



International Interdisciplinary Symposium
SURVIVING THE ANTHROPOCENE
TOWARDS ELEMENTAL LITERACY
AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PARTNERSHIPS

Online, May 24–26, 2021

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS

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**SURVIVING THE ANTHROPOCENE
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KOPER 2021

**International Interdisciplinary Symposium SURVIVING THE ANTHROPOCENE:
TOWARDS ELEMENTAL LITERACY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PARTNERSHIPS
Programme and Abstracts**

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CONTENTS

- 7 ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM
- 9 PROGRAMME
- ABSTRACTS
- 17 Panel I: THE ANTHROPOCENE SCENE
- 18 **Gísli Pálsson**
Anthropocene Survivors
- 19 **Nives Dolžak**
Three Facets of Climate Justice in the U.S.A.
- 22 **Naresh Giangrande**
What Does It Mean to Hope Radically in 2021?
- 24 Panel II: EMBODIED COGNITION AND AESTHETICS
- 25 **Viðar Hreinsson**
Complicated, Bloody Complicated: Against Dehumanizing
Denaturalization or Denaturalizing Dehumanization
- 27 **Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir**
The Glacier and Me – Understanding the Human Being in the
Anthropocene
- 28 **Bart Vandeput**
Aronia m. BaBe: A Leaky Reality Through Co-Morphing of Aronia m. /
Baroa Belaobara, Bartaku and Companions

29 Panel III: EMBODIED THEOLOGIES AND SENTIENT COSMOLOGIES

30 **Tamara Ditrich**

“Sentience” and its Ethical Implications: New Ways of Thinking,
Informed and Inspired by Ancient Indian Discourse

32 **Lenart Škof**

Being in the Heart of the Matter: Reflections on Ontology, Cosmic Christ
and Polar Bears

33 **George Handley**

Embodied Theology and the Problem of Evil: Toward a Theodicy of the
Anthropocene

35 Panel IV: AIR, DUST AND FLESH

36 **Jerry Zee**

Between Whirlwinds: Dust and the Poetics of Phases in China

37 **Petri Berndtson**

Avicenna’s Flying Person in the Aerial Flesh

39 **Emil Månsson**

Elements of ECT

41 Panel V: CROSS-CULTURAL, ELEMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND
EMBODIED COHABITATION

42 **Freya Mathews**

“Walking the Land”: An Alternative to Discourse as a Path to Ecological
Consciousness

44 **Shé M. Hawke**

Re-Stor(y)ing a World: Porous Entanglements and Elemental Literacy

46 **Clifton Evers**

Toxic Love: Men Doing Polluted Leisure in Blue Spaces

- 48 **Ram Eisenberg**
Rewilding Thinking
- 49 Panel VI: PEDAGOGICAL AND EXPERIENTIAL SENTIENCE
- 50 **Michael Marder**
Vegetal Pedagogy
- 51 **Reingard Spannring**
Subjective Experience as the Basis for Connectivity and Respect in a More-Than-Human World?
- 53 **Maja Bjelica**
Deep Re-Listening: Re-Referring to the World as Sentient, through Co-subjectivity
- 55 Panel VII: LIVED EXPERIENCES IN/BEYOND THE ANTHROPOCENE
- 56 **Claire Petitmengin**
Anchoring in Lived Experience as an Act of Resistance
- 57 **Donata Schoeller**
Environmental Responsiveness in Conceptual Thinking
- 59 **Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir**
From Eco-Anxiety to Embodied Knowing

ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

This interdisciplinary symposium is intended to bring together innovative g/local expertise in philosophy and pedagogy, ecofeminism, policy, theology, biosocial cultural studies and theories and practices of embodied critical thinking, to configure equitable and realistic ways for life on earth to survive the Anthropocene. Our focus is shared with the natural environment, understood as a sentient partner with inherent values beyond purely commodification and economic frameworks. In recognising the natural environment as an agent in its own becoming, the symposium aims to 'breath with nature', as a companion. We further aim to better understand and work towards resolving the perceived clash between nature, culture, ethics and policy, through new conceptual thinking and engagement that champions an elemental philosophy of connectivity and respect. Developing 'elemental literacy' to transpose current understandings of: what/how nature is, how it is acted upon, and how it acts upon, constitutes a primary focus for this symposium that seeks to imagine and dynamically participate in: new, complex and adaptive possibilities, environmental management provocations and reforms, and philosophical analyses of restorative ecological justice pathways, both conceptually and practically.

Intelligent (informed, perceptive/interoceptive) partnership with the natural and more-than-human world (broadly understood), and human culture, within the frameworks of policy decision-making, is crucial for a connected and ethical way forward for life on planet earth. The climate change crisis increasingly demonstrates that we stand at the precipice of change. We are changing the face of the earth. How humans continue to do that change, matters in this Anthropocene crisis that has been largely produced by human recklessness. Our aim and hope is to restore our biosocial relationships and elemental sensibilities, and our forgotten ontologico-environmental-material being.

SYMPOSIUM CO-ORGANISED BY

Institute for Philosophical Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper,
Slovenia

Department of Philosophy, University of Iceland, Iceland

University of Innsbruck, Institute for Educational Sciences, Austria

Alma Mater Europaea ECM, Slovenia

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PROGRAMME

International Interdisciplinary Symposium

SURVIVING THE ANTHROPOCENE

TOWARDS ELEMENTAL LITERACY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY PARTNERSHIPS

The symposium is held online, through the Zoom video-conferencing platform.

Note: the times are given in timezones of the organizers – GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) and CEST (Central European Summer Time, +2 hours)

MONDAY, May 24, 2021

15.00 GMT / 17.00 CEST

Welcome to the Anthropocene

Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir, University of Iceland, Iceland

Lenart Škof, Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia

15.15–16.45 GMT / 17.15–18.45 CEST

Panel I

THE ANTHROPOCENE SCENE

Chair: **Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir**

Gísli Pálsson: *Anthropocene Survivors*

Nives Dolžak: *Three Facets of Climate Justice in the U.S.A.*

Naresh Giangrande: *What Does It Mean to Hope Radically in 2021?*

TUESDAY, May 25, 2021

9.00–10.30 GMT / 11.00–12.30 CEST

Panel II

EMBODIED COGNITION AND AESTHETICS

Chair: **Reingard Spannring**

Viðar Hreinsson: *Complicated, Bloody Complicated: Against Dehumanizing Denaturalization or Denaturalizing Dehumanization*

Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir: *The Glacier and Me – Understanding the Human Being in the Anthropocene*

Bart Vandeput: *Aronia m. BaBe: A Leaky Reality Through Co-Morphing of Aronia m. / Baroa Belaobara, Bartaku and Companions*

10.30–11.00 GMT / 12.30–13.00 CEST

Break

11.00–12.30 GMT / 13.00–14.30 CEST

Panel III

EMBODIED THEOLOGIES AND SENTIENT COSMOLOGIES

Chair: **Petri Berndtson**

Tamara Ditrich: *“Sentience” and its Ethical Implications: New Ways of Thinking, Informed and Inspired by Ancient Indian Discourse*

Lenart Škof: *Being in the Heart of the Matter: Reflections on Ontology, Cosmic Christ and Polar Bears*

George Handley: *Embodied Theology and the Problem of Evil: Toward a Theodicy of the Anthropocene*

13.00–14.30 GMT / 15.00–16.30 CEST

Break

14.30–16.00 GMT / 16.30–18.00 CEST

Panel IV

AIR, DUST AND FLESH

Chair: **Lenart Škof**

Jerry Zee: *Between Whirlwinds: Dust and the Poetics of Phases in China*

Petri Berndtson: *Avicenna's Flying Person in the Aerial Flesh*

Emil Månsson: *Elements of ECT*

WEDNESDAY, May 26, 2021

9.00–11.00 GMT / 11.00–13.00 CEST

Panel V

**CROSS-CULTURAL, ELEMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS
AND EMBODIED COHABITATION**

Chair: **Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir**

Freya Mathews: *“Walking the Land”: An Alternative to Discourse
as a Path to Ecological Consciousness*

Shé M. Hawke: *Re-Stor(y)ing a World: Porous Entanglements
and Elemental Literacy*

Clifton Evers: *Toxic Love: Men Doing Polluted Leisure in Blue Spaces*

Ram Eisenberg: *Rewilding Thinking*

11.00–11.30 GMT / 13.00–13.30 CEST

Break

11.30–13.00 GMT / 13.30–15.00 CEST

Panel VI

PEDAGOGICAL AND EXPERIENTIAL SENTIENCE

Chair: **Emil Månsson**

Michael Marder: *Vegetal Pedagogy*

Reingard Spannring: *Subjective Experience as the Basis for Connectivity
and Respect in a More-Than-Human World?*

Maja Bjelica: *Deep Re-Listening: Re-Referring to the World as Sentient,
through Co-subjectivity*

13.00–14.30 GMT / 15.00–16.30 CEST

Break

14.30–16.00 GMT / 16.30–18.00 CEST

Panel VII

LIVED EXPERIENCES IN/BEYOND THE ANTHROPOCENE

Chair: **Shé M. Hawke**

Claire Petitmengin: *Anchoring in Lived Experience as an Act of Resistance*

Donata Schoeller: *Environmental Responsiveness in Conceptual Thinking*

Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir: *From Eco-Anxiety to Embodied Knowing*

16.00 GMT / 18.00 CEST

Symposium's concluding discussion

Chairs: **Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir** and **Lenart Škof**

ABSTRACTS

Panel I

THE ANTHROPOCENE SCENE

Chair: **Sigrídur Thorgeirsdóttir**

Monday, May 24, 2021

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Naresh Giangrande: *What Does It Mean to Hope Radically in 2021?*

ANTHROPOCENE SURVIVORS

Gísli PÁLSSON

*Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, University of Iceland
Senior Associate Scientist, Stefansson Arctic Institute, Akureyri, Iceland*

In recent decades, the duality of material Earth and the social life of humans has increasingly been challenged. In particular, the Anthropocene – or rather the recognition of human impact and dependence on the planet – has called for a realignment. Today many people are extending the notion of sociality not only to other species, but also to material things, including rocks and mountains. The notion of geosociality seeks to sum up these ideas, evident in practically all kinds of scholarship as well as the arts. This paper draws upon geosocial notions to explore the possibilities of geosocial contracts appropriate for the Anthropocene.

Keywords: Anthropocene, Holocaust, mass extinction, geosociality, solidarity, relationality

Gísli Pálsson is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Iceland. He has written on a variety of issues, including human-environmental relations, biomedicine, and enslavement. He has done fieldwork in Iceland, the Republic of Cape Verde, the Canadian Arctic, and the Virgin Islands. His most recent books are *Biosocial Becomings* (co-edited with Tim Ingold, 2013), *Nature, Culture, and Society* (2015), *Can Science Resolve the Nature/Nurture Debate?* (co-authored with Margaret Lock, 2016), *The Man Who Stole Himself: The Slave Odyssey of Hans Jonathan* (2016), and *An Awkward Extinction: The Great Auk and the Loss of Species* (forthcoming).

THREE FACETS OF CLIMATE JUSTICE IN THE U.S.A.

Nives DOLŠAK

*Stan and Alta Barer Professor of Sustainability Science
Director, School of Marine and Environmental Affairs
University of Washington, Seattle*

Aseem PRAKASH

*Professor, Department of Political Science
Walker Family Professor for the College of Arts and Sciences
Founding Director, Center for Environmental Politics,
University of Washington, Seattle*

The first and the most salient facet pertains to the disproportionate impact of climate bads. Research on environmental justice suggests that the underprivileged are disproportionately exposed to pollution or environmental degradation or both. Although climate change results from the overuse of global commons, its costs are asymmetrical across countries, regions, and communities. Governments can reduce climate vulnerability, but inequities are at play with their policy responses as well. Political and fiscal considerations lead governments to invest in climate adaptation to protect high-value areas populated by the rich and the powerful.

The second facet of climate justice pertains to the ease with which citizens can benefit from environmental public goods provided by the government. Because accessing public goods often involves incurring a cost, those from rich households disproportionately access these amenities. Furthermore, cities have a revenue incentive to provide public goods that favor richer neighborhoods. They tend to neglect the poorer neighborhoods in their distribution of climate-proofing amenities, such as tree canopy cover that can provide some protection from heat waves and thus reduce household energy bills. The pro-rich structural bias extends to federal policy.

The third facet, perhaps the most controversial one, pertains to who bears the cost of environmental protection. Environmental policies often impose concentrated costs on specific sections of the population to produce environmental protection benefits for all. For this reason, some organizations believe that the transition to a low-carbon economy will not necessarily be

just. The backlash from some labor groups against climate policies could stem from perceptions of the unjust burden imposed on specific industries and communities for mitigating climate change.

To create an equitable environmental governance framework, the first step is recognizing that climate justice has multiple facets. Next, policymakers need to decide how to translate these equity concepts into concrete policies.

Keywords: climate change, climate action, climate justice, environmental justice, pollution hotspots, green employment

Nives Dolšak is the Stan and Alta Barer Professor of Sustainability Science and the Director of the School of Marine and Environmental Affairs at University of Washington, Seattle. She holds a Joint Ph.D. from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the Department of Political Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, and a B.A. in Economics from the School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana. Her research examines institutional challenges in governing common pool resources, climate change, environmental policy, and the role of social capital in the U.S.A. and Central Europe. In collaboration with Professor Elinor Ostrom, she has published two books: *The Drama of the Commons* (The National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council's Committee on Human Dimensions of Global Change), and *The Commons in the New Millennium: Challenges and Adaptation* (the MIT Press). She has published in leading journals of environmental studies, public policy, and nonprofits. As a private citizen and not representing the views of the University of Washington, she also contributes to public scholarship via platforms such as *The Washington Post*, *The Hill*, *Slate*, *Huffpost*, *The Conversation*, *Regulatory Review*, *Forbes.com*, and *Opendemocracy*.

Aseem Prakash is the Walker Family Professor for the College of Arts and Sciences and the Founding Director of the Center for Environmental Politics, University of Washington, Seattle. He holds a Joint Ph.D. from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the Department of Political Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, an MBA from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and a B.A. (Hons) in Economics from St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi. He studies environmental policy, climate governance, NGOs and nonprofits, and voluntary/private regulation. He is the author of *Greening the Firm: The Politics of Corporate Environmentalism* (Cambridge), the co-author of *The Voluntary Environmentalists: Green Clubs, ISO 14001, and Voluntary Environmental Regulations* (Cambridge), and the co-

-editor of *Advocacy Organizations and Collective Action* (Cambridge), *Voluntary Regulations of NGOs and Nonprofits: An Accountability Club Framework* (Cambridge), *Voluntary Programs: A Club Theory Perspective* (The MIT Press), *Coping with Globalization* (Routledge), *Responding to Globalization* (Routledge), and *Globalization and Governance* (Routledge). In addition to guest editing several journal symposia, he has published in leading journals of political science, international relations, public policy, regulatory studies, nonprofit studies, and business ethics. With Nives Dolšak, he has a byline in *Forbes.com*. He also publishes on platforms such as the *Conversation*, *Huffpost*, *the Hill*, *Slate*, and *the Washington Post*.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HOPE RADICALLY IN 2021?

Naresh GIANGRANDE

Lecturer in Economics at Gaia Education

Co-founder of the international Transition Towns movement

In the face of multiple and accelerating civilisational challenges, ranging from climate change to species loss pandemics, and other as yet unknowns, we urgently need as many people as possible to be able to live without the old certainties and social, political, and economic structures that hold those certainties in place. We need to be able to face this new world 'as it is' without resorting to either blind optimism or 'soft' or 'hard' denial. This new and radical framework was originally proposed by Jem Bendell as Deep Adaptation, but now has morphed into many movements and social narratives such as Extinction Rebellion (XR), Fridays for Future, and in the Francophone world Collapsology. How are those movements and 'societal edge structures' (in permaculture language) to be interrogated and integrated into civilisational thought and social and political action, if at all? What narratives emerge from this space? How can we begin to develop pathways to a regenerative society in this time?

One of the places many of us are exploring are practices that in a previous age might have been the domain of religions but now in our secular age we need secular versions of what wisdom traditions might have proposed as ways to live well in times of change and uncertainty. What enables us to live well in this time which Donna Haraway calls the Chthulucene or 'the Dithering' ... Might this be one of the ways of radical, transformative hope?

As academics, regenerative community leaders, and thought leaders we also need to examine some of the deeply held and hitherto insufficient discernment practices such as peer review processes in order to better respond to the fast moving challenges we face as a civilisation.

Keywords: Radical Hope, Deep Adaptation, Chthulucene, Extinction Rebellion, Collapsology

Co-founder of Transition Town Totnes, the first Transition Town, and of Transition Training, **Naresh Giangrande** has been involved in designing, running and evolving many of the events, groups, and trainings that have been at the heart of the enormously successful Transition Towns movement. As one of the initiators, he has delivered hundreds of Transition Trainings to thousands of participants in twenty countries that has led to a local project in South West England becoming a world wide movement in over 50 countries. He has also delivered hundreds of talks and interviews on issues relating to Transition and regenerative culture.

He co-designed and co-facilitated the first Deep Adaptation Deep Dive in December 2018, and is part of a group, along with Dr Jem Bendell, who are exploring what 'Deep Adaptation' means both personally and as a society. He leads a team with Gaia Education developing new ways of delivering regenerative education to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He and Liam Kavanaugh of Life Itself are facilitating Contemplative Activism. Contemplative Activism is seeing the world as it is, and learning to act and be when we have no ground under our feet, drawing on the world's contemplative traditions.

Before the Transition movement took over his life he lived and worked in an eco community (and is living in one again), was Managing Director of a landscape company, a gaffer in the film industry, and taught meditation. He is joyfully aware of the preciousness of life, his capacity for love, and his own mortality. He is father to two lovely daughters and two equally gorgeous grandchildren.

Panel II

EMBODIED COGNITION AND AESTHETICS

Chair: **Reingard Spannring**

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

9.00–10.30 GMT / 11.00–12.30 CEST

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COMPLICATED, BLOODY COMPLICATED: AGAINST DEHUMANIZING DENATURALIZATION OR DENATURALIZING DEHUMANIZATION

Viðar HREINSSON

Icelandic Museum of Natural History

Stefansson Arctic Institute

The Reykjavik Academy

Reality and the past are far more complicated than is sometimes assumed. Western science typically cuts off the heels and toes in order to make knowledge fit into established paradigms. The blood of that disfigurement is upon us.

The fragmentation of knowledge destroys an awareness of nature. If nature exists at all (the term didn't exist in Old Norse), it has, by a process of reductive reification, been turned into a manipulable object, placed at a distance from humans who are, at the same time, distant from themselves. The overpowering reification of nature implies the power to define, which is comparable to folkloric naming, which seeks to dominate.

Biology and ecology contribute greatly to the re-recognition of diversity and complexity. Climate sciences synchronise various disciplines in order to grasp the complexity of life on earth. The recognition of the ecological aspects of human cultures can deter reification of cultural growth and creation. Antonio Damasio claims that a cell manifests "a powerful, seemingly indomitable 'intention' to maintain itself," one which corresponds "to the 'force' that the philosopher Spinoza intuited and named conatus," something that functions "at the macroscopic scale, everywhere we look in nature." Spinoza's idea is that organisms stubbornly maintain their coherent functions against threats.¹

Human cultures are also endowed with conatus and indomitably defy the massive powers of corporations and states; this signifies potential alliances and dialogues between humans and nature, living dialogues implying res-

¹ Antonio Damasio, *The Strange Order of Things: Life, Feeling and the Making of Cultures* (New York: Random House, 2018), 35-36.

possibility in a Bakhtinian sense.² As an agent in a biosemiotic sphere,³ the natural environment is a partner in a dialogue reflecting diversity, complexity and attentive observation of the small. The paper will explore the conatus inherent in culture through the ecosystem of Icelandic manuscript production and aspects of the modern music scene.

Keywords: Reductionism and reification, cultural and biological diversity, cultural ecology, conatus, manuscript culture

Viðar Hreinsson grew up on a farm in Northern Iceland and completed a Mag. Art degree in literary studies at the University of Copenhagen in 1989. He is an independent literary scholar and has taught and lectured on Icelandic literary and cultural history at universities in Canada, USA and Scandinavia and has published a number of scholarly papers. He is the General Editor of *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders I-V* (1997), and wrote a two-volume biography of Icelandic Canadian poet Stephan G. Stephansson published in Iceland 2002 and 2003, rewritten in English in one volume, *Wakeful Nights*, published in Canada in 2012. Both versions received nominations and awards. He has been an environmental activist and served as the director of the Reykjavík Academy. His latest work is a 760 p. monograph, *Jón lærði og náttúrur náttúrunnar (Jón the learned and the Natures of Nature, 2016)*, on 17th century conception of nature and the life of Jón Guðmundsson the Learned (1574-1658), a self-educated scholar, historian, poet, rebel, magician, healer and artist. It was nominated for the Icelandic Literary Award, and received the special award for academic work of outstanding quality from Hagþenkir, the Association of Icelandic Non-fiction Writers.

At present Viðar is working on various projects within environmental humanities and cultural sustainability in interdisciplinary manner, with main emphasis on history of ideas and conceptions of nature, manuscript culture, biosemiotics, and dialogues between the humanities and natural sciences.

2 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, tr. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

3 Jakob von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans with A Theory of Meaning*, tr. Joseph D. O'Neil, Introduction by Dorion Sagan and Afterword by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

THE GLACIER AND ME – UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN BEING IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Guðbjörg R. JÓHANNESDÓTTIR

*Institute for Philosophy, University of Iceland
University of the Arts*

In this paper I will contemplate whether we need a new understanding of the human being in times of the Anthropocene? An understanding of the human being that is at the same time an understanding of nature, and helps us gain a deeper understanding of the complex and inherently relational reality we live in? When I stand in front of a glacier and sense that both of us, the glacier and me, are threats at the same time as we are under threat, I understand and sense my relations with the forces of nature in a very different way than for example the farmers in Öraefi in Iceland did when they decided early last century to divert a glacial river away from their lands using only picks, shovels, horses and their own hands. We are not opposite each other anymore, me and the glacier, rather we are melting together. This melting is both happening in a literal sense as a result of the climate crisis, as well as metaphorically as we are understanding better and better how the borders between humans and nature are disappearing or melting away, and how they have perhaps never existed. The paper will address the question of what characterizes this new understanding of the human being from the perspective of relational ontologies and embodied aesthetic knowledge.

Keywords: relationality, embodied knowledge, aesthetics, human-nature relations, climate crisis

Guðbjörg Jóhannesdóttir is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Iceland's Institute for Philosophy and assistant professor at the Iceland University of the Arts. Her current research within phenomenology and aesthetics focuses on human-environment / body-landscape relations and processes, and their role in human thinking and understanding.

**ARONIA M. BABE: A LEAKY REALITY THROUGH CO-MORPHING
OF ARONIA M. / BAROA BELAOBARA, BARTAKU AND
COMPANIONS**

**Bart VANDEPUT
(artist name: Bartaku)**

*School of Arts, Design, Architecture - Aalto University
Espoo, Finland*

Since 2009 artist-researcher Bartaku and the plant *Aronia m. / Baroa belaobara* are entangling. Via the practice of artistic inquiry, a constellation evolves through public labs, performative happenings, interventions, exhibitions, lectures and talks. The artist perceives himself and his companions as plant-serving agencies that engage with local and global life forms: artists, scientists, citizens, *Baroa b.* companion species and cultural audiences. Various research strands are developing actively in this artistic practice. It drives and thrives in a time spatial matrix of ‘merely happenings’, unreflective and reflective normative actions and embraced failure. Being a dynamic interspecies interaction system, it is enactively named a ‘Leaky Loop System’.

Currently, a monograph is being finalized. Its key findings and confusions will be presented.

Keywords: embodied cognition, plant cognition, enactivism, artistic research, ontology, philosophy of science, technology.

Artist researcher **Bartaku**’s practice explores light, energy, plants and their relationalities. It is shaken by worldviews that humbly embrace the fluidity of the understanding of what life is. It spins according to the ways of play. Many works evolve from the entanglement with *Baroa belaobara*. It is the key whisperer of do’s and not do’s in Bartaku’s becoming.

Panel III

EMBODIED THEOLOGIES AND SENTIENT COSMOLOGIES

Chair: **Petri Berndtson**

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

11.00–12.30 GMT / 13.00–14.30 CEST

Tamara Ditrich: *“Sentience” and its Ethical Implications: New Ways of Thinking, Informed and Inspired by Ancient Indian Discourse*

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“SENTIENCE” AND ITS ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS: NEW WAYS OF THINKING, INFORMED AND INSPIRED BY ANCIENT INDIAN DISCOURSE

Tamara DITRICH

University of Sydney

This paper will explore the concept of “sentience” and its necessary link to ethics by examining the presentations of the intrinsic interconnectedness between humans, animals, plants and the natural elements as modelled in ancient India. Firstly, it will outline how the concept of “person” or “identity” is presented in the models of cognition in early Buddhism, namely, through the analytical model of intrinsically interrelated mind-body (*nāma-rūpa*), the model of five mutually activating, interconnected aggregates (*skandha*), and the dynamic, co-evolving model of interdependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). The three models (which link to and necessarily entail a larger ethical framework) disestablish the human self as the centre of all consideration and instead put forward a complex systems model that links all sentient beings and the natural world, and serves as the foundation for praxis, which typically involves meditation and the cultivation of a radically new understanding of sentience, which in turn is the basis for an ethics of behaviour, i.e., virtues, such as kindness and friendliness (*maitrī*), generosity (*dāna*) and—most importantly—non-violence or non-harming (*ahiṃsā*) in relation to all sentient beings.

Then the paper will examine how such models can inform contemporary Western discourse and contribute to new ways of approaching environmental and other issues. This will be shown using the example of an innovative programme “Meditation and Ethics for Educators,” currently being developed in Australia, which is inspired by the same early Buddhist discourse and aims to introduce meditation and an exploration of ethics in education, while focusing on deeper questions of constructs of identity, sentience, and the human relationship with the natural environment. The programme intends to focus not only on how but also on what students need to learn, thus linking contemplative approaches to learning to the content of the teaching through an exploration of more fundamental ethical and existential concerns, such

as the question of the meaning of life and the human potential for a deeper ethical transformation.

Keywords: sentience and identity, Buddhist ethics, non-self in early Buddhism, meditation and ethics in education

Tamara Ditrich has been researching and lecturing on a variety of academic subjects related to Asian religions and languages (Buddhism, Contemplation in Eastern Religions, Hinduism, Sanskrit) in universities through Europe (University of Ljubljana, University of Primorska) and Australia (Australian National University, University of Queensland, University of Sydney, Nan Tien Institute). Her main research areas include philosophies and languages of ancient India, focusing particularly on Buddhist Studies, Vedic Philology, traditional Indian Linguistics, ancient Indian contemplative practices, and gender and identity in Indian religions.

BEING IN THE HEART OF THE MATTER: REFLECTIONS ON ONTOLOGY, COSMIC CHRIST AND POLAR BEARS

Lenart ŠKOF

*Institute for Philosophical Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper,
Slovenia*

Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis, Ljubljana, Slovenia

When the American environmentalist and naturalist John Muir came across a dead bear in Yosemite Valley, he bitterly complained about all those who in their beliefs and theological views had no room in heaven for such a noble creature. In the current environmental crisis it is vital to acknowledge the ethical and theological value of this deep intuition, which is fully in line with contemporary views on deep incarnation within environmental theology. This lecture will first reflect upon idiosyncratic theological ideas as present in Ludwig Feuerbach, which, fully in line with contemporary environmental theology, feed into theological ideas of the cosmic Christ as taken from early Church Fathers to Teilhard de Chardin and to more recent deep incarnation theologies. In this, we will point to the process of debordering the barriers between naturalism, humanism and theism, and show how divinities and earthly creatures are seen as passing into one another, which reveals to us a new possibility for the theology of nature.

Keywords: environmental theology, Ludwig Feuerbach, theological materialism, deep incarnation, Teilhard de Chardin

Lenart Škof is Head of the Institute for Philosophical Studies at the Science and Research Centre (Koper, Slovenia) and Dean at Alma Mater Europaea – Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis (Ljubljana, Slovenia). He co-edited *Atmospheres of Breathing* (SUNY Press 2018), *The Poesis of Peace* (Routledge, 2017) and *Breathing with Luce Irigaray* (Bloomsbury, 2013). Lenart Škof is an author of several books, among them *Antigone's Sisters: On the Matrix of Love* (SUNY Press, 2021) and *Breath of Proximity: Intersubjectivity, Ethics and Peace* (Springer, 2015).

Homepage: <https://zrs-kp.academia.edu/LenartŠkof>

EMBODIED THEOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL: TOWARD A THEODICY OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

George HANDLEY

Brigham Young University

As is evident in this conference's call for papers and in many other efforts in the Environmental Humanities, the Anthropocene has necessitated a re-examination of the cosmological and ontological assumptions of culture. An underlying assumption of the environmental humanities has been that culture—narrative, poetry, popular culture, moral philosophy—has the power to shape and motivate human behavior and that it should therefore be exploited to offer new paradigms of human self-understanding. As such, we cannot ignore the underlying metaphysical and even theological impulses of much of this work.

This paper will explore recent attempts to articulate theologies of embodiment, especially in light of the need to bring theology “back to earth,” as it were, so as to inspire an ethics of care in the here and now. What has proved challenging about such theological work is that in responding to our current understandings of the evolution and interdependency of all life, it has had to confront the implicit problem of evil in a world that is subject to accident and chaos and that results in disproportionate and at times unavoidable human suffering. It must forge, in other words, an adequate theodicy. I will explore theologies (including process theology and Mormonism) that reject the traditional theses of God's omnipotence and a creation *ex nihilo* and yet still identify crucial grounds for hope in our capacity for a moral response to the reality of the Anthropocene.

Keywords: theodicy, ecotheology, creation *ex nihilo*, Mormonism, process theology, environmental humanities

George Handley is a Professor of Interdisciplinary Humanities at Brigham Young University. Trained in comparative literature at Stanford University and at UC Berkeley, his research and creative writing explore the connections between literature, religion, and the environment. He has published seven monographs, including *New World Poetics: Nature and the Adamic Imagination of Whitman, Neruda, and Walcott*;

an environmentally theme memoir, *Home Waters*; a climate change novel, *American Fork*; and a forthcoming collection of essays about Mormonism and the environment called, *The Hope of Nature*. Recent essays have explored the ecotheological themes in Marilynne Robinson, Pope Francis's encyclical, Terrence Malick's film, *The Tree of Life*, and in Darren Aranofsky's 2014 film, *Noah*. He also serves currently as a member of the Provo City Council in Utah.

Panel IV
AIR, DUST AND FLESH

Chair: **Lenart Škof**

Tuesday, May 25, 2021
14.30–16.00 GMT / 16.30–18.00 CEST

Jerry Zee: *Between Whirlwinds: Dust and the Poetics of Phases in China*

Petri Berndtson: *Avicenna's Flying Person in the Aerial Flesh*

Emil Månsson: *Elements of ECT*

**BETWEEN WHIRLWINDS:
DUST AND THE POETICS OF PHASES IN CHINA**

Jerry ZEE
Princeton University

Since the early 2000s, massive dust storms have been a signature feature of China's new meteorological contemporary, the changed weather patterns that have accompanied decades of breakneck social and economic change. Dust storms are land turned weather, articulating environment and political change as a process that takes places across geophysical shifts of phase. Sand and wind become wind-sand, a substance and relation that orients critical planetary attention in manifold relations between modern land and air. In exploring a series of forms and phases through which the dynamics of sand and wind reshape social collectives, political experiments, and human embodiment, this paper locates China in elemental transitions: what if the rise of China were to be taken literally, as the rise of China into the air?

Keywords: China, dust storms, weather, phase shift, politics

Jerry C Zee is assistant professor of Anthropology and Environmental Humanities at Princeton University. His work explores embroilments of politics, planet, and culture in the dust and aerosol weather systems that have, in the past decades, reshaped the weather systems of the Northern Hemisphere.

AVICENNA'S FLYING PERSON IN THE AERIAL FLESH

Petri BERNDTSON

University of Jyväskylä

Persian philosopher Avicenna (980-1037) is famous for his thought experiment concerning the “floating person,” “flying person” or “person suspended in air.” In this thought experiment, according to Avicenna, “[o]ne of us must suppose that he was just created at a stroke, fully developed and perfectly formed but with his vision shrouded from perceiving all external objects – created floating in the air... Then let the subject consider whether he would affirm the existence of his self/soul. There is no doubt that he would affirm his own existence.” The first knowledge of the flying/floating person would be “I am,” affirming his or her self/soul as self-consciousness. Very often scholars have compared this Avicenna’s argument for the existence of self/soul to the Cartesian *cogito*.

In my presentation, instead of reading Avicenna’s argument in the *cogito ergo sum* genre, I will interpret it in phenomenologico-elemental terms in dialogue with Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s elemental Flesh and Gaston Bachelard’s elemental poetics of air. For Bachelard, the highest form of life is the imaginary flying or floating “in the air” in which our terrestrial being becomes as aerial as breath. This life of the “aerial tissue” can be interpreted in Merleau-Ponty’s terms as Flesh. Flesh is the elemental connective tissue of our very existence. In my opinion, this kind of fleshy aerial reading of Avicenna’s flying/floating person argument could help us to develop elemental literacy to transpose our current understandings of what is the self/soul as the fundamental “I am” and how this self/soul is connected to nature.

Keywords: Avicenna, flying person, floating person, air, elemental, Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard, aerial poetics, flesh, breathing

Petri Berndtson, PhD, is a philosopher of breathing. He was full-time lecturer in philosophy at Lahti University of Applied Sciences in Finland. He has also worked as guest lecturer and workshop leader, for example, at Trondheim Academy of Fine Art in Norway and Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in USA. His main research interests and expertise lie in the experiential phenomenon of breathing, phenomenology

(especially Merleau-Ponty), embodiment, the elemental poetics of air (Bachelard), cultivation of breathing (the methods of *anapanasati* and *zazen*), and contemplative studies. He is a coeditor with Lenart Škof of the first anthology of respiratory philosophy, titled *Atmospheres of Breathing* (2018). Petri has also invented methods called Philosophical Breathwork and Mindfulness. In his workshops, his specialty is philosophico-experiential way of working with breathing.

Petri's YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRwDkNaYdkUBRkQ2YmSn6zg>

Petri's web page: www.mindfulness.com/

ELEMENTS OF ECT

Emil MÅNSSON

University of Iceland

“Nothing is inside, nothing outside / For what is inside, that is outside”
Goethe, Epirrhema

In *Nature and Madness* from 1982, Paul Shephard proposes to understand the ecological crisis as a kind of collective immaturity on the part of those that cause it, namely humans; to see our environmental destructiveness as a failed development of self. This inner/outer relationship is essentially a version of the so-called first law of ecological thinking: that all things are interconnected, from which follows that what we do to the environment, we do to ourselves. But this latter claim is rarely substantiated, which is what I hope to do here, by linking Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the flesh of the world to ancient and recent thinking on the elemental and, further, to insights from our project on Embodied Critical Thinking.

In what became *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty famously writes that “The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term ‘element,’ in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a general thing, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an ‘element’ of Being. Not a fact or a sum of facts, and yet adherent to location and to the now.” (pp. 139-40)

How might we conceive of Merleau-Ponty’s flesh as an elemental category somehow linked to the elements outside—from body-flesh to world-flesh—without falling back on the ‘old’ ones of body-mind-nature, subject-object and so on? What is the connection between flesh and Eugene Gendlin’s concept or notion of felt sense? And what is the take away if we start by rejecting the all too easy ‘self-transformation = world-transformation’ formula?

Keywords: interconnection, elemental thinking, body-nature unity/continuity, ecological maturity, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Shepard, embodied critical thinking (ECT)

Emil Månsson is a PhD student in philosophy, University of Iceland, part of the ECT project. In 2017 he got his MA in phenomenology and philosophy of mind from the Center for Subjectivity Research at Copenhagen University, and in 2012 his BA in literature. He has also studied at Charles University, Prague. He is currently working on his PhD dissertation *Living Well in a Dying World: On Humanity's Responsibility for Itself*. See more at: <http://ect.hi.is/members/>.

Panel V

**CROSS-CULTURAL, ELEMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS
AND EMBODIED COHABITATION**

Chair: **Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir**

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

9.00–11.00 GMT / 11.00–13.00 CEST

Freya Mathews: *“Walking the Land”: An Alternative to Discourse as a Path to Ecological Consciousness*

Shé M. Hawke: *Re-Stor(y)ing a World: Porous Entanglements and Elemental Literacy*

Clifton Evers: *Toxic Love: Men Doing Polluted Leisure in Blue Spaces*

Ram Eisenberg: *Rewilding Thinking*

“WALKING THE LAND”: AN ALTERNATIVE TO DISCOURSE AS A PATH TO ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Freya MATHEWS

School of Humanities & Social Sciences, College of Arts, Social Sciences & Commerce, La Trobe University, Australia

Though science has for centuries been at pains to repudiate the idea of mind in nature, it has recently begun to acknowledge that the natural world may in fact be full of minds – animal minds and maybe even plant minds as well. This is exciting, but will it make Western civilization more responsive, morally speaking, to larger communities of life? I suggest that as long as society relies, for its basic epistemology, on science, we shall continue to treat earth-life in an objectified manner, theoretically fascinating, perhaps, but morally of little salience to us.

In a world of seven billion people, there are myriads of practical reasons why we still need to pursue science. But for earth-life to matter to us, morally speaking, we may need to prioritise other ways of knowing.

In Australia we are lucky to have on hand teachers of a supremely psychically and hence morally engaged way of knowing – a way that leads not only to an exhaustive knowledge of one’s natural environment but to a sense of connection with it. As Aboriginal Law Men, Bill Neidjie of Kakadu and David Mowaljarlai of the Kimberley, both emphasize, Indigenous ways of knowing cannot be extricated from feeling. One arrives at this kind of knowledge not by adopting the stance of detached observer, as scientists do, but by, as Mowaljarlai puts it, “walking the land.” I interpret this expression in a larger than literal sense to denote an epistemology of actively addressing land as a collaborator that can and will join forces with us in shared vital projects. I further consider what such projects might consist in for those of us who no longer forage for our livelihoods but live in industrialized societies.

Keywords: scientific epistemology, subject-object dualism, Aboriginal epistemologies, ecological consciousness

Freya Mathews is Emeritus Professor of Environmental Philosophy at Latrobe University, Australia. She is the author of over a hundred books, articles and essays on ecological philosophy. Her current special interests are in ecological civilization; Indigenous (Australian and Chinese) forms of ecological consciousness and how such Indigenous perspectives may be adapted to the context of contemporary global society; panpsychism and critique of the metaphysics of modernity; and conservation ethics. In addition to her research activities she co-manages a private conservation estate in northern Victoria. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

RE-STOR(Y)ING A WORLD: POROUS ENTANGLEMENTS AND ELEMENTAL LITERACY

Shé M. HAWKE

*Mediterranean Institute of Environmental Studies, Science and Research
Centre, Koper, Slovenia*

A lineage of sand

A reef of memory ... (Kathy Jetñ il Kijiner, 2017)

This paper contemplates nature as thinking, feeling and embodied, with its own individual systems of signification, connectivity, and articulation – a potent multi-layered story. Each species is entangled within its own assemblage of complex and adaptive relationships, communications and stories, and in confluence with other stories beyond its immediate field, with its direct relations and environs and within itself that form the broader complex adaptive assemblage that is the ‘earth system’ (Steffen, Crutzen and McNeil 2007). How we each narrate our world to ourselves and our companion species and vice versa, is predicated firstly by our own subjectivity that is arguably ‘human-centric’, and secondly by intersecting narrative constellations to stories other than our own. There is an implied, if not actual intimacy of entanglement and ‘biocentric understanding’ (Salleh 2017) on offer by sharing the world through some form of mutual articulation of elemental literacy, and stor(y)ing, in which restorative justice is embedded. And here, the main protagonist might be nature – as plural as any human antagonists might be, and in which the systems of signification are equally polyvalent and complex.

It may not be possible to know how nature perceives us, how natures tell us. The pursuit of industry, capitalism and commoditisation through the epoch of the Anthropocene, however, provokes a narrative trajectory towards a different ‘mutually constituted’ (Barad 2007) fluency – a *muopoi-esis* with porous boundaries. The methodology of elemental literacy decentres the human and invites all actors into inter-species, elemental and abiotic dialogue. My focus here is to re-stor(y), recast, transform, and perhaps even personalise the character of climate change, from the brooding omniscient narrator that it has become, towards other more connected possibilities.

Keywords: restorative justice, climate change, cross cultural elemental philosophy, elemental literacy, biosocial assemblages, narrative co-creation, biocentrism

Shé M. Hawke is an inter-disciplinary scholar and Head of the Mediterranean Institute for Environmental Studies, at the Science and Research Centre, Koper, Slovenia. She is also an Honorary Associate in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies, University of Sydney where she taught from 2005-2013. Her scientific research also intersects with poetics. Her last two poetry books are: *Aquamorphia: Falling for Water* (2014, Interactive Publications: Carindale), and a bilingual collection: *Biti s Teboj/ Being with You* (2020, Društvo Konstruktivist, JSKD Sežana, and KUD Apokalipsa: Slovenia). The paper at this symposium is funded by ARRS J7-1824.

TOXIC LOVE: MEN DOING POLLUTED LEISURE IN BLUE SPACES

Clifton EVERS

University of Newcastle, United Kingdom

In the Anthropocene, pollution is part of the ecology. Nature-based leisure is now ‘polluted leisure’ as new ‘naturecultures’ emerge. It is well-understood that leisure causes pollution. However, less examined is how pollution generates, shapes, informs, and leads to gendered leisure. The concept ‘polluted leisure’ describes the embodied, sensorial, emotional, intellectual, spatial, and technological emergence of pollution–material and social; harmful and non-harmful; actual and perceived–assembling with leisure. Britton et al. (2018) provide a useful definition of the term ‘blue spaces’ as referring to “all visible outdoor, natural surface waters with potential for the promotion of human health and wellbeing” (p. 2). Men I have been researching with who undertake polluted leisure in blue spaces are working through what is quite literally toxic masculinity. In this talk, I share an interdisciplinary imaginative ethnography (involving arts-based research methods such as film, soundscapes, ethnographic fiction) about polluted leisure sites in England and Wales. The findings reveal how cultural and material relationships between pollution and leisure are gendered. The project is also validating how an arts-based and interdisciplinary approach to articulating and analysing a more-than-human understanding of polluted leisure is useful. Finally, the outcomes of the project are troubling the now popular health discourse that celebrates blue spaces as therapeutic.

Keywords: men, pollution, leisure, recreation, arts-based research, ethnography

Dr Clifton Evers is a lecturer in media and cultural studies at Newcastle University. Through “imaginative ethnography” (arts-based research methods) his work addresses relationships between men, masculinity, sport, leisure, and the environment. A key focus is exploring a new research area he is calling ‘polluted leisure.’ Clifton is part of a team working on the project *Whose transformation? The places, politics and ethics of the fossil free society in Sweden*. He is a member of the Shadow Places Network, a network of scholars, artists and activists who collaborate to document, co-produce and reimagine connections between places and peoples in an

era of climate change. Clifton is also an active member of the HEAL (Health, Environment, Arts and Literature) research group, headquartered at Oviedo University, Spain.

REWILDING THINKING

Ram EISENBERG

Technion, Israel Institute of Technology

I believe the current environmental crisis is a manifestation of our conceptualization of thinking and mind as taking place in an abstract “Nowhere,” treating the environment as negligible background. To change our interaction with the environment, we must also change our conceptualization of thinking.

Although perfectly logical, the notion of situated thinking defies our conventional conception of mind as “something that is contained in a body.” Situated thinking implies that minds think differently in different places. The agency of place is as critical to mind as is the agency of body. In order to think new ways, we must learn to rewild our thinking, we must engage with places of agency. That is why wildernesses as the arctic are so critical (and why it is so appropriate for this conference to be held in Iceland).

Yet although we have the philosophical conceptual framework to talk about it, there are very few philosophical methods of how to practice Rewilding Thinking. i.e., how to create a thinking experience that is contextually rich with embodied and situated experiencing, and how to teach this way of thinking.

Being grounded in both artistic and analytical modes of thinking, I believe design can act as a bridge to forming such new ways of thinking, in particular in relation to the environmental crisis. Design and design-education may have something fresh to offer philosophy, as design-thinking theory and methodology focus on problem-solving in nonlinear and experiential ways that defy common deductive logic.

Keywords: environmental crisis, environmental design, situated thinking, rewilding thinking, wilderness, non-discursive

Ram Eisenberg is a landscape Architect situated in Haifa Israel, and an assistant professor of landscape architecture at the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology. Ram has gained significant acclaim in Israel for his award-winning projects, and is the recipient of the 2018 EDRA Place Design Award.

Panel VI

PEDAGOGICAL AND EXPERIENTIAL SENTIENCE

Chair: **Emil Månsson**

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

11.30–13.00 GMT / 13.30–15.00 CEST

Michael Marder: *Vegetal Pedagogy*

Reingard Spannring: *Subjective Experience as the Basis for Connectivity
and Respect in a More-Than-Human World?*

Maja Bjelica: *Deep Re-Listening: Re-Referring to the World as Sentient,
through Co-subjectivity*

VEGETAL PEDAGOGY

Michael MARDER

*Department of Philosophy, University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU)
Ikerbasque: Basque Foundation for Science*

In this talk, I summarize what plants may teach us with regard to living on a planet they have inhabited for much longer than members of the species *Homo sapiens*. Throughout, I concentrate on the literal sense of pedagogy as the art of guiding children. The vital question for me is not whether or how human beings can attain full maturity, embodied in a serious and responsible posture vis-à-vis the environment. Rather, the question is what kind of children we are or may become: the unruly and destructive ones, or filled with wonder in each new encounter with the strange worlds we circulate in.

Keywords: vegetal life, environmental pedagogy, childhood, philosophy of plants

Michael Marder is IKERBASQUE Research Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain. His writings span the fields of phenomenology, political thought, and environmental philosophy. He is the author of numerous scientific articles and monographs, including *Plant-Thinking* (2013), *The Philosopher's Plant* (2014), *Pyropolitics* (2015), *Dust* (2016), *Energy Dreams* (2017), *Heidegger* (2018), *Political Categories* (2019), *Dump Philosophy* (2020), and *Hegel's Energy* (2021) among others. For more information, consult his website michaelmarder.org.

SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE AS THE BASIS FOR CONNECTIVITY AND RESPECT IN A MORE-THAN-HUMAN WORLD?

Reingard SPANNRING

Institute for Education Science, University of Innsbruck, Austria

The unfolding of the ecological disaster has led authors to reconsider the position of the human subject and his/her relationship with the earth and to explore the possibilities for just biosocial relationships on earth. Environmental educators often propose subjective experience in and with nature as an important learning space for environmental consciousness and environmentally friendly behaviour. However, in the context of consumer society it is less clear what subjective experience is and whether/how the nonhuman world would benefit from it.

This paper brings ecocentric and zoocentric work in environmental education research into dialogue with a fundamental critique of consumption as a way of being in and relating to the world. In particular, it foregrounds processes of objectification and commodification, and their impacts on human and nonhuman subjectivity and the possibility of care within a more-than-human community. From this perspective, eco-pedagogy seeks to liberate humans, nonhumans and elemental beings from predetermined behavioral results and functions, and opens the time and space for the subjectification of humans, nonhumans and elemental beings within the complex dynamics of a more-than-human community. With this proposition, the paper contributes to an ecocentric understanding of education that builds on the continuity of life and subjective experience.

Keywords: more-than-human world, experience, consumer society, commodification, self-commodification

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Reingard Spannring is a sociologist working as lecturer and researcher at the Institute for Education Science, University of Innsbruck, Austria. Her main fields of interest are environmental education research, environmental sociology, philosophy of education, critical animal studies and cognitive ethology.

DEEP RE-LISTENING: RE-REFERRING TO THE WORLD AS SENTIENT, THROUGH CO-SUBJECTIVITY

Maja BJELICA

*Institute for Philosophical Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper,
Slovenia*

The presentation invites participant co-listeners towards a possibility of a practice of deep re-listening to the environment, to the world, that might exceed the field of a mere acoustic soundscape to which the ear refers by hearing. We aim to go beyond it and understand it as a shared practice, a gesture that en-livens co-listeners to a mutually sentient space of cohabitation.

Through air, being the sharing space and environment of sound and listening, I connect the aesthetic, artistic process of deep listening, brought to practice by the musician Pauline Oliveros, to the conceptual and embodied practices of thinkers in the fields of ethics and phenomenology. Jean-Luc Nancy presented the phenomenological aspect of the act of listening as a co-constitutive and mutually referential process of (inter)subjectivity, while Luce Irigaray exposes listening as offering silence and space to the other for their expression and being, without reducing them to the same, as a respectful and recognizing gesture of sharing. Following their thoughts, I stress the importance and possibilities of another ethics of listening that would take into account not only the human other, but also every possible other matter or being as a co-subject.

The experiment of a deep re-listening can offer a path towards (re)discovering nature, world(s), environments as co-sentient beings and matters that co-listen and share.

Keywords: ethics of listening, deep listening, co-listening, intersubjectivity

Maja Bjelica, PhD, is an assistant researcher at the Science and Research Centre Koper at the Institute for Philosophical Studies. Currently she is working on the research programme on liminal spaces or areas of cultural and societal cohabitation, a research project on interreligious dialogue and a research project on biosocial philosophical literacy. She obtained her doctoral degree in 2018 at the Facul-

ty of Humanities of the University of Primorska, Slovenia, with the dissertation “A Philosophical-anthropological Study of the Possibilities of the Ethics of Hospitality: Breath, Silence and Listening in Spaces of Intersubjectivity.” Her research interests include ethics of hospitality, applied ethnomusicology, community music, ethics of listening, intercultural philosophy, transdisciplinary methodologies.

Panel VII

LIVED EXPERIENCES IN/BEYOND THE ANTHROPOCENE

Chair: **Shé M. Hawke**

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

14.30–16.00 GMT / 16.30–18.00 CEST

Claire Petitmengin: *Anchoring in Lived Experience as an Act of Resistance*

Donata Schoeller: *Environmental Responsiveness in Conceptual Thinking*

Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir: *From Eco-Anxiety to Embodied Knowing*

ANCHORING IN LIVED EXPERIENCE AS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE

Claire PETITMENGIN

*Professor Emerita in Philosophy at the Institut Mines-Télécom
Member of the Archives Husserl, Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris*

I advocate the idea that our way of life and the ecological catastrophe it is bringing about are intimately linked to our blindness to that which is nevertheless closest to us: our lived experience. The crucial problem is that we do not recognize the “felt” dimension of our experience, the vibrant and quivering dimension where the separation between inner and outer space vanishes. At the cost of considerable tension, we try on the contrary to maintain a separation between these two spaces, which has the effect of depriving them both of life, of dis-animating them. Cut off from the source of life and meaning, we are drained of our vital energy. The weaker we become, the more we try to satisfy ourselves with frantic consumption, and the more we exhaust the earth. This rupture with the living heart of our experience is therefore the very condition for the survival of our current economic system, which strives to maintain it. Liberation from this enslavement requires recognizing and loosening the tensions that cut us off from our experience. Retrieving contact with it is the precondition that would allow us to regain our lucidity, our dignity, and the courage to change our model of society.

Keywords: ecology, ecopsychology, felt meaning, lived experience, micro-phenomenology

Claire Petitmengin is currently Professor Emerita in Philosophy at the Institut Mines-Télécom and member of the Archives Husserl, Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. Her research focuses on the usually unrecognized dynamics of lived experience and “micro-phenomenological” methods enabling us to become aware of it and highlight its essential structures. She studies the epistemological conditions of these methods, as well as their educational, therapeutic, artistic and contemplative applications. She currently devotes herself to exploring the links between the ecological crisis and our blindness to our lived experience, notably in the context of the Micro-phenomenology Lab, an international “without walls” laboratory gathering researchers from various disciplines involved in micro-phenomenological research.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIVENESS IN CONCEPTUAL THINKING

Donata SCHOELLER

University of Koblenz

University of Iceland

Responsiveness to environments goes along with non-controllable surprises of embodied experience. At the same time, responsiveness is a skill that entails opportunities and risks. My first part will explore practices of re-gaining responsiveness in thinking, the human domain especially prone to disconnect from the embodied environments within and around us. Laying out risks and opportunities entailed, I will present research on re-thinking thinking, based on the turn to embodiment in philosophy and the cognitive sciences. Conceptual thinking is an easily overlooked environment in itself which can close down the range of human experience within which we feel value, beauty, vulnerability and presence. The first part will end with reflecting the sensitive interaction of experience and conceptual thinking, based on micro-phenomenological research.

The second part of my paper will investigate a new understanding of conceptual thinking as a home grown environment. New environmental concepts safeguard from the reductions and colonializations of an experienced world by formulated structures and theories. These new kinds of concepts imply a constantly possible and necessary re-opening of what we think by what we feel and experience while thinking and using language. What is at stake in this subtle practice of responsiveness in conceptual thinking in terms of a micro-level environmental interaction is to be discussed.

Keywords: embodied experience, responsive thinking, freedom to make sense, body-environment

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Talking: Erleben zu Sprache bringen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), *Saying What We Mean*, ed. together with Ed Casey, (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2017), and *Thinking Thinking*, ed. together with Vera Saller (Freiburg: Alber Verlag, 2016). Donata Schoeller is on the scientific board of the WHO conference on Health and Meaningful Life in Bratislava 2019, and of Mind and Life Europe. She is a trainer in the mindfulness practices of Focusing and Thinking-at-the-Edge, which she teaches at universities internationally.

FROM ECO-ANXIETY TO EMBODIED KNOWING

Sigridur THORGEIRSDOTTIR

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Greta Thunberg famously said “I want you to panic!,” thus expressing a widespread eco-anxiety among younger people. To them the gap between what we know about the condition created by climate change and lack of action is alarming. One reason is that the financial-economic system we live in is disconnected from its earthly foundations and limits. Ruptures in big systems, such as the present pandemic, open cracks that show and make us physically sense how we are a part of the earth.

In my talk I will present my research into a different rupture that literally has shaken our earthly foundations in Iceland. This spring we had a several weeks long spell of earthquakes, followed by a volcanic eruption. The earthquakes never seemed life threatening, yet a number of people felt rather anxious about them. I decided to conduct micro-phenomenological and focusing oriented (Petitmengin, Gendlin) interviews with people, first about the earthquakes and then later about the volcanic eruption that ensued. In these interviews deeper levels of embodied knowing were accessed, that yielded information about a process that moves from an eco-anxiety derived from disconnection from our earthly embodiment towards connected embodied knowing about ourselves as embodied earthlings.

Keywords: climate change, embodied, earthly knowing, micro-phenomenology, philosophy of the body

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