different ways, retard and inhibit the intrinsic purposes and desires of life’ (p. 14, cf. pp. 27–28). It is easy to understand why a naturalistic environmentalist might find such a view attractive. Yet, one need not believe the ‘rape is in our genetic interest’ view some sociobiologists defend in order to be skeptical of the claim that what we in the West take to be ethically good (or bad) is what serves (or undermines) the ‘intrinsic purposes and desires of life’ – even assuming, *concessio non dato*, that we can make adequate sense of that phrase, something Kohák does only by making ‘Husserl’s phenomenology an anticipation of evolutionism in sociobiology’ (p. 28), a view implicitly shared by a surprising number of *Eco-Phenomenology*’s contributors. For, the sociobiology literature is replete with less controversial studies of behaviors we would condemn as immoral among humans that seem to have been advantageous from the perspective of Dawkins’s ‘selfish gene’.<sup>20</sup> (Perhaps that should only surprise the prudish; as Freud explained in *Totem and Taboo*, societies do not morally prohibit acts no one wants to commit.) Indeed, both Nietzsche and Freud argue that Western civilization is premised on the repression and sublimation of the very innate purposes and desires of life to which the naturalistic ethical realists appeal, and that ethics functions, at least in part, to codify and enforce this very repression.<sup>21</sup>

So, instead of assuming that our core values are natural (which would be to *mystify* rather than to *naturalize* the ground of ethics), we should admit that, insofar as we can articulate an ethics in conformity with the ‘intrinsic purposes and desires of life’ (which Nietzsche too called for), the resulting *naturalistic* ethics is likely to differ significantly from the core value system we have inherited from the Judeo-Christian tradition, with its familiar proscription of ‘dishonesty, fraud, rape, ... murder’ and so on (and its defense

of pity and compassion for the weak, Nietzsche would add).<sup>22</sup> *Eco-Phenomenology's* naturalistic contributors thus seem more forthright when they suggest, for example, that an ethics that does justice to 'life' may require not only 'an attitude of moral regard and respect for some nonhuman others' (Brown, p. 10), but even – and as one of its 'basic principles' – 'that the human population needs to be reduced by several billion' (Embree, p. 47). If we cannot expand our core Judeo-Christian-Kantian value-system to accommodate such differences, they may render the adoption of a naturalistic eco-phenomenological ethics unlikely, undesirable, or both. At best, Marietta may be correct to see in this ethics a 'rejection of humanistic ethical concerns – which thinkers of our day are not ready to accept, but at which thinkers in the future might not blanch' (p. 125). Deferring empirical questions about what people may or may not be willing to accept, let us turn to our second question, focusing on philosophical questions about whether or not they should be so willing. (This distinction between 'empirical' and 'philosophical' problems will repeatedly break down, however, revealing a basic philosophical disagreement between eco-centric and humanistic eco-phenomenologists over what we *should* be willing to accept.)

Is the notion of the 'intrinsic purposes and desires of life' sufficiently substantive to ground an ethics? Insofar as it is, should we adopt this ethics? Nietzsche argues that a naturalistic *ethics of life* will not resemble our Judeo-Christian value system; some will go further and worry that it may not justify any value system at all. This worry about the *indeterminacy* of an ethics of life is suggested by the fact that, the more specific the values that are supposed to follow from 'the intrinsic purposes and desires of life', the more dubious their derivations seem. To add another example: when Kohák asserts that the human attachment to a 'homeland' is justified by the fact that we are embodied entities (p. 28), it sounds as if he is rationalizing a politically disastrous and thus ethically suspect attachment. We are not salmon, after all. The underlying worry here is that the 'axiological transcendental' (which holds that ultimately the objective conditions that generate life are *good* while those which diminish it are *bad*) may be too general to be of much help in resolving real-world environmental disputes, especially once we have made room at the ethical bargaining table for non-human organisms, as the view suggests we must when it posits life in general as its fundamental value. Let us test this worry, seeing how far this ethics of life can take us and what sort of problems it runs into, by considering some universal interests suggested by the naturalistic eco-phenomenologists.

## V. Life and the Goodness of Water

Perhaps many kinds of living beings can appreciate (after a fashion) 'the goodness of water' (Brown, p. 12), but what should we do in those

increasingly common situations in which water becomes so scarce that human groups and non-human organisms develop what amount to competing and incompatible claims to it? In the high desert region of central New Mexico, for example, a debate now rages between those who, in effect, want to divert scarce water from the Rio Grande in order to meet the needs and desires of the human population, and those environmentalists who argue that any further depletion of this once-great river will devastate the ecosystem it now struggles to support, driving to extinction the last of the silvery minnows, an endangered species (*Hybognathus amarus*) in the Rio Grande which has given the environmentalists their only leverage in this political struggle.<sup>23</sup> How will the eco-phenomenologists' naturalistic axiological transcendental help decide such pressing issues, when its appeal to those conditions that serve life seems to support both sides? How should we adjudicate between the competing demands of human lives, on the one hand, and the lives of the silvery minnow and other non-human animals, on the other?

One 'solution' might be to point out that life lives on life, that the needs of one group of organisms often come into conflict with the needs of another, and conclude that we should leave it to life to work through these problems for itself. Husserl recommended 'recognizing consciousness itself as a project of the world' (Klaver, p. 165), and, as Langer shows, one can extend such a view all the way to Freya Mathews' position that we should accept nature's 'dark side and its exemplification in human destructiveness' by recognizing that 'bulldozers, chainsaws, bombs, missiles, and all our other technologies are part of "the natural order" and contribute to "the moral order" as effectively as any forest', so that we should 'honor these ecologically destructive technologies' as nature's own projects (p. 105). Yet, even if eco-phenomenologists recognize some truth in the view of technology as an excrescence of evolution, this sociobiological perspective is unlikely to dislodge Heidegger's ontological critique of technology (discussed below) from the heart of the movement – especially given Brown's observation that '[d]reams of technological utopia have been replaced overnight by nightmares of ecological holocaust' (p. 5) – and most eco-phenomenologists will reject any neo-Darwinist 'might makes right' view where the environment is concerned, taking Mathew's view as an unwitting *reductio* of any all-inclusive concept of 'nature'. Instead, eco-phenomenologists will likely suggest that because life is sustained by ecosystems, we can settle ethical disputes by appealing to the overarching 'good' of the ecosystem within which the dispute takes place. Such an appeal to the needs of the ecosystem would favor keeping the water flowing through the Rio Grande – to 'Keep the Rio Grande Alive', as the environmentalist slogan has it – rather than diverting more water to meet the demands of a human population which, having already grown beyond the desert environment's capacity to sustain it, is on pace to exhaust all its potable aquifers within thirty years. (Of course, this

brings us back to the ‘empirical problem’ that most ‘citizens’ of our democracy prefer burying their heads in the sand to confronting the alarming implications of such facts.)

What will naturalistic eco-phenomenologists say, then, about cases in which the needs of different ecosystems collide, either at borders between systems (as, for example, when those systems expand or shift in response to changing environmental conditions), or when new and seemingly dominant organisms begin to emerge (by mutation or transplantation) within established ecosystems? They will point out that ecosystems tend to be connected holistically, nested within one another (vertically) in relations of hierarchical interdependence or joined (horizontally) in interlocking webs, which means (by the same logic as above) that disputes between ecosystems should in principle be decidable by appeal to the needs of a broader system encompassing the competing organisms or systems. The problem here, however, is not so much that such an appeal suggests an infinite regress (vertically, from ecosystem to meta-ecosystem to meta-meta-ecosystem, and so on; as well as horizontally, from one ecosystem directly to the entire holistic web of ecosystems), for we can halt this regress for almost all current practical purposes by treating the planet earth itself as the outermost ecosystem within which all its interconnected ecosystems are nested (even while acknowledging that all life in this earth ecosystem is in fact sustained by its precise place within the solar system – its distance from our sun and moon, for example – and that roughly the same point can be made regarding the place of our solar system within its galaxy, and so on). The more pressing conceptual problem is that the further up in the hierarchy of nested ecosystems one ascends, the more difficult it is to say what the needs of (and so the good for) that overarching ecosystem are, making it very difficult fairly to adjudicate conflicts within large-scale ecosystems. For, how do we really know which of the ecosystems that have come into conflict (the old or the new, say) better serve the needs of the meta-ecosystem encompassing them, unless we know what these needs are?

What, then, are the needs of the earth-as-ecosystem, beyond the perpetuation of conditions capable of sustaining life? Gaia metaphysics notwithstanding, does the earth ecosystem have an ‘interest’ in which of its competing sub-ecosystems wins out? Insofar as it does, is it not likely that the earth ecosystem’s interests will conflict with the interests of humanity, that species most likely (by several orders of magnitude) to extinguish life on earth, a species currently responsible for a massive depletion of biodiversity?<sup>24</sup> If, with Husserl, we should recognize ‘consciousness itself as a project of the world’, then, with Freud, we must also acknowledge that a powerful thanatological drive seems to be at work within this project. Eco-phenomenologists might not agree with Wood ‘that photographs from space argue that the earth, itself a living system, is dying’ (p. 226), but many share

Wood's belief that the grave nature of our environmental crisis calls for desperate measures, up to and including governmentally-controlled 'active human population reduction' (p. 224). Some of us worry that we see 'eco-fascism' here, a worry which will not be assuaged by Wood's suggestion that '[t]he argument that there are circumstances in which democratic societies might suspend democracy [in order to enact unpopular but necessary environmental measures] is not as totalitarian as it seems' (p. 231).<sup>25</sup> (Here we face another 'empirical' problem about what people are willing to accept; the recurrence of such problems, I suggest, indicates the presence of a basic philosophical conflict between eco-centric and humanistic eco-phenomenological approaches.)

Some may think we can get around this problem (that the interests of the meta-ecosystem seem either to be indefinite or else to conflict with our own) by appealing to the horizontal webs of interdependence conjoining smaller ecosystems. Thus, out of a sound respect for the time it takes a relatively stable ecosystem to develop (and the complexity of the relations of interdependence that constitute existing ecosystems), coupled with a sense for our own unavoidable custodial role, naturalistic eco-phenomenologists will once again tend to reject any simple logic of natural selection (which would trust life to sort out its own conflicts, as it always did before humanity) and instead fall back on the conservational logic which gives precedence to established ecosystems and so concludes, for example, that we should defend 'native' flora and fauna from 'alien' invasions. Thus Embree suggests another 'basic principle' of eco-phenomenology: 'exotic organisms cause trouble' (p. 47). However prudent, the inherent conservatism of such conservational arguments makes them sound strange coming from the political left. For, by placing the burden of proof against new organisms or ecosystems emerging within older ones, this conservative logic cuts against the admirable leftist call for openness to emerging differences, radical newness, alterity, and so on. It is, of course, easy to advocate an openness to radical difference in the abstract.<sup>26</sup> Such a principle is truly tested only when it becomes a question of being open to, and not merely tolerant of, the different ecosystem or species which threatens to replace your own. (Only the most prejudiced individual leaves the neighborhood when the first other moves in, but how many want to stay when they themselves become the other? How many welcome the other to the point of becoming other themselves?) One can add to the conservational logic a defense of the positive value of diversity, and then make a stronger, neo-liberal move which calls for an aggressive intolerance of intolerance. Yet, standard communitarian criticisms of that move (such as the allegation that it generates an imperialistic relativism that undermines traditional sources of meaning) suggest that communitarianism and environmentalism share a conservatism that liberalism lacks. From the progressive-liberal perspective, moreover, the problem is that tolerance is not sufficient (we must,

as Kant says in ‘What Is Enlightenment?’, ‘renounce the arrogant title of tolerance’); any genuine call for diversity demands more than that we uphold the diversity already represented within the status-quo, and so moves us back toward the need for openness to radical newness and difference, and thus back into conflict with the basic conservatism of the conservationist logic. Once we admit, finally, that under the long view there really are no ‘native’ species (as one tribe of Alaskan Eskimos says, ‘We are all visitors here’, and the later Heidegger recognized existence as an *Aufenthalt*, that is, an inherently finite visitation or ‘sojourn’ in intelligibility), the underlying conservational logic becomes problematic. Why should the length of time that one ecosystem has dominated a particular ecological niche be the trumping concern for the adjudication of conflicts in environmental ethics?<sup>27</sup> If it is not, then when ought we to prefer an unknown future to a known present? Certainly the natural history of the earth is filled with examples of ‘alien’ species becoming so well-established as to represent a new dominance within an ecosystem, or even the emergence of a new ecosystem. (Think not of the kudzu in the American South but rather of the eucalyptus groves in California – or, from a slightly longer-term perspective, of humanity on the earth.) Indeed, our best understanding of evolution suggests that the static perpetuation of the status-quo is *not* sustainable in the long run, since such factors as random mutation and escalating competition are important for long-term survival in an ever-changing environment.<sup>28</sup>

It was just such a line of thought, however, that led Nietzsche to his controversial doctrine of the ‘superman’ (or ‘trans-human’, *Übermensch*), his neo-Darwinian idea that evolution is not over, since humanity too ‘is something that shall be overcome’. Nietzsche’s pursuit of a naturalistic ethics of life, in other words, brought him to the conclusion that if what we most value is the continuing survival of life itself, then humanity not only will but *should* be superseded.<sup>29</sup> This brings out what may be the most serious objection to the naturalistic ethical realism we have been examining. What if a rigorous ethical observance of the underlying conditions that sustain and enhance life (the very logic of Nietzsche’s ‘transvaluation of values’) actually undermines what human beings prize most highly: art, literature, religion, culture, and the like? Here the naturalistic eco-phenomenological perspective, true to its Nietzschean roots, threatens to generate a defense of the ‘post-human’. For, insofar as naturalistic ethical realism generates an eco-centric ethical perfectionism in which the preservation of life in general is the highest value, it is likely to cut against a more humanistic perfectionism, according to which what matters ultimately is that we cultivate the development of distinctive talents and capacities which have thus far been associated almost exclusively with the human species.<sup>30</sup> Here, in other words, a perspective that gains much of its appeal from its attempt to put other forms of life on an equal footing with the human species risks losing that appeal by devaluing the



highest achievements of humanity, even advocating the overcoming of the human as such – whether through continued evolution or technological innovation (or the latter understood as the former). The human fear of such a *coup d'état* by our technology (given its most popular expression in the *Terminator* and *Matrix* series) is not groundless (as these examples drawn from science fiction might suggest), but reflects a growing anxiety about the place of technology in our lives (indeed, about the displacement of what matters most in our lives *by* technology), an anxiety perhaps best understood in terms of the Heideggerian critique of technology appropriated and disseminated by transcendental eco-phenomenologists such as myself.

## VI. Transcendental Ethical Realism in Eco-Phenomenology

Although naturalistic approaches predominate in *Eco-Phenomenology*, it is no coincidence that, '[o]ver the past decades, environmentalists have consistently focused more on Heidegger than on any of the other phenomenologists' (Langer, p. 112; cf. Marietta, p. 133 note 1). Heidegger's 'later' (post-1937) philosophy in particular has proved an incomparably rich source of phenomenological reflection for ecologically-minded philosophers, thanks to both his incisive philosophical critique of, and his suggestive treatments for, the nihilistic worldview underlying phenomena such as environmental devastation.<sup>31</sup> The later Heidegger's ontological critique of 'enframing' (*Gestell*, our nihilistic, 'technological' understanding of being) builds on the idea that we *Dasein* implicitly participate in the making-intelligible of our worlds, indeed, that our sense of reality is mediated by lenses inherited from metaphysics. Here Heidegger historicizes Kant's *discursivity thesis*, which holds that intelligibility is the product of a subconscious process by which we spontaneously organize and so filter a sensibly overwhelming world to which we are fundamentally receptive.<sup>32</sup> For Heidegger, however, this implicit organization is accomplished not by historically-fixed categories but rather by a changing historical understanding of what and how entities *are* (an *onto-theological* understanding of both their essence and existence, to take the most famous example), and this 'understanding of being' is supplied by the metaphysical tradition. Metaphysics, as ontotheology, temporarily secures the intelligible order both ontologically, from the inside-out, and theologically, the outside-in (so to speak), thereby supplying the most basic conceptual parameters and ultimate standards of legitimacy for each of history's successive *epochs* or constellations of intelligibility. We late-moderns, for example, implicitly process intelligibility through the ontotheological lenses inherited from Nietzsche's metaphysics, which ultimately understands the being of entities as eternally-recurring will-to-power, that is, as forces coming-together and breaking-apart with no goal other than their own unlimited

self-augmentation. The result is an unnoticed ‘enframing’ of reality, by which we tend to reduce every entity we encounter to the status of an intrinsically meaningless ‘resource’ (*Bestand*) merely to be *optimized* as efficiently as possible, leveling all attempts to say what matters to us down to empty optimization imperatives (such as the ubiquitous: ‘Get the most out of your potential!’). Thus we come to treat even ourselves (modernity’s vaunted ‘subject’) in the terms underlying our technological refashioning of the world, as just another resource to be optimized, ordered, and enhanced with maximal efficiency. Now, to take just one telling example, for every individual who goes out for a hike in nature in the USA, thousands drive to indoor gyms in order to ‘get their exercise’ on a treadmill, seeking to optimize their health by going nowhere fast, often while watching television or otherwise diverting their attention through technological means.

While many eco-phenomenologists recognize Heidegger’s ontological critique of technology as a revealing understanding of the precise metaphysical roots of our worsening environmental crisis, others ignore it and so unknowingly reinscribe Nietzsche’s metaphysics into their environmentalism. It is thus crucial to notice, for example, that the naturalistic eco-phenomenological view we examined seeks to ground the ‘intrinsic value’ of living organisms in an implicitly Nietzschean understanding of life as ‘a spontaneous, self-maintaining system, sustaining and reproducing itself, executing its program’ (Toadvine, p. 140), thereby failing to recognize that this ontological understanding of life as a self-reproducing program clearly is borrowed from, and so would inevitably reify, our nihilistic Nietzschean ontotheology. Of course, however insightful and revealing Heidegger’s critique of technology is, if he gave us only this diagnosis with no reason to hope for a cure, his critics would be right to accuse him of ‘hopeless heteronomism’ (Marcuse), fatalistic quietism, and so on. Fortunately, the later Heidegger’s influence on environmental philosophy stems from a second source as well, namely, his complementary efforts to elaborate a positive philosophical treatment for the nihilism that results from the fact that we implicitly interpret intelligibility through the lenses of our age’s reigning Nietzschean ontotheology.<sup>53</sup> This treatment includes Heidegger’s calls for such ecologically-suggestive phenomenological comportments as ‘dwelling’ (*wohnen*) and ‘releasement toward things’ (*Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*), to which we will return shortly.

Michael Zimmerman, a leading neo-Heideggerian environmentalist, is best known for persuasively connecting Heidegger and deep ecology. This is rather ironic, however, since his contribution to *Eco-Phenomenology* shows him having reconsidered his advocacy of this connection. Zimmerman’s reversal can be explained in part by the fact that his own important work on the ‘Heidegger controversy’ made him acutely aware of the political risks of enlisting a philosopher often maligned as an ‘unrepentant fascist’ as the prime philosophical ally for a radical environmental movement similarly accused

of ‘eco-fascism’, risks which presumably would only be heightened if it were widely known that the emergence of the environmental movement itself was intertwined with the rise of Nazism (as Zimmerman shows in another important article).<sup>34</sup> I have argued elsewhere that Heidegger joined the Nazi party in 1933 in order to attempt to enact his own long-developed philosophical vision for a radical reformation of the university. It seems likely, however, that Heidegger’s stunningly naïve belief that the Nazi ‘revolution’ could be led to a ‘second, deeper awakening’ in which it would discover its own ‘inner truth and greatness’ was reinforced by the misleading sense of Nazism he absorbed from the German youth movement, a movement pushing for educational reform which drew a great deal of its strength from the student hiking associations, which in turn were rooted philosophically in German romanticism. Indeed, I would suggest that the great romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin was, in effect, the first hiker, thanks to the way in which his legendary, heartbreaking walk back home to Germany through the French countryside captured the imagination of subsequent generations. Nietzsche, an early admirer of Hölderlin and a passionate proponent of the culturally-restorative powers of youth, celebrated hiking as a stimulus to philosophical innovation (and even wrote poetry under such pseudonyms as ‘Prince Freebird’). In turn, Nietzsche inspired the Stephan George circle, one of whose members, Norbert von Hellingrath, brought to light Hölderlin’s later poetry, the very poetry which – taking us full circle – proved formative for Heidegger’s own philosophical vision of a spiritual revolution, first of Germany, then, later, of the world. This complex of romantic influences on environmentalism deserves a careful, nuanced study; the fact that the historical rise of environmentalism is permeated by the politically-dangerous dream of philosophical revolution will not allow it simply to be dismissed.<sup>35</sup>

Of course, Zimmerman’s dramatic reversal of his own well-known case for taking Heidegger as the prime philosophical ally for the deep-ecological movement cannot be understood simply as the politically prudent strategizing of a leading philosophical environmentalist. Philosophically, it turns rather on Zimmerman’s adoption of Thomas Sheehan’s contention that the later Heidegger never meant to disseminate an understanding of ‘being as such’ (*Seins als Solche*) that was any different from his own earlier understanding of the ‘being of entities’ (*Sein des Seienden*). Yet, Heidegger himself admits (in his 1936–37 *Beiträge*) that his own earlier failure to recognize precisely this difference was ‘disastrous’ philosophically, and those (like Julian Young and myself) who believe Sheehan is wrong on this crucial point will also think it a serious mistake for Zimmerman to follow him here. For, deprived of the central notion of ‘being as such’, Heidegger’s later thought would indeed suffer from many of the problems Sheehan and Zimmerman diagnose – and numerous others. For instance, Heidegger could not account for ‘historicity’ (the vertiginous fact that our bedrock understanding of what is changes with

time), and, most seriously, his later positive project would lose much of its force and appeal.<sup>36</sup> Hermeneutic generosity alone thus suggests we recognize the notion of 'being as such' at work in Heidegger's later thought and see what follows for eco-phenomenological appropriations of his work, rather than claim that he lacks this crucial notion and then enumerate the resulting problems for taking him as an ally of environmentalism.

The main reason the later Heidegger became dissatisfied with (and so mostly stopped using) the word 'being' (*Sein*) is that it is ambiguous between 'being as such' and 'the being of entities'. This ambiguity was 'disastrous' not only because it allowed him to mistake the 'being of entities' for 'being as such' in his early work (which made it possible for him to believe he could 'recover' a 'fundamental ontology' from beneath history, a false belief which, I have shown elsewhere, fueled his political ambitions), but also because it obscures three connected insights central to his later thought: first, that 'being as such' makes possible the historical succession of different metaphysical understandings of the 'being of entities'; second, that metaphysics, as 'onto-theology', systematically obscures and forgets 'being as such'; and thus, finally, that metaphysics systematically elides its own condition of possibility (which means that the metaphysical tradition can be deconstructed by immanent critiques that help reveal 'being as such' and so point beyond this tradition).<sup>37</sup> While the later Heidegger thus abandons the locution 'being' as disastrously misleading, he nevertheless makes clear that the notion of 'being as such' must be understood as implicit in his later concept of the 'fourfold'. Indeed, this fourfold of 'earth, heavens, mortals, and divinities' simply unpacks the four quadrants of 'being' when it has been 'crossed-through' (~~Being~~), and so is meant by Heidegger as another way of developing and conveying his post-metaphysical insights into 'being as such'.<sup>38</sup> Because 'releasement to things' is the later Heidegger's name for a phenomenological comportment receptive to this fourfold, and 'dwelling' is another (slightly earlier) name for a comportment open to 'being as such', these eco-phenomenologically suggestive comportments simply cannot be understood without recognizing the role of 'being as such' in his later thought.

Here, moreover, we encounter the transcendental ethical realism the later Heidegger pioneered, according to which we discover what really matters when we are appropriately open to the environment, but what we thereby discover are neither facts nor values but rather 'being as such', a transcendental source of meaning that cannot be reduced to facts, values, or entities of any kind.<sup>39</sup> For, as Zimmerman sees, 'letting things be' means 'allowing them to manifest themselves in terms of their own inherent possibilities' (p. 79), while the 'fourfold' poetically names the interwoven horizons of this phenomenological self-showing, the 'presencing' which Heidegger understands as made possible by all the grounds (including the past) which bear us up without being completely within our control ('earth') as well as the

projects which open the future ('heavens'), and which can thus matter most deeply ('divinities') to we finite and so reflexive entities ('mortals').<sup>40</sup> Similarly, to 'dwell' means to be at 'home' with 'being as such', albeit an *unheimlich* dwelling in which one is outside any metaphysical understanding of the being of entities (*pace* Langer, p. 114), attuned to that temporally-dynamic phenomenological 'presencing' that metaphysics both presupposes and elides. These compartments, however difficult to understand, will be crucial to any deep eco-phenomenological appropriation of the later Heidegger. When we adopt these compartments, and so become attuned to the phenomenological 'presencing' whereby 'being as such' manifests itself, we come to understand entities as being richer in meaning than we are capable of doing justice to conceptually, rather than taking them as intrinsically-meaningless resources awaiting optimization.

Wood suggests that, in order to transcend the nihilistic metaphysics of our age, eco-phenomenologists '*need a model of the whole as something that will inevitably escape our model of it*' (p. 217), which is what both Heidegger and Levinas give us with their respective understandings of 'being as such' and 'alterity'.<sup>41</sup> Given the proximity of Heidegger and Levinas on this crucial matter, it is revealing to observe that the same refusal to recognize the notion of 'being as such' in Heidegger's later thought helps motivate the popular move beyond Heidegger to Levinas in pursuit of the ethical perspective Heidegger is supposedly missing. This too is ironic, since Levinas's ethics is grounded in alterity ('ethics is the other; the other is ethics', as Levinas told Derrida), and Levinas's notion of alterity (as a radical other who issues aporetic commands both necessary and impossible to obey) is much closer to the later Heidegger's understanding of 'being as such' (as a temporally-dynamic presencing that simultaneously elicits and defies conceptual circumscription) than most Levinas scholars acknowledge. Of course, these Levinasians are simply following Levinas himself, whose notorious animosity toward Heidegger (an extreme instance of Bloom's 'anxiety of influence') distorted his own understanding of the profound conceptual debts he owed to Heidegger's thinking. Nevertheless, as Wood pointedly observes: 'If you're going to be a Levinasian' (that is, someone who practices a Levinasian ethics of reading), then 'you couldn't possibly read Heidegger in the way Levinas reads Heidegger'.<sup>42</sup>

## VII. Levinas, Heidegger, and the Ethical Question of Animality

Rather than endlessly restaging the old debates between the masters, however, we do better to follow the spirit of the eco-phenomenological movement by working creatively to appropriate their thinking for ourselves. In this spirit, Christian Diehm makes a noble attempt to rehabilitate Levinas's notion of

alterity, purging it of its anthropocentrism so that it can serve the cause of animal rights (pp. 171–185). Edward Casey, however, points out a formidable textual obstacle to this well-meaning hermeneutic endeavor, namely, Levinas's (barely secularized) belief that only the face of the other *person* can grant us access to alterity (albeit a paradoxical mode of access in which alterity is 'manifest' but 'non-apparent'). Levinas did well to ask himself, 'Can things have a face?' (p. 192), but, as Casey shows, 'Levinas himself would doubtless have to conclude that either there is nothing like a face in the environment ... or the face is all over the place: in which case, its meaning will be [*pace* Wood] so diluted as to risk losing any ethical urgency. Otherwise put, ethics is human or it does not exist at all' (p. 193).<sup>43</sup> Casey's sharp critique of Levinas is convincing on this point, but Diehm does well nonetheless in what I take to be an attempt to show that the conceptual resources of a great philosopher often exceed the narrow conclusions that philosopher, as an idiosyncratic individual, actually drew from them.<sup>44</sup>

We could use the same strategy to ally Heidegger (more convincingly than Levinas) with the animal rights movement, building on John Haugeland's 'unorthodox' argument that '*Dasein*' and 'human being' are not coextensive, since the reference of '*Dasein*' is, in principle, broader.<sup>45</sup> Haugeland argues that corporations, for example, could qualify as '*Dasein*', but I would prefer to suggest extending the term to (at least some) non-human animals. Indeed, on my view, *Being and Time*'s revolutionary conception of the self not as a thinking substance, subject, ego, or consciousness, but as a *Dasein* (a 'being-here', that is, a temporally-structured making-intelligible of the place in which I happen to find myself) promises us a philosophically-defensible, non-speciesist way of making the ethically-crucial distinctions between (something like) 'lower' and 'higher' forms of life missing from the eco-centric views considered above (as well as from more famous non-speciesist ethical views like Peter Singer's sensation-centered consequentialism). Without such distinctions, these positions, we have seen, tend to generate anti-human consequences that render their widespread acceptance extremely unlikely, leading to a practical dead-end in which even as creative a philosopher as Wood is willing to suggest a seemingly 'eco-fascist' solution to the global environmental crisis in which benevolent eco-centric dictatorships temporarily abrogate decision-making from less rational, democratic states (p. 231).<sup>46</sup> Yet, such anti-human implications and anti-democratic conclusions can be avoided, and without falling back into illegitimate, speciesist reasoning, if we understand 'rights' (with the progressive strand of the liberal tradition) as political protections owed to *all* agents capable of reflexively pursuing life-projects, since the pursuit of such life-projects gives one the kind of world that both desires and deserves protecting.<sup>47</sup> The suggestion, put provocatively, is that eco-phenomenologists should answer the question, 'Which entities deserve intrinsic rights?', with: 'All *Dasein*', that is, all entities whose being

is an issue for them, and only these entities (although other entities could, of course, deserve rights instrumentally, in virtue of their relations to *Dasein*, including relations of eco-systemic interdependence).

On this neo-Heideggerian eco-phenomenological view, what counts (in contrast to the naturalistic, neo-Nietzschean and Husserlian positions considered earlier) is not life *per se*, but rather a life that has a temporally-enduring world that matters to it explicitly. Heidegger did well to escape the gravity of his age far enough to recognize that being a *Dasein* is not an all-or-nothing affair, since there are degrees of 'having a world'. Still, as Llewelyn observes, 'Heidegger's phenomenology ... does not entail this ... thinking of the non-human other. It only enables it' (on Llewelyn's view, by conceiving of *Dasein* broadly as 'being's *oikos*, the ecologicality of being' (pp. 58, 62)). The simple tripartite distinction Heidegger famously proposes in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* between the 'worldless' rock, the 'world-poor' animal, and the world-rich '*Dasein*' really only inaugurates the more difficult labor of drawing fine-grained distinctions on a much fuller continuum. We might imagine such a *continuum of Dasein* as stretching, for example, from:

(1) 'worldless' inorganic matter; to (2) similarly 'worldless' invertebrate organisms (lacking a nervous-system and so physiologically incapable of sensation); to (3) simple vertebrate organisms (possessing of the capacity to experience pleasure and pain, and so somewhere between being 'worldless' and 'world-poor'); to (4) 'world-poor' entities like the lizard on the rock and cow in the field (sentient but not reflexive, apparently permanently immersed in perceptual immediacy); to (5) the 'near-*Dasein*' of such entities as the chimpanzee (whose self-awareness is demonstrated, for example, by a remarkable capacity to incorporate an explicit understanding of its role in a complex social group into a creative plan to accomplish difficult, temporally-distant goals); to (6) the partial *Dasein* of such entities as gorillas (who conveniently demonstrate their possession of a world by learning our languages); to (7) the potential *Dasein* of young children (who combine capacities like (6) with the potential for (8)); to (8) the 'rich world' of full *Dasein* (including not only normal adult human beings but also whatever other entities – be they organic, android, or alien – possess a reflexive self-understanding making them capable of experiencing not merely pleasure and pain but also immense suffering and sublime elevation, and of developing and pursuing a self-understanding which gives meaning to their lives from within); and, perhaps, to (9) entities with even richer worlds than human *Dasein* – who could deny the possibility?

This suggested elaboration of a graded '*continuum of Dasein*' remains too simplistic and speculative, of course, and perhaps its implicit hierarchy is marked by a residual anthropocentrism. Notice, however, that the same 'criticisms' hold even for extreme, eco-centric perspectives, which yield such anthropomorphizing confusions as Klaver's belief that a stone can have 'being-in-the-world' (pp. 159–62) and Diehm's idea that, in all organisms, 'the horizon opened by need is, minimally, a horizon of self-concern, an openness to experience', such that mere 'being alive ... is

appropriately ... characterized as being-for-itself' (p. 181). Such implicitly anthropomorphic descriptions – which seek to bestow upon simple organic (and even inorganic) entities reflexive capacities such as 'self-concern', 'being-for-itself', and even 'being-in-the-world' (in other words, *Dasein*) – generate a hyperbolic, neo-Levinasian extension of ethical concern in which ethical duties, multiplied to infinity, become uselessly 'diluted' (as Casey argues).<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, although Marietta's claim that 'we are no more able than the ape to transcend the biological realities that affect our lives' (p. 129) is false (since it ignores the transformations made possible by our scientific and medical technologies), the continuum I mark out may also err in assigning a lesser degree of *Dasein* to chimpanzees, for example; certainly we should not precipitously foreclose that important empirical question or others like it, questions which, I would speculate, we will be able to address much more precisely as we perfect techno-empirical means (such as fMRI and PET scans) that should one day enable us to share more directly in the experiences of others, thereby opening up new domains for ethno-anthropological exploration (enabling us to work to cross the inter-species line, rather than expecting other animals to do so, for example, by learning sign-language). While we struggle to decide which entities are sufficiently *Dasein*-like to deserve *intrinsic* political rights (again, other entities will deserve such rights *instrumentally*, in virtue of their relations to *Dasein* – including relations of eco-systemic interdependence), however, the burden of proof should be on the side of higher primates, elephants, dolphins, and other species we reasonably suspect might possess *Dasein*-like capabilities. The practical consequences of even this fairly minimal expansion of our current conception of rights would be immense, and would surely be recognized by the naturalistic eco-phenomenologists as an enormous step in the right direction. The point of the continuum, then, is simply to suggest that we could articulate 'degrees of *Dasein*' with more subtlety than Heidegger himself ever did, and thereby work toward a non-speciesist way of distinguishing between different kinds of life, as in fact we must if we are ever to find equitable ways of resolving the inter-species ethical dilemmas that will inevitably arise in a universe of scarcity, where life continues to live on life.

Such distinctions would enable the neo-Heideggerian version of the transcendental eco-phenomenological approach to avoid the anti-human excesses of the naturalistic approach without falling back into speciesism, and, as we have seen, the two approaches differ in other ways as well. Let us conclude by indicating one final difference: neo-Heideggerian eco-phenomenologists will disagree with the Husserlian idea that '[a]n ethics of the environment must begin with the sheer and simple fact of being struck by something wrong happening in the surrounding world' (Casey, p. 187). Because the emergence and development of environmentalist intuitions require us, both as individuals



and as societies, to recognize, criticize, and *transcend* the tacit metaphysical lenses by which our nihilistic Nietzschean ontotheology encourages us to treat all entities as meaningless ‘resources’, we need an experience of what in the environment is ‘right’ (whole, holy, hale, healing – this is the role filled by that which Heidegger calls ‘being as such’), before we can be struck by the world’s being (to quote the Bard) ‘out of joint’.<sup>49</sup> Thus, like Heidegger, Neil Evernden stresses the necessity for (what we could call) a ‘conversion experience’ to transcendental eco-phenomenology. Evernden thinks that ‘some experience that transcends the normal understanding and holds it temporarily in abeyance so that the personal awareness of the living world is restored ... is a prerequisite to any real change in the awareness of individuals’ (quoted by Toadvine, p. 142). Whether such a sublime experience is afforded by a mountain vista, the night sky, an encounter with a wild animal, the birth of a child, a philosophical conversation, or (as Heidegger himself suggests) any appropriately thoughtful encounter with the myriad of ‘humble things’, such transformative encounters – in which we recognize entities as being more than resources awaiting optimization (and so learn to approach them with care, humility, patience, gratitude, even awe) – can become microcosms of (as well as inspiration for) the revolution beyond our underlying ontotheology that we need in order to set our world aright.

As Langer reminds us, the Heideggerian insight inspiring the eco-phenomenological movement is that ‘[t]here can be no “fix” for environmental issues. Rather, there must be a radical change in humans’ relation with being’ (p. 114). Heidegger characterizes the requisite transformation as an environmental *awakening*. In ‘The Fieldpath’ (1949), he writes:

Humanity in vain attempts to order the globe through their plans whenever they are not in harmony with the message of the fieldpath. The danger threatens that contemporary humanity remains hard of hearing to its language. ... The message of the fieldpath *awakens* a spirit who loves the open air and, at a favorable place, leaps over even heaviness into an extreme serenity [or even ‘cheerfulness,’ *Heiterkeit*]. ... The expanse of all grown things which dwell around the fieldpath bestows the world. It is only in the unspoken of their language that, as the old Master of letter and life, Eckhart, says, God is God.<sup>50</sup>

Heidegger creatively appropriated his eco-phenomenological comportment of ‘releasement toward things’ from the great mystic Meister Eckhart, and as Heidegger practiced this comportment and elaborated the philosophical insights it afforded, it seems clear that he was (in the words of John Muir) ‘urged on and on through endless, inspiring, Godful beauty’.<sup>51</sup> From the naturalistic perspective, such a transcendental approach may well look like a kind of ‘eco-spiritualism’ (Embree, p. 45). Yet, Heidegger knew that the transformation he and other eco-phenomenologists call for cannot be achieved through the nostalgic idealization of a pre-industrial age (as though by returning to the mythic Black Forest his critics enjoy lampooning), but only

by forging ahead creatively into a new future, which, as Heidegger repeated, requires *transcending* (in the Hegelian sense) our nihilistic, Nietzschean ontotheology.<sup>52</sup> We cannot accomplish this transcendence, however, by unintentionally reinscribing this ontotheology into our guiding understanding of what organic life is, and then seeking to base a naturalistic eco-phenomenological ethics on this implicitly nihilistic understanding of life as a self-replicating system. As Brown himself says, ‘the ecological crisis is a crisis of meaning. It is ultimately the meaning of nature and humanity that is at stake’ (p. 5).

In the end, then, the contrast between the naturalistic and transcendental eco-phenomenological approaches comes down to two different understandings of what it is about life that makes it most worth living – in other words, to two competing versions of ethical perfectionism. Naturalistic ethical realism, we have seen, generates an eco-centric perfectionism that emphasizes the flourishing of life as such, even at the expense of the human, and so courts the charge of eco-fascism. Transcendental ethical realism, on the other hand, yields a more humanistic perfectionism, yet avoids speciesism by seeking to protect the cultivation and development of those distinctive traits and capacities belonging, by right, to all Dasein. I have suggested that eco-phenomenologists should prefer this Heideggerian version of the transcendental approach, not only because this perspective reveals serious problems with the naturalistic approach (including eco-fascism, the call for a post-human condition, and the reification of Nietzschean nihilism), but also because (as we saw in the case of animal-rights) the neo-Heideggerian approach promises to help us draw nearer to the loftier eco-centric goals of the naturalistic approach while avoiding its problems.<sup>53</sup>

#### NOTES

- 1 As Monika Langer shows, environmental philosophers still disagree about the meaning of such basic concepts as ‘environment,’ ‘nature,’ and ‘life’ (pp. 103–6). Not surprisingly, then, terms such as ‘deep ecology’ are also used in a variety of different ways, sometimes by the same author; John Llewelyn plumbs the depths no less than four different ways (pp. 56–8, 60). In the literature, ecological ‘depth’ is taken to mean everything from holistic to far-sighted, non-instrumental, eco-centric, ethically-realist, ontologically-focused, transcendental, comprehensive, or radical (see also Arne Naess, ‘The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary’, *Inquiry* 16:1 (1973), pp. 95–100).
- 2 Influential rearguard movements continue defending these distinctions; see e.g., Jerry Fodor, ‘A Science of Tuesdays’, *London Review of Books* 22:14 (20 July 2000); and Stanley Fish, ‘Truth but No Consequences: Why Philosophy Doesn’t Matter’, *Critical Inquiry* 29:3 (2003), pp. 389–417. They have, however, been persuasively undermined by leading analytic philosophers; see, e.g., John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1994) and Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Harvard University Press, 2002).
- 3 I say ‘descriptive enterprise’ rather than Husserl’s own ‘descriptive science’ (see John Llewelyn, pp. 51–4) in order to put into parentheses the complex, politically-charged question of phenomenology’s relation to science (see note 46 below). Notice, moreover, that

if all descriptions are implicitly prescriptive (if, for example, Irene Klaver is right that '[a]ny act of naming is formative as well as performative; it sets a boundary and effectuates a norm' (p. 162)), then we need instead to recognize that phenomenology too is a *prescriptive* endeavor – or, better, a series of sometimes conflicting prescriptive projects, as in the case of the competing eco-phenomenological approaches examined below.

- 4 See Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. R. A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), pp. 45–9. Langer (pp. 115–7) and Ted Toadvine (pp. 146–8) suggest that the later Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'flesh' also undermines mind/world dualism.
- 5 For Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, see below and my 'Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger's *Destruction of Metaphysics*', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8:3 (2000), pp. 297–327.
- 6 (Cf. Llewelyn, 54.) Heidegger's hyphens, moreover, convey the 'equiprimordiality' of these linked terms: each must be understood from the whole, and so cannot be made the basis for understanding the others. On Heidegger's radical challenge to Cartesian dualism, see Charles B. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983); John Richardson, *Existential Epistemology: A Heideggerian Critique of the Cartesian Project* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); and Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).
- 7 Critics have long advanced the same charge of residual Cartesianism against Heidegger himself, moreover, pointing to *Being and Time's* reliance on the notion of a *solus ipse*, a self whose identity-bestowing connections to its existential projects have been severed in its 'being-toward-death'. See Stephen Crowell, 'Subjectivity: Locating the First-Person in *Being and Time*', *Inquiry* 44:4 (2001), pp. 433–54.
- 8 (See e.g. Marietta, pp. 121–4.) I say 'non-subjective reality' because the idea that environmental 'values' are 'objective' runs into two kinds of problems. First, the collapse of the fact/value distinction is supposed to follow from phenomenology's undercutting of subject/object dualism. For, if facts are observer-independent (or 'objective') features of reality, while values are observer-dependent (or 'subjective') features, then we cannot draw the fact/value distinction without presupposing the subject/object divide. Nor, obviously, can we refer to these purported 'values' as *objective* once we have undermined the subject/object divide. Second, one can criticize the Husserlians' frequent reliance on the theory-laden Nietzschean concept of *value* for another reason. An 'objective value' is an oxymoron, Heidegger argues, because a value is always a value posited by a subject (such that values attach to, rather than inhere in, objects). Describing what matters to us in terms of 'values' thus *undermines* ethical realism by exaggerating the degree to which what matters is simply up to us (cf. Llewelyn, p. 57; Langer, pp. 112–4). Indeed, the 'subjectivistic metaphysics' implicit in the concept of value encourages the phenomenologically inaccurate view that we subjects can simply withdraw our existing values (perhaps even entire value-systems) and posit new ones, as both Nietzsche and Sartre sometimes assume. Still, Husserl himself would resist this objection of *ethical voluntarism* by stressing two of his phenomenological insights: first, the fundamental unity of valuing and entity-valued; and second, the relative fixity of historically-sedimented, intersubjective meaning structures (Embree, pp. 40–1).
- 9 Monica Langer implicitly raises the question 'of what it means to remain true to "the earth"' for Nietzsche (p. 112), but, suggesting that eco-feminists can 'develop a fuller description' than this 'blatantly phallogocentric' philosopher (p. 106), she leaves this important question unanswered. *Pace* Langer's charge that Nietzsche is 'blatantly phallogocentric', however, one could note the Nietzschean precedents of Derrida's '(affirmative) deconstruction of phallogocentrism as philosophy' (Derrida, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy*, trans. J. Plug [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002], p. 71) in, e.g., *Zarathustra's* 'On the Afterworldly'. Here Nietzsche writes, provocatively: 'it was the body that despaired of the earth ... It wanted to crash through these ultimate walls with its head, *and not only with its head*' (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in W. Kaufmann (Ed. and Trans.), *The Portable Nietzsche* [New York: Penguin, 1954], p. 143, my emphasis). Langer claims that Zarathustra's 'eagle and snake ... symbolize the integration of male and female power' (p. 111; for Heidegger, they also symbolize the ontotheological unity of will-to-power and

- eternal recurrence), but Langer does not consider Derrida's provocative implication (in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*) that Nietzsche is an hermaphrodite – an entity which (among some species) appears more frequently during times of environmental adversity.
- 10 When Zarathustra first introduces his motto, '*Remain true to the earth*', he adds: 'and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes!' (See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, op. cit., p. 125.) Similarly, Nietzsche refers to those who pursue the 'other-worldly' and so become nihilists of *ressentiment* as the 'afterworldly' (*Hinterweltern*), for they seek something behind or beyond this world, something 'metaphysical'. Faithfulness to the earth – Zarathustra's godless faith for (supposedly) anti-metaphysical naturalists – is meant to follow from an understanding of the more famous phrase Nietzsche emphasizes in section three of 'Zarathustra's Prologue', viz.: '*I teach you the superman.*' On the meaning of Nietzsche's 'superman,' see my 'Deconstructing the Hero', in J. McLaughlin (ed.) *Comics as Philosophy* (University Press of Mississippi, forthcoming).
  - 11 Hence Nietzsche's famous quip that Christianity is 'Platonism for the masses'. One need not assume, of course, that Nietzsche gives a fair hearing to Christianity or Platonism in order to appreciate the cogency of his psychological understanding of nihilistic *ressentiment*. For a less controversial example of this nihilistic pursuit of the 'other-worldly', think of our many contemporaries who feel miserable with their bodies (or the bodies of their loved ones) because they compare so unfavorably with the air-brushed and computer-enhanced pictures of 'super-models' in fashion magazines (and, increasingly, on television and in movies) – in other words, because their own bodies do not live up to a degree of beauty that no human body actually instantiates.
  - 12 Indeed, Nietzsche proposes that we *embrace* a 'sour grapes' phenomenon, consciously rejecting the pursuit of that which we know we can never attain. Max Scheler is thus incorrect to use Aesop's fable of the fox who calls the grapes he cannot reach 'sour' to illustrate Nietzsche's critique of *Ressentiment*. For such an illustration, we could, instead, imagine a scenario in which Tantalus, finally given food to slake his immense hunger, denigrates it nevertheless because it fails to live up to what he has long imagined would be the taste of those tantalizing grapes hanging forever out of his reach.
  - 13 See Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, op. cit., p. 188.
  - 14 Husserl too employs an earth/world contrast (Klaver, p. 164), which could be revealingly compared with Heidegger's more famous view.
  - 15 See Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 33–4.
  - 16 In 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry', Heidegger argues that Friedrich Hölderlin is the 'poet of poetry' because Hölderlin's poetry poetically expresses what poetry is; his poetry names-into-being the way poetry names-into-being. Analogously, in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', van Gogh is for Heidegger the painter of painting, since his painting expresses the essence of painting: the essential tension of an interdependent 'earth' and 'world' which allows art to 'set its truth to work'. (We should not allow the long-standing debate about whether van Gogh painted a peasant's shoes or his own – Heidegger notes in the 1960 Reclam edition that we cannot tell 'to whom they belong' – to obscure the point of his analysis.)
  - 17 Brown comes close to giving away the entire 'ethical realist' game here, by allowing for an incommensurability in our phenomenological experience of the environment that is incompatible with a naturalistic, eco-phenomenological ethical realism. He would do better to maintain that the natural environment *normally* shows up as intrinsically 'valuable' when it is experienced pre-theoretically, and that apparent exceptions should be understood as unnoticed re-theorizations (e.g., unconscious distortions) of this normal experience. Thus, if it is indeed possible for a clear-cut old-growth forest to be experienced pre-reflexively as *good* (which I doubt), that would likely be because ordinary experience has been perverted in the name of one or more powerful but unassumable pragmatic interests (e.g., pathological avarice), interests which, being repressed, do not allow themselves to be recognized as tacitly distorting ordinary pre-theoretical experience. Of course, some environmental harms may be experienced *indirectly* as good (polluted skies, e.g., can make for beautiful sunsets), and this leads to the question of how ethically *deep* our ecological perceptions run. Can

phenomenologists pre-reflexively experience global warming? We can experience changes to environmental conditions (animal migration patterns, precipitation and temperature changes and effects, etc.) with which we are intimately familiar (particularly in places like northern Alaska, where such changes are obvious and startling). But do we thereby perceive global warming *with human causes*, as opposed to, say, long-term drought with non-human causes? That seems dubious (although I do not doubt that we play a large role in global warming), and so suggests another limitation of the naturalistic approach.

- 18 Brown argues that obvious objections to his faith in the self-correcting nature of this prereflexive morality, such as the long-standing historical persistence of patently unethical institutions and prejudices (his example is slavery), should be understood in terms of an underlying 'moral unease' which 'remained mute and powerless until the Enlightenment rhetoric and the ideologies and discourses of freedom and equality were developed' (p. 16). I would not follow Richard Rorty in claiming that there is no such unease without some corresponding ethical vocabulary, but I would suggest that what really matters in such cases is how long it takes the sense that there is something ethically wrong to express itself *effectively* (often against entrenched interests) and so build up the kind of 'critical mass' needed to bring about large-scale political transformations. In our context, the most salient problem with 'grounding ecological philosophy in the evolving wisdom of our collective experience' (p. 15) is that it is no longer obvious that the environmental movement will achieve such critical mass before it is too late to save the environment. Although long-building dissatisfaction can reach such a critical mass suddenly and unpredictably (as with the fall of the Berlin wall, or, more recently, 'September 11'), some of us worry that the environmental movement is not simply progressing slowly, but actually retrogressing (see note 23 below).
- 19 Kohák, 'Knowing Good and Evil ... (Genesis 3:5b)', *Husserl Studies* 10 (1990), p. 31; quoted by Brown (p. 13).
- 20 For the debate over the sociobiological account of rape, see Randy Thornhill and Craig T. Palmer, *A Natural History of Rape: Biological Bases of Sexual Coercion* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000); and Cheryl Brown Travis (ed.), *Evolution, Gender, and Rape* (Cambridge: MIT, 2003).
- 21 This hermeneutic of suspicion applies to other kinds of prohibitions as well, helping us recognize the repressed homosexuality at work in homophobia, the group attempt to repress cross-'racial' propagation implicit in racism, and so on.
- 22 This is Nietzsche's critique of Kant's ethics, which also cuts against more recent efforts – like Philippa Foot's *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) – to argue that 'to be moral' is 'in our nature'. (Foot recognizes this and so launches a counter-attack on Nietzsche's 'cynical' conception of human nature (pp. 99–115), but her unargued appeals to common sense, and thus to our entrenched Judeo-Christian morality, are question-begging in this context. Her critique would also need to be broadened to include Darwin and Freud, whom she mistakenly seems to think of as allies rather than opponents.) Nietzsche saw Kant as a Raskolnikov figure who set out to kill (to 'kill god', that is, to make reason rather than divine authority the foundation of morality), but then felt he had to steal (the old Judeo-Christian value system) in order to rationalize this murder, and thereby avoided facing up to the true radicalism of his act (the fact that 'the death of god' demanded a 'revaluation of values', that is, a new, non-nihilistic value-system). See Nietzsche, 'On the Pale Criminal,' *Zarathustra*, op. cit., pp. 149–52.
- 23 Although six major environmental groups (from the Sierra Club to the Audobon Society) argue that the silvery minnow, as a riparian obligate, represents the proverbial 'canary in the coal mine' whose death would signal that the entire Rio Grande ecosystem is in grave peril, the environmentalist position is so unpopular that even New Mexico's Democratic Governor and Attorney General have vowed to fight an initial, pro-environmental Court of Appeals ruling 'all the way to the Supreme Court'. Failing that, moreover, they announced a plan to convene the Endangered Species Committee, which can give legal permission knowingly to drive species to extinction, a national group (euphemistically-known as 'the God squad') which has only met three times in the 30 years since its formation (see Tim McGivern, 'Newscity', *Alibi*, pp. 19–25, June 2003). Other popular 'solutions' include keeping enough silvery minnows alive in the local zoo (in a 'refugium') that they will not technically be

- 'extinct', while working to weaken legislatively (dodging if not simply repealing) the Endangered Species Act. Given that this struggle is only one of many similar environmental battles being fought in the shadow of global warming, the larger worry is that these dramatic and depressing local battles could themselves prove to be 'canaries in the coal mines' for the environmental movement, signaling a widespread lack of ethical vision and political will needed to create and enforce sustainable environmental policies.
- 24 Stephen Jay Gould's argument that what matters here are variety and diversity, not complexity, would also cut against humanity. See Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1996).
- 25 As if to motivate the 'eco-fascist' solution, Wood suggests that, 'When the house is on fire, you don't reason with the child who wants to finish his Nintendo game; you grab the child and run. (And explain later.)' (p. 224). The problem with Wood's analogy is not simply its paternalism (which may or may not be justifiable), but the fact that it does not adequately capture the desperate nature of the environmental crisis as Wood describes it. We come closer to that crisis by envisioning a scenario in which the world is on fire, and the only way to save any of our children is by sacrificing some significant proportion of them. Such an analogy, moreover, better suggests the problems with the view. Whose children will be sacrificed? Who decides? Who enforces such necessarily global policies – and how? Some will point out that a significant proportion of the world's children are already being sacrificed, inadvertently, as a consequence of the massive economic disparities of global capitalism, and that it would be better to make such decisions consciously and so, potentially, more justly. I side with the later Marcuse, however, in rejecting these as the only alternatives. See Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).
- 26 One can even worry that the unconditional duties at the heart of Levinasian ethics, being infinitely demanding and so impossible actually to live up to, suggest that they will remain purely abstract. Because Levinas's understanding of 'rational responsibility' is 'never accomplished, always beyond limit, infinite, unfinished: never enough, because absolutely beyond sufficiency', Llewelyn sees it as 'ethical psychosis, madness' (p. 66).
- 27 Of course, there may be good non-environmental reasons for giving indigenous groups political preferences (reparation for past injustices, e.g., as in the cases of Native Americans in the USA and highlanders in Britain). Perhaps the best *environmental* justification for privileging indigenous groups politically would be that populations that have learned to maintain a sustainable relation to their environment have much to teach those that have not. Heidegger, in his *Discourse on Thinking*, argues for such a privileging of *geographical* indigeneity, but only as a step toward the development of *ontological* indigeneity, an *unheimlich* 'rootedness' not in the soil but rather in being itself.
- 28 See John Richardson, 'Nietzsche Contra Darwin', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 65:3 (2002), pp. 537–75.
- 29 (See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, op. cit., p. 124.) Before we object that eco-phenomenologists who follow Nietzsche here are committing the naturalistic fallacy (by illegitimately deriving ethical *values* from the *facts* of evolution), we need to remember that phenomenology undermines the fact/value dichotomy when it undercuts the subject/object divide. (Obviously, this is too complex a matter to treat adequately here, but see note 8 above.)
- 30 On the call for the post-human, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 386–7; Keith Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997); and Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Picador, 2002). For Heidegger's perfectionism, see my 'Heidegger on Ontological Education, or: How We Become What We Are', *Inquiry* 44:3 (2001), pp. 243–68.
- 31 Dreyfus shows, moreover, that *Being and Time*'s claim that entities reveal themselves most fully when encountered as 'hands-on' (*zuhanden*) equipment makes the early Heidegger look (from the perspective of the later Heidegger) to be caught up in the penultimate stage of the increasingly nihilistic 'history of being' that culminates in 'enframing' (cf. Zimmerman,

- p. 78). See Hubert L. Dreyfus, 'Heidegger's History of the Being of Equipment', in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Harrison Hall (eds), *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell University Press, 1992), pp. 173–85.
- 32 See Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). The interpretation that follows is developed in detail in my *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
- 33 For a defense of these claims, see my 'What's Wrong with Being a Technological Essentialist? A Response to Feenberg', *Inquiry* 43:4 (2000), pp. 429–44.
- 34 See Zimmerman, 'Heidegger, Buddhism, and Deep Ecology', in C. Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 240–69 (Zimmerman raises this political worry on p. 264); 'Rethinking the Heidegger-Deep Ecology Relationship', *Environmental Ethics* 15:3 (1993), pp. 195–224; *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and 'Ecofascism: A Threat to American Environmentalism?', in Roger S. Gottlieb (ed.), *The Ecological Community* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 229–54.
- 35 On Heidegger's revolutionary philosophical vision, see my 'The Philosophical Fugue: Understanding the Structure and Goal of Heidegger's *Beiträge*', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 34:1 (2003), pp. 57–73. It may be easier to dismiss the entire romantic tradition as proto-fascist (as do neo-Enlightenment critics of romanticism such as Isaiah Berlin and Jürgen Habermas), but here easier is not better, as I argue in 'Deconstructing the Hero', op. cit.
- 36 See Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, *Gesamtausgabe* vol. 65 (Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1989), p. 250. In my view, once Heidegger abandoned his earlier quest for a 'fundamental ontology' (that is, a transhistorically-binding understanding of 'the meaning of being in general'), he could no longer appeal to such a notion in order to explain what makes possible Western history's succession of epoch-grounding understandings of 'the being of entities' (a succession that, in the early work, is thought to be a retrogressive falling-away from an originally complete 'fundamental ontology'). I believe Sheehan is misled by passages in which Heidegger seems to equate 'being as such' with 'enowning' (*Ereignis*), for this is not Heidegger's considered view, and passages can be found alongside these that more carefully distinguish these two key terms of his later thought (put simply, *Ereignis* is how 'being as such' takes place), as I show in 'The Philosophical Fugue', op. cit. In fairness to Sheehan and Zimmerman, this crucial matter is too complex to treat adequately here, but see my *The End of Ontotheology: Understanding Heidegger's Turn, Method, and Politics* (UC San Diego: Philosophy dissertation, 1999), esp. pp. 105–14; Thomas Sheehan, 'Kehre and Ereignis: A Prolegomenon to *Introduction to Metaphysics*', in R. Polt and G. Fried (eds), *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 3–16; and Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- 37 See my 'Heidegger and National Socialism', in Mark Wrathall and Hubert Dreyfus (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Heidegger* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, forthcoming).
- 38 See Heidegger, *The Question of Being* (London: Vision Press, 1956), pp. 81–5.
- 39 For a clear explanation and defense of Heidegger's ethical realism, see Hubert L. Dreyfus and Charles Spinosa, 'Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and Borgmann on How to Affirm Technology', *Man and World* 30:2 (1997).
- 40 As this sketch implies, the middle and later Heidegger's conceptions of 'earth' are different. (Most importantly, the ineffability of the middle concept of 'earth' passes to 'being as such' as it is conveyed by the entire fourfold.) For Heidegger, moreover, the mortal's *finitude* makes reflexivity possible; see my 'Can I Die? Derrida on Heidegger on Death', *Philosophy Today* 43:1 (1999), pp. 29–42.
- 41 Wood writes: 'This sense of the infinite in the finite, which is precisely not a spiritual dilution but an intensification of the concrete, can take a number of forms' (p. 216), but this is a more Levinasian than Heideggerian way of putting the point. Of course, Wood and Llewelyn both propose creative syntheses of Heidegger and Levinas. Llewelyn envisions a Levinasian 'fourfold' (made up of the 'aesthetic-poetic, practical-political, ethical, and ontological')

- which, he concludes by suggesting, we should think in combination with the original Heideggerian fourfold as a kind of eco-phenomenological eight-fold ('the engine of phenomenology is imagination' (p. 70), indeed).
- 42 David Wood and John Dalton, 'The Art of Time: An Interview with David Wood', *Contretemps* 3 (2002), p. 12.
- 43 This dilemma helps motivate Casey's own efforts to 'supplement' Levinas's ethics with an extreme version of Husserlian ethical realism that locates 'the compelling power of the ethical' in 'the unsuspected strength of the mere glance' (pp. 190–1). Casey maintains that the phenomenological 'glance exercises its penetrating power, its ability to go *under* the manifest phenomenon – yet without any interpretive activity on my part', and so it can, e.g., be immediately attuned to '*the direct presentation of environmental distress*' (pp. 188, 197). I countenanced a similar strategy in note 17 above, pointing out some of its limits, and I have difficulty understanding how Casey's eco-phenomenological ethical realism avoids falling back into a myth of the ethical given. His example of such a 'penetrating' glance ('The glance catches a sense of less manifest aspects of the other, e.g., her darker thoughts, as when I glancingly realize that the other person is far more disturbed at a deeper level than her previous behavior may have indicated' (p. 188)) seems to involve a great deal of 'interpretive activity', even if, when such a realization is experienced as an epiphany (as such realizations often are), that interpretive activity takes place only tacitly, in the background.
- 44 Llewelyn too seeks to deconstruct the anthropomorphic prejudices implicit in Levinas's claim that 'the human face is the face of the world' (quoted by Casey, p. 203). Llewelyn argues that Levinas's view that 'the other who obsesses me cannot be non-human' should be understood as a 'figment of a lack of imagination', one 'connected with [Levinas's] fear of "Hasidic" (Buberian), inebriated participation and confusion of every being with every or any other' (p. 66). As Casey shows, however, from the ethical perspective this is not an irrational fear.
- 45 See John Haugeland, 'Heidegger on Being a Person', *Nous* 16 (1982), pp. 6–26; and Haugeland, 'Dasein's Disclosedness', in *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, op. cit., pp. 27–44.
- 46 This is a 'solution' that those of us who have learned the political lessons of Heidegger's attempt to do something similar during his Rectorate will find particularly alarming, an alarm which will not be quieted by Wood's desire to follow in Heidegger's political footsteps by self-consciously seeking 'to repeat some of the Husserlian hubris' of engaging in 'tentative legislation for any subsequent science' (p. 220). On these complex, politically-charged issues, see my 'Heidegger and the Politics of the University,' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41:4 (2003), pp. 515–42.
- 47 See Michael Tooley, 'Abortion and Infanticide,' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2 (1972).
- 48 In effect, Diehm gives us an hyperbolic, Levinasian extension of the underlying principle motivating the naturalistic ethics of life, according to which 'the organism, as a selective system, stands in need of ... specific environmental conditions to perform the activities by which it sustains itself' (p. 180). I take the conclusion quoted above (that all 'being alive' is 'being-for-itself') as a *reductio* of the attempt to use that underlying position to motivate extending ethical 'rights' to all organic entities. (Diehm's view has the merit of excluding the inorganic from any claim to intrinsic ethical consideration – unlike Klaver's eco-saintly sympathy for rocks.) I was thus careful to define the neo-Heideggerian view (that we should understand 'rights' as political protections owed to all agents capable of reflexively pursuing life-projects) in terms of *Dasein*, or a *life that has a temporally-enduring world that matters to it explicitly*, so as to head-off the most problematic conclusions of the naturalistic, eco-phenomenological approach. The danger that my approach too could generate a defense of the post-human is mitigated, I think, by the fact that any possible subordination of the rights of *human Dasein* would have to follow from our own (human) recognition of other *higher* forms of life, rather than from the universalization of the value of life as such. (I can see no non-speciesist way to exclude such a possibility, and thus suspect it would be a true test of our ethical hospitality to the other.)
- 49 Casey comes closest to recognizing our tacit reliance on such a contrast-class when he observes that 'the alarming character of the disturbed environmental surface often takes the form of being presented with contrary qualities on that very surface' (p. 201).



- 50 Martin Heidegger, 'The Fieldpath', B. Mexia (Trans.), *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 13 (1986), pp. 455–8 (my emphasis).
- 51 John Muir, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 228. Llewelyn aptly characterizes Muir as a 'poet, scientist, and phenomenological ecologist' (p. 61).
- 52 We need, e.g., a massive infusion of capital investment into environmental projects; indeed, were our current political leadership not so corrupted by its relations with the oil industry, the USA could spearhead an Apollo-Program-style alternative energy plan, mobilizing the widespread desire for independence from Middle Eastern oil. The entrepreneurial development of the sustainable environmental technologies we need, moreover, is most likely to come about when we recognize and cultivate our distinctive capacity as *Dasein*, as Charles Spinosa, Fernando Flores and Hubert L. Dreyfus argue in *Disclosing New Worlds: Entrepreneurship, Democratic Action, and the Cultivation of Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
- 53 'Gratitude', Nietzsche says, 'is a milder form of revenge'. I offer sincere thanks, nonetheless, to Anne-Margaret Baxley, Kelly Becker, John Bussanich, Hubert Dreyfus, Russell Goodman, Wayne Martin, and John Taber, for encouragement, criticism, and guidance.

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