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ECOLOGICAL DEMOCRACY

CARING FOR THE EARTH IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Odin Lysaker

"*Ecological Democracy* is a landmark in ecological philosophy, offering both a profound argument about how to care democratically for all existence and an indispensable critical guide to the history of green political thought. Odin Lysaker clarifies what is at stake as he re-thinks what a truly ecocentric democracy should entail".

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Ecological Democracy

Ecological Democracy offers an original, thought-provoking, and engaging treatment of why and how democracy should be re-imagined in reaction to today's ecological crisis. This book explains that one needs to re-imagine both the view on nature and democratic ideals within the same framework in the Anthropocene, the present geological epoch of human-made instability in the Earth system and its planetary boundaries. This book proposes unique and challenging readings of green political theory and its development of ecological democracy in the last four decades. This book is the first to offer a systematic and detailed interpretation of the role of critical theory vis-à-vis green political theory through an update regarding current non-anthropocentric critical theorists and how they may contribute to the further development of ecological democracy. *Ecological Democracy* builds further on deep ecology, ecophenomenology, and animism by articulating an ecocentric view of nature which defends an intrinsic moral value of all existence and by formulating the democratic principle of all ecologically affected parties.

This book provides a sophisticated, convincing, and accessible argument for how to re-imagine ecological democracy as ecocentrism in practice: ecological love. To love ecologically means caring for and encountering all existence on the Earth and in the cosmos. This book is multi disciplinary and will be of great value to researchers as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students from many disciplines.

Odin Lysaker is a Professor of Ethics at the University of Agder, Norway. He earned his PhD in Philosophy from the University of Oslo. Lysaker is an Affiliate Researcher at the Center for Development and the Environment at the University of Oslo and a member of the Working Group on Ecological Democracy organized by the Earth System Governance Project. He has written and contributed to many articles, books, and book chapters, especially in the fields of philosophy of nature, environmental ethics, and democracy theory.

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Ecological Democracy:
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Odin Lysaker

Ecological Democracy

Caring for the Earth in the Anthropocene

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Preface and Acknowledgments

In my heart, through the senses and emotions, through my veins and nerve system, through every atom and fiber layers, and through my entire body, I experience a particular and significant kinship, closeness, and encounter with all existence. Through this embodied encounter, I experience interwovenness and co-inhabitance with the human and the more-than-human world. I also experience my embodied encounter as cosmological belongingness and togetherness in a wider world of mutual relations. I describe this interconnected experience and practice as *ecological love*—the love and care of all existence. Ecological love, however, involves not only my personal experience of such caring; since all humans are situated by being embodied, I believe, all people are, at least potentially, capable of opening themselves to and resonating with the love of all existence, all that matters—more than you may think. So, ecological love interconnects human nature with the more-than-human world of the entire Earth system and the rest of the cosmos.

Ecological love is the foundation for another main theme of the present monograph—*ecological democracy*. I address ecological democracy from an *ecocentric* approach to nature. Thus, both ontologically and normatively, my concept of nature includes human nature as well as animate and inanimate parts of nonhuman nature. I suggest, then, a radical, alternative, and political cosmology—*ecocentrism in practice*. I wish to contribute to re-imagining ecological democracy based on ecocentrism through new and expanded ways in which to care for Mother Earth and the rest of the universe in the Anthropocene.

Ecological love is the guiding vision of this book. My active hope—if you are not already engaged by practicing ecological love—is that your own heart might be sparked by reading about my ideas. In turn, you may recognize to a greater extent than before that you coexist and can resonate with all existence. All these parts of the planet and the universe are equally vulnerable and dependent, wonderful and strange, and dangerous and uncontrollable. My active hope is that your heart can be sparked in similar ways that some co-earthlings sparked mine to write this book—from my own heart, where everything burns and ecological love and ecological democracy matter more than you may think.

Several beautiful human souls sparked me to write this book from the heart. My appreciation goes primarily to Arne Johan Vetlesen, who sparked me by having been my supervisor for both my master's thesis and PhD thesis in philosophy at the

University of Oslo. Later, we became close friends and good colleagues. He has deeply influenced my thinking in many ways and areas. In 2015, Vetlesen published *Denial of Nature*. This monograph inspired me to look closer at the crossroads between critical theory and green political theory, among the main themes of the present publication.

I am grateful to John S. Dryzek, who sparked my writing process by commenting on a draft for the book proposal. Earlier, in 2016, I became acquainted with Dryzek when I responded to his lecture at the Arne Naess Symposium organized by the Center for Development and Environment at the University of Oslo. I then began learning about the richness and relevance of ecological democracy. I also appreciate Dryzek for inviting me to join the Working Group on Democracy organized by the Earth System Governance Project.

I am very pleased to have been an affiliate researcher at the Center for Development and Environment at the University of Oslo since 2016. I am thankful for inspirational exchanges with my fine colleagues at the center, the members of the Philosophy Reading Group, and the Arne Naess Program on Global Justice and the Environment. I especially appreciate Director Sidsel Roalkvam and Nina Witoszek for introducing me to Dryzek in 2016.

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Smaller portions, though heavily modified and reorganized, of the material constituting this book were published earlier as "Økologisk antropologi: Heidegren/Honneth-debatten i økokrisens tid" in *Teori och person: Socialfilosofi, samhällsteori, filosofisociologi, filosofihistoria*, edited by Anna Engstam (Bokförlaget Daidalos, 2023); "Planetary Ethics: Rereading Seyla Benhabib in Times of Climate Refugees", *Jus Cogens: A Critical Journal of Philosophy of Law and Politics*, 2023; "Sivil ulydighet i økokrisens tid: En økosentrisk tilnærming", *Norsk filosofisk tidsskrift*, 2022; "Oceanic Cosmopolitanism: The Complexity of Waiting for Future Climate Refugees", *Journal of Global Ethics*, 2022; "Ecological Sensibility: Recovering Axel Honneth's Philosophy of Nature in the Age of Climate Crisis", *Critical Horizons: A Journal of Philosophy and Social Theory*, 2020; "Ecological Love: Reflections on Morality's Existential Preconditions", in *Between Closeness and Evil: A Festschrift for Arne Johan Vetlesen*, edited by Odin Lysaker (Scandinavian Academic Press, 2020); and "Økologisk demokrati og naturens iboende verdi: Klimasøksmål i miljøkrisens tidsalder", *Etikk i praksis: Nordic Journal of Applied Ethics*, 2019. I thank the editors and journals for allowing me to reprint these ideas.

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I am also fortunate to have my position at the Department of Religion, Philosophy, and History at the University of Agder, who generously funded my research stay at Uppsala University. I am thankful for the support throughout the entire writing process, especially by the Head of the Department, Reidar Salvesen, and the Vice Dean of Research at the Faculty of Humanities and Education, Gunhild Kvåle.

I owe a special thanks to my editor, Neil Jordan, and the rest of the Routledge team. Jordan enthusiastically supported and shepherded this project to completion. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewer for excellent and inspirational suggestions. These comments greatly enhanced the quality of the manuscript.

I wish to share with the reader some personal experiences, too. I have always been engaged with the ecological crisis. Still, increasingly during the last five years or so, I have experienced a closer connection to nonhuman nature. I have done so by recognizing, appreciating, and valuing the entire cosmos, for instance, from the outlook from my cottage in the middle of the forest with its view over a lake and with the dawn on the horizon. I have further experienced that my combined philosophic and poetic practices while facing today's ecological crisis have made me more aware of lakes, woods, horizons, dawns, and all the other wonders and the

magic of the more-than-human world. I therefore mourn and grieve, for instance, over today's sixth mass extinction, and I feel anxiety and anger when co-earthlings are harmed or become extinct. Still, my active hope is to find a personal and a professional route as a co-habitant of the universe, for example, by writing this book. In doing that, I hope to transform my mourning and anger into ecocentrism in practice: ecological love and ecological democracy. My wish is that this ecocentrism and cosmology will inspire the readers, as well, to actively interrelate with, care for, and protect all existence in their everyday lives.

Finally, my deepest thanks go to my close friends, family, and my sister, Hilde Martine Røiseland. Not least, I wish to thank my beloved partner, Ebba Katarina Tellander, for her continuous encouragement during the writing process and her inspiration to write this book from my heart. All my ecological love goes to Ebba for making my life meaningful through our encounters with each other and the magic of the rest of the universe. I also appreciate Greta Thunberg's graceful gift. I dedicate this book to Thunberg and those of us who are inspired by her unstoppable, incredible, and important engagement—by, I believe, practicing ecocentrism in virtue of ecological love and ecological democracy. We may thereby protect the entire Earth and the rest of the cosmos—everything threatened and disappearing.

Oslo, June 5, 2023
Odin Lysaker

1 Introduction

Ecological Democracy of the Anthropocene

We live in an age of crisis—an ecological crisis, which creates a democratic crisis, as well (e.g., Eckersley 1992; Barry and Eckersley 2005; Fischer 2017; Dryzek and Pickering 2019; Fraser 2022). I begin Chapter 1, therefore, by describing the ecological crisis, and thereafter I portray the democratic crisis. I further wish to explain why I hold that there exists a mutual relationship between these crises in the Anthropocene. Additionally, I try to show how the ecological model invites us to re-imagine democracy in these troubled times. Altogether, these are constituent elements of my study of the prospects for a comprehensive ecological democratization in the present geological epoch.

1.1 No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference

Today's ecological crisis involves many complex, as well as interchanging and reinforcing, aspects on all temporal and spatial scales. Nonetheless, I suggest, the ecocrisis can be portrayed as existential, planetary, and acute (Hamilton 2017, vii, 1, 9, 119). Given that, this crisis is existential since its direct and indirect impacts threaten the survival of both humans and the more-than-human world. Further, concerning its scope, the ecocrisis is planetary in terms of involving and affecting the entire Earth, and in some cases it is even linked to the universe. Finally, the environmental catastrophe is acute due to its accelerating speed and the many disastrous impacts this acceleration generates. One way in which the acuteness of the ecocrisis is grasped by Greta Thunberg in her book *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* is based on a speech during Extinction Rebellion's rally at the Parliament Square in London on October 31, 2018: "They keep saying that climate change is an existential threat and the most important issue of all. And yet they just carry on like before" (Thunberg 2019, 7–8). That said, it goes without saying that Thunberg and those following her have transformed their frustration and anger into mobilization and struggle. As indicated, this list of characteristics is not meant to be exhaustive. Yet, I believe, it captures some of the most central features of our ecological crisis.

By being existential, planetary, and acute, the question we should ask is how much time we have to tackle this crisis—before it is too late to do anything, at least on behalf of the humans and the good life many of us wish to continue living.

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In this regard, some researchers have tried to estimate by when the acceleration of the consequences and side effects of the ecological crisis should be decelerated. While the date is disputed—especially because it is difficult to measure, and scholars often estimate different aspects of the ecological crisis—there are some suggestions on the table. For example, in 2021, Johan Rockström and colleagues showed that "[t]ime is not on our side" (Rockström et al. 2021, 4). The reason, they hold, is because humanity "[w]ithin *this decade* [i.e., before 2030] we must *bend the global curves* of greenhouse gases emissions and of biodiversity loss" (ibid., emphasis added). Later, in 2022, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) documented that the next few years are critical and that we have simply three years (i.e., until 2025) left to turn the trend of greenhouse gas emissions to limiting global warming to around 1.5°C (IPCC 2022, 2). So, the window of opportunity may close at least around 2030—at the latest. Although outside the scope of my book, the global energy crisis created due to Russia's war on Ukraine is another reason why the window of opportunity concerning the ecocrisis now can be even smaller.

The ecological crisis further implies that we have left the former and stable geological era, the Holocene, and entered a new, emerging, and more unstable geological epoch, the Anthropocene. This concept relates to the word anthropo-, meaning human, and -cene, the standard suffix for geological epochs. The term was coined more than two decades ago (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). Thus far, there exists no agreement around the definition of this notion. Yet, the idea of the Anthropocene has influenced many discourses. According to Paul J. Crutzen and scholars following his studies, the Anthropocene assumes that "the central role" to "geology and ecology" is now "mankind" (ibid., 17). In turn, "many … major and still growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global, scales" (ibid.). At the time, Crutzen's hypothesis was that the Anthropocene began with the Industrial Revolution in 1750. Later, however, the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program has found indication for another commencement date for the Anthropocene at 1950, namely, the Great Acceleration (Steffen et al. 2005). In both cases, among the main drivers behind the Anthropocene are both Earth system trends (i.e., carbon dioxide, nitrous dioxide, methane, stratospheric ozone, surface temperature, ocean acidification, marine fish capture, shrimp aquaculture, nitrogen to coastal zone, tropical forest loss, domesticated land, and terrestrial biosphere degradation) and socioeconomic trends (i.e., global population growth, real GDP, foreign direct investment, urban population growth, primary energy use, fertilizer consumption, large dams, water use, paper production, transportation, telecommunications, and international tourism) (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 4–5). These trends mutually reinforce each other and have since the 1950s pointed upward—which by now appears to have been proven scientifically to be the wrong direction (ibid.). The main impacts of the Anthropocene, therefore, are anthropogenic climate change, biodiversity loss, and declining natural resources (ibid.).

While the idea of the Anthropocene was introduced by Crutzen nearly 15 years ago, it has thus far not been officially recognized by the Subcommission on

Quaternary Stratigraphy and its Anthropocene Working Group. Still, the concept of the Anthropocene has created intense scholarly and public debates, even outside natural sciences and within social sciences and the humanities (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 12–15). Here, some scholars propose other terms than the Anthropocene. In doing so, they claim, we can arrive at more precise descriptions of the present geological epoch and its drivers. Some of the most well-known notions in this regard are the Capitalocene (i.e., capitalist power organizes and uses natural resources historically and geographically; e.g., Moore 2016); the Plantationocene (i.e., colonialism, racism, and capitalism shape the past and the future concerning who have access and who do not have access to natural resources; e.g., Davis et al. 2019); the Chthulucene (i.e., the capacity for and the need to make kin by virtue of unexpected entanglement and collaborations among humans and more-than-humans; e.g., Haraway 2015); the Homogocene (i.e., a more homogenized biosphere with lower diversity at regional and global scales; e.g., McKinney and Lockwood 1999).

Although alternative explanatory concepts of our geological era exist, some researchers support the concept of the Anthropocene by developing it further on their own scholarly terms beyond its natural-scientific origin. To give a few examples, some argue that this era generates humans' "geological agency" (Chakrabarty 2009). Further, the Earth and its history is described as a "full-fledged actor" (Latour 2014). Additionally, the assumed singular origin and the linear nature of the Anthropocene are critiqued for smuggling in misconceptions of geology and temporality (Barad 2003). The Anthropocene is also understood as created by historical heterogeneity and cultural specificity showing human-nonhuman interconnections (Tsing 2017). Despite the dispute concerning the start date and the main drivers of the Anthropocene, there is seemingly a large agreement that a new geological epoch has arrived. Also, there seems to be a large degree of consensus around the interconnections between the Anthropocene and the ecological crisis.

In this book, the Anthropocene plays a crucial role. Which, then, of the above accounts of this idea is adopted? I recognize the actual plurality of understandings of the current geological epoch. Further, I appeal to a process through which one listen to and learn from insights of all these explanations without adopting merely one of them. I also suggest that irrespective of which of the sources behind the Anthropocene one finds the most conniving, these changes in the Earth system occur to be significant to all existence on the planet. To me, therefore, by drawing on various understandings of today's geological era, they can serve as a wake-up call for re-imagining democracy (Tremmel 2019).

How can the ecological crisis generate a democratic crisis, too? From my angle, there are at least five reasons why that is so. In turn, these reasons shed light on themes that currently preoccupy many central green political theorists and their development of the model of ecological democracy. Surely, all these reasons—both as ideals and in reality—involve both strengths and weaknesses. However, I suggest, by learning from all of them, we may to a greater extent than the business as usual of liberal democracy propel prospects for ecological-democratic

transformations and transitions. In effect, the latter framework articulates morally, legally, and politically ways in which to approach today's ecocrisis.

First, I address what I label as *the geology and the Anthropocene condition*. This aspect deals with the development of the present geological epoch. Here, ecological-democratic transformations and transitions can be hindered since today's democratic principles and practices emerged during, and thus to support democratic governance in the former geological epoch, the Holocene (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 20). Further, to update these outdated governance forms (e.g., liberal democracy and global capitalism), geology and ecology should be recognized as an inescapable precondition of all existence. In turn, such natural phenomena should be included as part of the picture while addressing democratic engagement in the Anthropocene. For example, the current geological destabilization of the Earth system and its impacts for governance can then be better examined (ibid.; Eckersley 1992, 59–60). Importantly, within green political theory, an increasing number of scholars have in the last decade or so developed new frameworks connecting their interpretations of ecological-democratic transformations and transitions to the idea of the Anthropocene (e.g., Dryzek, Norgaard, and Schlosberg 2013; Dryzek 1997/2021, 2016; Schlosberg 2016; Eckersley 2017, 2020, 2023; Dryzek and Pickering 2019; Pickering 2019a, 2019b; Pickering and Persson 2020; Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020; Romero and Dryzek 2021; Pickering et al. 2022). Here, some propose a shift from Holocene governance to Anthropocene governance (e.g., Dryzek and Pickering 2019).

Second, I address what I outline as *the Earth system and planetary boundaries framework*. Here, ecological-democratic transformations and transitions are related to the Earth system. The Earth system and Earth system science are terms used to describe the pioneering research that Rockström and colleagues have undertaken. Perhaps the core of this inquiry deals with the recognition of the Earth as an integrated system. In this context, ecological-democratic transformations and transitions should be allied with the Earth system and its planetary boundaries. In historical hindsight, Rockström and colleagues explained that the development of the Earth system and planetary boundaries framework was partly inspired by James Lovelock's 1972 Gaia hypothesis (Steffen et al. 2020, 55–56). This idea, which Lovelock co-developed with Lynn Margulis, suggests that living organisms cooperate with their inorganic settings on Earth to create a synergistic and self-regulating, complex system that assists to uphold and preserve the preconditions for life on the planet (Lovelock and Margulis 1974; Lovelock 1979).

Noteworthy, the Gaia hypothesis and its role for the Rockströmian framework has influenced several central scholars of this book. In the field of green political theory, these perspectives are seminal to various seminal accounts of ecological democracy (e.g., Dryzek 1990, 1995, 2016; Eckersley 2017, 2023; Dryzek and Pickering 2019). I am inspired by this book because of the significance of the Gaia hypothesis to deep ecology, ecophenomenology, animism, and the evolution of an ecocentric approach to nature (e.g., Abram 1985; Capra 1996; Harding 2006).

Let us now move to Rockström himself. He says that the Earth system should be understood as:

> the *integrated* biophysical and socioeconomic *processes and interactions* (cycles) among the atmosphere, hydrosphere, cryosphere, biosphere, geosphere, and anthroposphere (human enterprise) in *both spatial*—from local to global—and *temporal scales*, which determine the *environmental state of the planet* within its current position in *the universe*. Thus, humans and their activities are fully part of the Earth System, interacting with other components.
>
> (Rockström et al. 2009a, footnote 1, emphasis added)

It is important, I believe, to underscore the holism of the Earth system idea. As I interpret it, both ontologically and normatively, this framework understands reality as integrating both biophysical and socioeconomic aspects. So, the Rockströmian outlook is not following the Cartesian idea of dualism which ontologically divides humans and nature into two different categories. Rather, he rejects the assumed split between such categories as self and other, reason and emotion, freedom and necessity, reason and nature, and culture and nature, to mention only some of the divides related to this logic and structure. Also, some argue that Cartesianism is part of a larger dualistic logic and structure in the West (e.g., Plumwood 1993, 43). Given that, I find the ecofeminist Val Plumwood illuminating, who combines insights from deep ecology and feminism as well as being a central voice in the field of green political theory and its development of the idea of ecological democracy. In her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, she holds that dualism is not simply a theoretical standpoint among philosophers, but it is even exercised in society as an ideology (ibid., 69). When dualism is practiced, it is often normatively defending instrumentalism (ibid., 142). This means that humans, perceived as the center of the universe (i.e., anthropocentrism), can limitlessly use—or, perhaps more precisely, overuse—given, limited, constantly reduced, and in some cases extinct natural resources, which are assumed to be endless (ibid., 24). In the Anthropocene, however, we know that such overexploitation of nonhuman nature cannot continue. To illustrate, the Earth's overshoot day (i.e., the calculated date on which humans' resource consumption for the present year exceeds Earth's capacity to regenerate these resources that year), which is currently estimated globally to be in July (in some countries even earlier). It should be mentioned that even today some defend ontological dualism (e.g., Dilley 2004). Yet, let me admit that in the following, I reject Cartesian dualism, an issue to which I return. In short, however, I suggest that the Earth system framework requires ontological holism. This stance comes in various styles. Later, I defend an ecocentric approach to holism, which, both ontologically and normatively, integrates organic and inorganic parts of nature. Interestingly, Rockström's Earth system framework moves beyond the planet by including *the universe*. Regarding the latter, Earth system science can be interpreted as "a mode of looking at this planet that … *necessarily has other*

planets in view in order to create models of how this planet works" (Chakrabarty 2021, 75, original emphasis).

Rockström's research team also relates the concept of the Earth system to the notion of planetary boundaries. This term is defined as thresholds within which the stability and resilience of the Earth system as a "safe operating space for humanity" can be gained (Rockström et al. 2009b, 472). Thus, both ontologically and normatively, these boundaries must not be overridden. The Rockström team has identified nine such boundaries. These boundaries include climate change, biodiversity loss (terrestrial and marine) (later termed biosphere integrity), nitrogen and phosphorus cycles interference, stratospheric ozone depletion, ocean acidification, global freshwater use, land use change, chemical pollution, and atmospheric aerosol loading (ibid.). Together, they safeguard the Earth system. In 2009, the year this framework was first published in the renowned science journal *Nature*, three among the nine thresholds (i.e., biodiversity loss, shifts in nutrient cycles, and climate change) were already exceeded. In 2015, an update of the planetary boundaries framework showed that a fourth planetary boundary (i.e., land use) had been transgressed (Steffen et al. 2015). In 2022, even a fifth threshold and a sixth threshold (i.e., freshwater and environmental pollutants, as well as green water, were surpassed) were overridden (Persson et al. 2022; Wang-Erlandsson et al. 2022). So, it is highly significant to trying to deescalate these processes by turning overridden boundaries into safe sustainable modes and preventing the last three boundaries from being trespassed. This, however, might be more difficult than first assumed. Recall the transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene, from a stable geological period for the past 10,000 years to an unstable one. In the same period, "human actions have become the main driver of global environmental change", which might push the Earth system beyond its planetary boundaries with "detrimental" or even "catastrophic" consequences for large parts of the planet (Rockström et al. 2009b, 472).

Interestingly, seminal voices in the field of green political theory have increasingly adopted and further developed this Rockströmian framework concerning ecological democracy (e.g., Dryzek 2016; Eckersley 2017, 2023; Dryzek and Pickering 2019; Pickering and Persson 2020; Romero and Dryzek 2021; Pickering et al. 2022). Although I find this development within green political theory promising, I shall later criticize what I understand as an ecocentric deficit regarding the Rockströmian concept of safe operating space for humanity. Here, despite relating the Earth system to ecological democracy, several seminal green political theorists seem to underestimate the anthropocentric premises of the Rockströmian framework. In contrast, however, some green political theorists argue that "an *ecocentric* approach could extend the idea of a safe operating space for integrated and entangled humans and non-human systems" (Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020, 10, emphasis added).

Third, I deal with what I portray as *the ecological limits and ecological freedom conditions*. Here, too, to achieve ecological-democratic transformations and transitions, I suggest, these conditions should not be undermined. The idea of ecological limits has been advanced by the group of researchers around Rockström. They are portrayed as "the role of thresholds related to large-scale Earth System

processes, the crossing of which may trigger nonlinear changes in the functioning of the Earth System, thereby challenging social-ecological resilience at regional to global scales" (Rockström et al. 2009a, 5). Moreover, this outlook builds further on and extends approaches such as "limits to growth" (e.g., Meadows et al. 1972) and "safe minimum standards" (e.g., Bishop 1978; Rockström et al. 2009a, 4–5).

Among green political theorists, the issue of limits has been increasingly addressed (e.g., Eckersley 2004, 10, 2017; Schlosberg 2016; Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 12; Pickering and Persson 2020; Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020). The limits discourse—including ecological limits—has seen a renaissance in recent years, for instance, in debates on slow growth, antigrowth, or degrowth (Schlosberg 2016, 199). Significantly, the idea of ecological limits is "not purely scientific constructs but also involve normative decisions" (Pickering and Persson 2020, 61). This indicates that "[w]hat is considered tolerable, acceptable or safe will depend on a range of normative or value judgments" (ibid.), for example, whether the nonhuman nature is protected by having an inherent or an instrumental value. So, ecological limits "need not be fixed in perpetuity but could vary over time along with changes in social values as well as ecological dynamics" (ibid.).

Due to the existence and impacts of ecological limits, I argue, the discourse on freedom is cast in a new light. I relate the outlook of ecological limits to freedom since the latter concept is often perceived as a condition of democracy theories. Perhaps the most influential understanding of freedom proposed for Holocene issues is Isaiah Berlin's concepts of negative and positive freedom (he uses the notions of liberty and freedom as synonyms, and I therefore use the concept of freedom in this context). Negative freedom is understood as "freedom from" something through which one can define "the area within which the subject – a person or group of persons – is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons" (e.g., governments, corporations, and private persons; Berlin 1958, 121–122). Positive freedom, on the contrary, is defined as "freedom to" something by defining "[w]hat, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that" (ibid.). Berlin appears to support negative freedom since this idea of freedom safeguards pluralism in liberal democracies (ibid., 172). Charles Taylor, among others, has criticized this standpoint. In the piece "What's Wrong With Negative Liberty", Taylor holds that Berlin's division between negative and positive freedom, as well as his own support of negative freedom, is problematic (Taylor, 1985, 213–214). Taylor believes that negative freedom is not as undesirable as Berlin wants it to be. Taylor here means that negative freedom in reality presupposes and therefore should accept certain aspects of positive freedom. This indicates that negative freedom is based on equal self-realization (ibid., 212, 217). As I read Taylor, this means more concretely that certain positively free conditions (e.g., language skills or knowledge) must be fulfilled in order to be able to develop and thereby to become a good citizen. So, according to Taylor, to exercise negative freedom, for instance, in a democracy (e.g., free speech and participation) presupposes that certain aspects of positive freedom are safeguarded (e.g., language skills and education).

Now, let us move to the issue of freedom in the Anthropocene. The question is, then, if Taylor's critique of a one-dimensional negative freedom is relevant. I suggest that it is in terms of Taylor's argument that negative freedom and positive freedom presuppose each other. Given that, in the Anthropocene, a third concept of freedom is required. We here need to re-imagine freedom to tackle today's ecological crisis. Thus, free actions cannot supersede the Earth system's planetary boundaries or ecological limits. Consequently, "freedom in ecological self-limitation" by making "moderation the new virtue", as well as discovering freedom in "new social and ecological constraints", is desirable (Willig and Blok 2020, 34, 43, my translation). Similarly, Robyn Eckersley introduces the concept of *ecological freedom* (Eckersley 2004, 107, see 13, 95). According to her, such freedom "can only be realized under a form of governance that enables and enforces ecological responsibility" (ibid., 107). Moreover, in times of ecological crisis, "people are first authentically free related to and responsiveness compared to these other forms of life" (Willig and Blok 2020, 43, my translation). Ecological freedom also seems to resonate with Rockström: "humanity [should have] the freedom to pursue long-term social and economic development" (Rockström et al., 2009a, 21). In any case, ecological freedom aims at not "unduly restrict citizens' freedom to choose among different societal goals (e.g., economic growth), tipping the balance in favour of green outcomes and thereby undervaluing democratic procedures" (Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020, 10). Rather, "[e]volving scientific understanding about potentially catastrophic risks associated with the disruption of the Earth system casts this debate [of, e.g., freedom] in a new light" (ibid.; see Eckersley 2004). By understanding and applying the planetary boundaries framework, ecological limits are "compatible with democratic legitimacy" if spaces "for inclusive debate over what constitutes unacceptable ecological risk and over how associated planetary targets should be developed to manage this risk" are created and maintained (ibid.). Thus, we cannot have more freedom—not even democratically—than is scientifically sustainable within the boundaries and limits of the Earth system. Then, such boundaries and limits "remain *essential* for *safeguarding* ecological democracy" (Pickering et al. 2022, 9, emphasis added; see Pickering and Persson 2020; Pickering et al. 2022). I interpret the concept of ecological freedom as both descriptive and normative; it is descriptive by referring to science regarding the ecocrisis, and it is normative by understanding freedom within the planetary boundaries framework.

Fourth, I draw attention to what I outline as *the golden mean of ecological democracy between environmental democracy and eco-authoritarianism*. Such an Aristotelian perspective portrays two assumed extremes to show that a golden mean should be preferred. In the field of green political theory, these extremes are often referred to as environmental democracy (or liberal/representative democracy) and eco-authoritarianism. Environmental democracy means regimes "achieving sustainability through *reform* of *existing* liberal democratic institutions" and "*existing* democratic … decision-making processes" (Pickering et al. 2022, 4, emphasis added; see Eckersley 1992, 2002, 2020; Schlosberg, Bäckstrand, and Pickering 2019; Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020; Romero and Dryzek 2021).

Further, environmental democracy is associated with eco-modernity or the good Anthropocene, namely, "to celebrate and advance the idea of benign human control over the natural world" (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 10). Although knowing about the ecocrisis, promoters of environmental democracy still "believe the catastrophes can be averted and a bright future assured" (ibid.); instead of dire warning, environmental democracy stresses hope, optimism, and opportunity. Another characteristic of environmental democracy is its anthropocentric (i.e., human-centered) approach to human-nonhuman values (Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020, 4). Then, based on ontological dualism, humans and nature are divided into two separate categories. Consequently, humans are ranked over nature. From a critical angle, I believe, environmental democracy can be described as business as usual (e.g., techno-fix, geoengineering, or greenwashing).

On the other side of the specter, we find eco-authoritarianism, survivalism, and ecofascism. This standpoint can be defined as "achieving sustainability transformation through a *shift* to or *persistence* of authoritarian rule" (Pickering et al. 2022, 4, emphasis added; see Eckersley 1992, 2004, 2017; Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 60–61, 115, 149; Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020). Eco-authoritarians also criticize the representative democracy for being "too slow, compromising, cumbersome, and captured by interest groups and veto players" while endeavoring necessary sustainable democratic transformations and transitions in our age of the ecological crisis (Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020, 3). Eco-authoritarians also appeal to a "hierarchical, technocratic and centralised response" including a "strong state or 'green leviathan'" on both national and global levels (ibid.). Further, an eco-authoritarian state can be organized in terms of "presiding over a strict regime of ecological controls and resource rationing" (Eckersley 2004, 1). Today, eco-authoritarianism has "fewer proponents than in 1970s"; yet, this outlook has undergone "recent revival" regarding China's ostensibly capability to respond to the ecological crisis by taking "decisive action on some fronts" (Dryzek 1997/2021, 238). Although this statement was made a decade ago, China is still referred to as an eco-authoritarian regime.

In contrast to both environmental democracy and eco-authoritarianism, ecological democracy creates and maintains a "[d]ual transformation" (Pickering et al. 2022, 4). This means "achieving sustainability transformation through a parallel transformation toward democratic practices" (ibid.). Such a dual transformation can be based on various forms of democratization or deepening of existing democratic practices. Further, ecological democracy appeals to a "[r]adical ecological transformation" by being "more critical of existing liberal democratic institutions – particularly those associated with capitalist markets, private property rights and the prevailing multilateral system" (Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020, 4). To assist this ecological transformation to get started, some key proponents of ecological democracy adopt an ecocentric approach (e.g., Eckersley 1992; see Pickering, Bäckstrand, and Schlosberg 2020). This outlook, both ontologically and normatively, recognizes all that exist—human nature, living parts of nonhuman nature (e.g., animals, trees, or plants), and non-living parts of nonhuman nature (e.g., oceans, mountains, and the air). In my understanding, ecocentrism partly

argues that there is an interconnection between our ideal of democracy and our understanding of nature. So, a transformation toward ecological democracy requires that we critically reflect on our view on the concept of nature. Scholars supporting ecological democracy may choose different routes regarding the approach to nature. Yet, in this book, I follow Eckersley's argument that ecological democracy goes hand in hand with ecocentrism (Eckersley 1992).

Fifth, and finally, ecological-democratic transformations and transitions should deal with what I perceive as *the all ecologically affected principle*. The core of this argument is the following: to be affected by the ecological crisis and thus to be an affected party related to this crisis, one demands to be safeguarded from the opportunity of democratic participation or otherwise being represented (Eckersley 2004, 171, see 16, 118–120, 2020). Thus, without a voice and yet being an affected party creates a democratic deficit. Again, in the age of ecological crisis, the representative model of Holocene governance is not representative enough. So, our principles and practices of democracy need to be further democratized in line with the ideas and practices of ecological democracy. To illustrate, democracy can become more representative by representing nonhuman nature and future generations. I return to all ecologically affected principles in Chapter 5.

I suggest, then, that the above five ecological-democratic premises should be further enhanced to develop democracy in the Anthropocene. Also, we should attempt at achieving this goal by relating ecological democracy to what I, through this book, conceptualize as ecological love. In turn, we can care for the entire Earth system and all existing on it. Further, I propose a new and radical cosmology: ecological democracy as ecocentrism in practice. Subsequently, I wish to shed light on various ways of re-imagining ecological democracy in ecocentric terms. I assume that such an outlook is a particular and necessary historical moment of transformation and transitions succeeding a stronger caring for the Earth and the rest of the cosmos. To initiate this transformation and transitions, I believe, Greta Thunberg's words are inspiring: "no one is too small to make a difference" (Thunberg 2019).

Throughout the present monograph, I base much of my argument on a particular idea of existence. I sometimes use terms like all existence, all existing, and all that exist. I often link these terms to the Earth or the planet, as well as to ecological love, cosmological love, and even the universe or the cosmos. Although I return to this issue, this use of the term existence requires an explanation. I believe it is more precise to speak about existence instead of, for instance, life. Ontologically, the term life may be narrower understood than the notion of existence. So, since my study moves between various scales—from the microlevels of poetry and ontopoetics of the river via the mesolevel of the Earth system to the macrolevel of the cosmos—I need a concept that is general enough to cover all these scales. Further, I defend an ecocentric approach to nature. As I see it, this standpoint covers more than life narrower defined. Rather, life echoes another standpoint in this context, namely, biocentrism (i.e., life-centrism). Again, the term existence in its variants is helpful. Having said that, I must admit that this issue is not an easy one. For example, even Arne Naess—who's deep ecology is a member of the same family as the

ecocentrism I defend in this book—refers to "human and non-human life on Earth" (Naess 1989, 29). What does Naess here mean by the notion of life? One way forward is to interpret the concept of life in a narrow and a wide manner (Hverven 2022b, 298–299; see Weber 2016a). Narrowly, life may refer to biologically living organism, individually or collectively, associated with biocentrism, and widely, life covers all that exist or are alive in an ecocentric sense. Albert Schweizer's well-known credo, reverence for life (Schweitzer 1969), and Paul Taylor's environmental ethics (Taylor 1986) seem to illustrate the narrow concept of life, whereas the above quote from Naess appears as an example of a wide concept of life. For both simplicity and accuracy, however, I use terms such as all that exist throughout this book. Also, I use the term existence in an ecocentric sense, corresponding to the wide understanding of the term life. Despite that I study existence on many and different levels, including the universe, existence on the Earth will be my main focus. For the sake of my argument, I believe, it is enough to explain how I use the word existence. As Timothy Morton reminds us, in his book *Dark Ecology*, thinking that operates with the Earth as its extension is not "universalistic generalizations", but it is "highly accurate and specific" (Morton 2016, 24). Inspired by Morton, in this book, I deliberately alternate between using concepts, which some readers may associate with various, and perhaps too different and not interconnected, scales. Here I use expressions such as the cosmos and the universe, cosmology, geology and geological time (including deep time), the Anthropocene, everything that exist and all existence, and cosmological love, on the one hand, and, on the other, notions such as nonhuman nature (including organisms, species, etc.), planetary, the Earth, Mother Earth, the Earth system, ecology, and ecological love. Let me admit that these terms have very different scopes; the second group of notions, focusing on the Earth, refer to only a tiny part of the first group of terms, involving the universe. As I see it, however, there are at least two reasons why it may be worthwhile to use these concepts interchangeably, at least in some contexts. In light of these reasons, I wish to show why I believe this usage becomes more precise than imprecise. First, scientifically, the Earth is a small part of the universe, which empirically is natural-scientifically studied. As showed above, by listening to Rockström and his research team, we learn that the Earth system framework requires that one do research not only on the Earth but also on the universe. In this book, therefore, I am interested in this descriptive interconnection between the Earth and the universe. Second, normatively, as far as Earth system science provides us with adequate knowledge about the interchange between the Earth and the universe, this knowledge appears significant to the model of ecological democracy, as well. As mentioned, in the field of green political theory, an increasing number of scholars connect the idea of ecological democracy to the Rockströmian Earth system framework. In this book, then, I wish to follow and contribute to this line of thought, yet I wish to do so on my own premises.

Let me add to the above that I use concepts and distinctions such as organic/inorganic, biotic/abiotic, and animate/inanimate throughout this book. I understand these distinctions as synonyms. So, though some disciplines may study these parts separately or that in some parts in this book I focus on inanimate elements for the

sake of a nuanced picture of their richness, as well as the philosophically relevance of such an outlook, I suggest that to address such phenomena as the Earth system as a system, organic and inorganic parts of the world must be explored as interconnected. This is in line with natural-scientific findings and the ontological holism which I defend (e.g., Capra 1996; Harding 2006; Rockström et al. 2009a; Weber 2016b; Dryzek and Pickering 2019). All are interconnected, and you cannot have one without the other. To illustrate, the Earth system, the human body, or biotopes consist of both animate and inanimate aspects. In the case of humans, our body exists based on an on-going metamorphosis of organic cells and inorganic water, to only mention some parts of this complex process. Further, when I refer to terms like inorganic, abiotic, or inanimate, some scholars may associate these notions dead matter. This perspective is far from my own outlook. Inspired by deep ecology, ecophenomenology, and animism, I perceive all existence as enlivened in their unique and diverse, yet interwoven, ways (e.g., Abram 1996; Harding 2006; Weber 2016a). One example is what some scientists assume to be inanimate (i.e., dead) stones, which in fact animistically can be perceived as sacred mountains. This outlook even includes the cosmos as alive and meaningful (e.g., Mathews 1991, 2003; Harding 2006).

Let me underscore one more significant aspect regarding the above explanation of my approach in this book. In the fields of philosophy of nature and environmental ethics, it can be argued that there is a large difference between ontology and normativity concerning the earlier described scales. To illustrate, it here seems to be a difference regarding the scope of the Earth and the scope of the universe. Another chief insight in this respect is that various standpoints (e.g., anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism) often combine ontology and normativity in various ways. To demonstrate, an anthropocentrist may ontologically accept the viewpoint that nature includes both living parts (i.e., biocentrism) and non-living parts (i.e., ecocentrism); yet, the anthropocentrist concludes that only humans have moral value or status. I return to these issues in Chapter 2.

This book is written by a philosopher. Yet, my thinking is radically interdisciplinary or, more accurately, inter-facultary. Methodologically, I believe, philosophy is a research field that does science on its own premises. Still, from Aristotle to Bourdieu, philosophy has always been interdisciplinary and even involved scholars from other disciplines who after a while are viewed as philosophers proper. Additionally, many philosophers are empirical oriented in terms of reading or even integrating empirical research from the social sciences, the humanities, or other fields. Typically, the latter is often the method of many accounts of both green political theory and critical theory, both central traditions in this book. Regarding the inter-facultary methodology of this book, I hold, it is absolutely essential while dealing with the ecological crisis to move beyond a narrow interdisciplinary or even an intradisciplinary methodology. In this book, therefore, I do so, for instance, by presenting and discussing natural-scientific research about the Earth system and the Anthropocene. In doing that, we can easily understand and approach the many complex dimensions of today's ecological crisis.

1.2 The Problems of Ecological Democracy—and How to Attempt at Solving Them

Let us imagine this snapshot: in 1996—the same year as Jürgen Habermas' seminal work on democracy, *Between Facts and Norms*, was published in English (noteworthy, the book was originally published in German already in 1992)—the volume *Ecology and Democracy* edited by green political theorist and deep ecologist Freya Mathews came out. Here, another important green political theorist, John S. Dryzek, gives his warm thanks to "the Melbourne Democracy and the Environment Working Group, especially Robyn Eckersley, Freya Mathews and Val Plumwood; Robert Goodin; David Schlosberg" Dryzek (1996, 14). While writing this book, I have many times dreamt about being a fly on the wall when the members of this working group met. It must have been a very stimulating gathering of scholars.

To make a long and rich story short, the development of green political theory as an interdisciplinary research field began in the early 1980s. One of its main aims was to bridge the supposed unproductive gap between environmental ethics and philosophy of nature, especially Arne Naess' and Warwick Fox' deep ecology, on the one hand, and, on the other, anthropocentric models of deliberative democracy, such as Habermas. In 1987, Dryzek, one of the leading figures in this milieu, published his monograph *Rational Ecology: Environment and Political Economy*, a theme he had developed at least from around 1982 (Dryzek 1983). Eckersley is another seminal member of this group at this early stage. Her first mature work within this field is the 1992 monograph *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (Eckersley 1992). Eckersley, too, builds further on earlier papers, such as "Habermas and Green Political Theory: Two Roads Diverging" (Eckersley 1990). Later, this working group's ideas expanded outside Australia, as well (e.g., Barry 1999). What was quickly labeled "ecological democracy" has for around 40 years contributed significantly and diversely to both theoretical and empirical discourses on democratic transformations and transitions in the age of the ecocrisis. Throughout that period, these scholars have re-imagined the principles and practices of ecological democracy on all scales in both formal and informal fora.

Perhaps the main aim of ecological democracy is to develop more efficient democratic responses to today's ecological crisis. To me, in her introduction to *Ecology and Democracy*, Mathews raised some highly pregnant questions in this regard:

i Can a [representative] democratic system respond adequately to crisis [i.e., the ecological crisis] when the crisis is not directly 'visible'—that is, when it is identifiable to experts and to persons specially briefed, but not to ordinary citizens?
ii What is the relation of ethics to democracy? Are democratic systems based on moral values or on self-interest? If they rest ultimately on self-interest, can they guarantee adequate protection of the natural world?
iii What in fact constitutes the best political scenario for environmental reform? Would such reform best be facilitated by the devolution of power away from the

> state into local communities, or by the centralization of power into federal and international agencies?
>
> (Mathews 1996, 3)

The above research questions—the need for new democratic imaginaries as well as transformations and transitions with an ecological footing—seem just as pregnant today as 30 years ago. To me, this is quite obvious in light of the earlier-explained recent transgression of the sixth out of the nine planetary boundaries as well as dominance of representative democracy and how that model has been one of the main drivers behind today's ecocrisis. Therefore, within the horizon of my cosmology—ecological democracy as ecocentrism in practice—Mathews questions guide my study in this book. Although I do not claim to have all the answers to these questions, I assume that they should be raised again and again to avoid the business of representative democracy as usual. By doing that, I think, we may come closer to the answers to these questions than without raising them. From my viewpoint, in light of Earth system science and the planetary boundaries, the entire planet appears to be potentially and, in some cases, actually affected by the ecocrisis. This consideration should be, I suggest, the most basic one for all political issues. Then, ecological democracy is the first virtue of a political community. These aspects constitute, I suggest, the promise of ecological-democratic transformations and transitions in our age of ecocrisis.

It is surprising, I think, that while some of the above internationally well-known scholars for decades have engaged with Habermasian ideas of deliberative politics in non-anthropocentric terms, Habermas himself or other central contributors to the Frankfurt School neither in Frankfurt nor elsewhere have apparently never replied to this critique. Further, it is paradoxical that the more acute the ecocrisis becomes and the more we need democratic innovations and transitions in this context, the less seem Habermas and many current critical theorists preoccupied with this issue. Let us also recall that some Frankfurters critiqued Habermas along the same lines as green political theorists (e.g., Marcuse 1964; Whitebook 1979). However, Habermas himself has not engaged in this internal critical-theoretical discourse in the comprehensive manner which is required to address the ecocrisis.

The above situation can be portrayed as a lost opportunity. Yet, the reason behind this lack of a dialogue might be found on the Australian side instead of the Frankfurt side, as well. I here think of how some influencing green political theorists might have been too critical in their critique of Habermas. To illustrate, Eckersley points to "the failed promise of critical theory" (Eckersley 1992, 95), and Dryzek argues that it is necessary "to rescue communicate rationality from Habermas" by redefining it in non-anthropocentric terms (Dryzek 1995, 20). Or, ecological democracy can be accused for being too thick and not enough procedural. If so, this idea of democracy can only create substantive outcomes instead of formal ones (Goodin 1992, 168).

Whatever the reason might be, let us remember that Habermas and most Habermasians—including Eckersley, Dryzek, and other green political theorists—have faith in learning processes. That is good news for one of the main global

challenges today—to enhance our democratic toolbox in the Anthropocene. Among the main motivations behind my book, therefore, is to overcome the lost opportunity of mutual listening and learning between Frankfurtian critical theory and Australian green political theory. So, to re-imagine the original ideas of ecological democracy in the Anthropocene, I intellectually move from Australia to Frankfurt and back again. I here especially engage with various present non-anthropocentric critical theorists (e.g., Vetlesen 2015; Rosa 2019). Overall, I believe, this may contribute to the further development of the model of ecological democracy. I also add to my theoretical palette insights from ecophenomenology (i.e., a combination of deep ecology and phenomenology), deep ecology, and animism (i.e., the idea that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human). I return to these perspectives throughout the book.

In this book, which is titled *Ecological Democracy: Caring for the Earth in the Anthropocene*, I wish to break new ground through its critical engagement with the discourse on ecological democracy. I try to do so against the backdrop of the above three guiding questions articulated by Mathews. Further, I address what I take to be two significant problems concerning the model of ecological democracy, which I attempt at solving throughout the book. The first issue concerns non-anthropocentric accounts of critical theory, whereas the second is linked to the metaphysics of critical realism (i.e., a golden mean between naturalist realism and social constructivism). In both cases, I suggest that ecophenomenology as well as deep ecology and animism should be drawn on to address these problems. To find ways in which to tackle these problems, then, I initiate a dialogue between some of today's most significant contributors to green political theory and critical theory along with thinkers representing ecophenomenology, deep ecology, and animism.

The first problem addresses many seminal green political theorists' strong reliance on what can be argued to be an outdated version of critical theory. Consequently, by not considering past or present *non-anthropocentric versions of critical theory*, green political theory may run into a theoretical deficit. On the one side, for example, Eckersley formulates her account of ecological democracy partly inspired by early non-anthropocentric critical theorists such as Joel Whitebook and Herbert Marcuse (Eckersley 1990, 1992), whereas on the other she draws on Habermas' anthropocentric account of critical theory. Similarly, in his interpretation of ecological democracy, David Schlosberg builds on anthropocentric critical theorists such as Axel Honneth, Iris Marion Young, and Nancy Fraser instead of non-anthropocentrists of the first generation of the Frankfurt School (Schlosberg 2007).

Even more interesting is when some green political theorists have not yet directed their attention to the currently growing number of seminal critical theorists who presently formulate non-anthropocentric accounts of critical theory or current critical theorists who in diverse manners have interested themselves in the ecological crisis. In addition to Nancy Fraser (2022), I have in mind Hartmut Rosa (2015, 2019), Arne Johan Vetlesen (2015, 2019, 2022), Maeve Cooke (2020), William E. Scheuerman (2021), Rasmus Willig (Willig and Blok 2020), Jean-Philippe Deranty

(2005), Jay M. Bernstein (2023a, 2023b, 2023c), and Mikael Carleheden (Carleheden and Schultz 2022), to only mention a few. In contrast to many green political theorists, then, my book aims at showing how the latter scholars are relevant not simply to an internal critical-theoretical discourse, but even to the discourse around ecological democracy.

To move beyond the first problem, therefore, I initiate a dialogue between green political theory and the present non-anthropocentric critical theory. Through such dialogue, the framework of ecological democracy could be enhanced by more sufficiently taking advantage of critical theory. Still, within the Earth system framework, since even non-living parts of nonhuman nature (e.g., ecosystems, as part of living organisms) are affected by climate change and other natural hazards in the Anthropocene, I argue, not merely a biocentric, but even an ecocentric approach to nature is demanded. Given that, this book builds further on the ecocentrism of green political theorists Eckersley and Mathews. In effect, the first problem of ecological democracy appears remedied. To do so, I also integrate ecophenomenological, deep ecological, and animist insights in my portray of ecological democracy.

The second issue which I raise in this book concerns *the metaphysics of realism*. Paradoxically, by following Habermas to a great extent—and despite their differences in other respects—both green political theorists (e.g., Dryzek and Eckersley) and anthropocentric critical theorists (e.g., Honneth) seem to uncritically continue Habermas' post-metaphysics. This program holds that to remain critical in modernity, humans should maintain rationality and universality received from traditions while stripping it of what is assumed to be its metaphysical limitations (Habermas 1994). However, post-metaphysics appears to throw the baby out with the bathwater. It does so by being grounded in an unsatisfactory rejection of ontological realism, epistemological naturalism, and normative non-anthropocentrism. Instead, post-metaphysics presupposes—either implicitly or explicitly—social constructivism both ontologically and epistemologically along with normative anthropocentrism (Lysaker 2020a). In the age of the ecological crisis, I find this standpoint problematic.

In contrast to social constructivism and normative anthropocentrism, I suggest, ecological democracy shows why an alternative ontological, epistemological, and normative outlook is required. To tackle more effectively today's ecological crisis and its impact on the planetary boundaries, green political theory offers a multidisciplinary methodology. This framework includes even natural-scientific knowledge, such as Earth systems science, without becoming positivistic. For example, green political theorist Dryzek and his non-anthropocentric Habermasian approach to ecological democracy integrate such a multi-disciplinary methodology. However, he seemingly does so without engaging in a dialogue about the Earth system as part of reality within a metaphysical-realist framework.

Green political theorist Mathews, however, offers a metaphysical realism. I find this outlook more promising than Dryzekian post-metaphysics. As I see it, the post-metaphysical limitations may be surpassed through metaphysical realism because this standpoint represents a third way between traditional realism and social constructivism. In effect, both ontologically and normatively, Mathews' stance

provides a holism encompassing human nature and nonhuman nature. Against this backdrop, I articulate what I term as a critical-realist ecology, arguing that realism is a more rewarding metaphysical framing of ecological democracy and non-anthropocentric critical theory. Here, too, ecophenomenology, deep ecology, and animism play a key role. By appealing to bodily and sensory encountering with the more-than-human world, these outlooks remind us of the importance of concrete experiences while engaging with reality. As I interpret Mathews, these viewpoints also come close to her realism and her notion of ontopoetics (i.e., the communicatively engagement with the magic and meaningful presence of nature). Let me also add that Mathews and other seminal voices in this book appear to be well versed in the post-colonial terrain (e.g., Abram 1996, 2010; Mathews 2003, 2005; Harding 2006). Such an ecophenomenological account of realism, I propose, integrates animist wisdom that has been part of the way of living of many indigenous peoples around the world for ages. As I try to show in this book, the Sami poet Nils-Aslak Valkeapää tells us a story about how everything is alive in the widest sense of that term along the lines that portrayed earlier. Such an animist ontopoetics—where the river engages with humans, and not simply being a one-way street where we relate to the living water of the river—appears to call for a Mathewsian realism. I argue so due to how I interpret the above ecophenomenological and deep-ecological accounts of animist wisdom of indigenous peoples. The latter worldview incorporates not only humans or the planet but also the universe—an understanding of the cosmos as an evolving web of life. Thus, though my theoretical framework primarily is Western, yet I am to a great extent inspired by a post-colonial lens and its critique of Eurocentrism.

1.3 The Content and Contributions of the Book

The main contributions of this book are three-folded. These contributions aim at being relevant for various discourses and approaches concerning the book's main topic, namely, ecological democracy. These contributions—both theoretically, methodologically, and practically—draw on and integrate insights from various discourse. The most important discourses which I visit are that of green political theory, non-anthropocentric critical theory, together with ecophenomenology, deep ecology, and animism.

First, as far as I am aware of, the book proposes original and thought-provoking readings of green political theorists and their contribution to the evolvement of ecological democracy in the last four decades. I do so, both ontologically and normatively, by defending and developing a version of the ecocentric approach to nature. Also, I put forward a radical alternative cosmology holding ecological democracy as ecocentrism in practice. I further want to provide green political theory with new and relevant ideas, especially the concept of ecological love.

Second, for all I know, this monograph is the first to offer a systematic and detailed reading of the role of critical theory vis-à-vis green political theory through an update review of current non-anthropocentric critical theorists. Here, I shed light on how non-anthropocentric critical theory may contribute to further

enhance ecological democracy. In this context, I address how some seminal non-anthropocentric critical theorists recently have drawn attention to climate disobedience and ecocide, to mention only a couple of themes that I find relevant for ecological democracy, too. Further, I aim at giving the readers some novel insights regarding the relevance of ecocentrism, ecophenomenology, deep ecology, and animism, as well as critical realism and ontopoetics, for the additional progress of non-anthropocentric critical theory.

Third, and finally, as mentioned, my book is multi-disciplinary—both across disciplines and across faculties. I here draw on fields such as philosophy, ethics, political theory, political science, law, anthropology, religious studies, sociology, biology, ecology, environmental studies, and Earth system science. Thus, I hope that this book will be of great value to researchers and postgraduate students coming from many different disciplines, especially while being interested in how to develop the democratic toolbox in our age ecocrisis. Additionally, since this crisis affects all life on the planet, scholars coming from other disciplines than the abovementioned can—and should—address this issue from their unique viewpoint. In turn, I believe, my book is relevant for the latter group of researchers, as well.

This monograph contains in total six chapters. In addition to the present introductory chapter titled "Ecological Democracy of the Anthropocene" and the conclusionary chapter titled "The Widening Circles of Ecological Love", the book contains four main chapters titled "From Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism: Redefining Nature"; "Ecological Sensibility: The Encountering of All Existence"; "Ecophenomenological Ethics: Caring for Mother Earth"; and "Ecological Democracy: The Moral Trump of Earth Politics". Albeit the book is composed of these four separate main chapters, each with its in-depth analysis and novel contributions, I aim weaving all the chapters together. Further, each of them serves as steppingstones of the book's overarching argument. The overarching argument can briefly be articulated as follows: to re-imagining the original insight of ecological democracy in the Anthropocene, we should adopt a new and radical cosmology, namely, ecological democracy as ecocentrism in practice. This perspective perceives the Earth and the cosmos as interwoven. Thus, within the framework of ecological democracy, to care for Mother Earth in the Anthropocene, ecological love is a central ingredient—a love echoing the entire cosmos. The steppingstone being established in Chapter 1 is the claim that an ecocentric definition of nature is most adequate to develop the ecological framework of democracy in the Anthropocene. Then, in Chapter 3, the idea of ecological sensibility is ontologically and normatively based on such an ecocentrism. In Chapter 4, which concerns ecophenomenological ethics, which I interpret as interconnected with deep ecology and animism, the steppingstone draws on ecological sensibility in the sense of what I conceptualize as ecological love. Last, in Chapter 5, my main argument builds further on ecophenomenological ethics through legitimate practices of ecological democracy in terms of, for instance, climate disobedience, mini-publics, and transnational ecocide courts. As mentioned, Chapter 5 also deals with the all ecologically affected parties' principle, which is key to ecological democracy.

2 From Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism

Redefining Nature

> One existence, one music, one organism, one life, one God: star-fire and rock-strength, the sea's cold flow
> And man's dark soul.

Thus writes the ecophilosophical poet Robinson Jeffers (Jeffers 1991, 257). In my reading, he expresses a deep embodied sensitivity toward nature, Mother Earth, and the cosmos. Why begin Chapter 2 on the matter of an ecocentric redefinition of nature with this poem? Although not being the entire story, let us listen to the author's own insights to consider the relevance of his poem for this book:

> I believe that the universe is one being, all its parts are different expressions of the same energy, and they are all in communication with each other, therefore parts of one organic whole. (This is physics, I believe, as well as religion.) The parts change and pass, or die, people and races and rocks and stars; none of them seems to me important in itself, but only the whole. This whole is in all its parts so beautiful, and is felt by me to be so intensely in earnest, that I am compelled to love it, and to think of it as divine. It seems to me that this whole alone is worthy of the deeper sort of love; and that there is peace, freedom, I might say a kind of salvation, in turning one's affections outward toward this one God, rather than inwards on oneself, or on humanity, or on human imaginations and abstractions – the world of spirits. I think that it is our privilege and felicity to love God for his beauty, without claiming or expecting love from him. (A letter written by Jeffers in 1934 quoted from Devall and Sessions 1985, 101–102)

The ecopoet Jeffers is one among many authors who have inspired several significant souls of the school of deep ecology (e.g., Devall and Sessions 1985, 101–102; Seed, Macy, Fleming, and Naess 1988, 16; Fox 1995, 7, 67, 202, 256; Harding 2006, 255). By quoting Jeffers' poetic portrait of the cosmos, I wish to set the scene for Chapter 2. I also believe that Jeffers sheds interesting light on the concept of nature. This is a necessary step of my interpretation and adoption of ecological democracy. However, let me underscore that though I seek to articulate

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a cosmology, I depart from Jeffers concerning his seemingly view on the role of the parts of the whole. In my reading, he only focuses on the whole as such, instead of the parts constituting this whole as well as various ways in which the parts are interconnected with each other and the whole. In contrast, I find both the parts (e.g., humans, organisms, biotopes, landscapes, oceans, or mountains) and the whole (e.g., the Earth and the universe) significant and valuable in themselves. As I see it, if we do not recognize the parts, too, as valuable in themselves, we may morally accept damage and extinction of these parts (as long as such action cannot be claimed to benefit the whole).

As mentioned, I suggest that the ecological democracy framework should integrate a cosmology that extends to the universe. I describe this perspective as a political cosmology. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Johan Rockström's Earth system science and scholars following him—including Eckersley, Dryzek, and other seminal green political theorists—provide an outlook including not merely the planet but also the universe (Rockström et al. 2009a, 23). James Lovelock, one of Rockström's predecessors and inspirations, reflects around this interlinkage between the Earth and the universe in his book *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* as follows: "the Earth's beginnings in the context of the universe from which it was formed, we can at least make intelligent guesses about the environment in which life, and potentially Gaia, began, and set about ensuring their mutual survival" (Lovelock 1979, 12). So, since the concept of the Earth system not merely involves the Earth but also the cosmos, in which the Earth is one among many parts, I suggest that the ecological democracy framework should adopt this outlook. In turn, we could more nuancedly address the ecological crisis regarding even its cosmic aspects. To illustrate, studies on the Anthropocene in terms of how humans have impacted the Earth system more quickly and extensively is based on the timescape of deep time (Shoshitaishvili 2020). Here, both the Earth's enormous geological history and the universe's gigantic cosmological history are intertwined. One link between the two temporalities of this timescape, it can be argued, is the extraction of fossil fuel leading to climate change. In this setting, fossil refers to the geological history of a particular organic matter conserved and later changed in the Earth through deep time, whereas fuel denotes the rapid overuse of this resource by humans for societal purposes (ibid., 8).

From my outlook, there is a fascinating affinity between the above-described natural-scientific studies of the Earth and the universe, on the one side, and, on the other, deep-ecological dealings with the idea of nature and the cosmos. According to deep ecologist Warwick Fox, the concept of:

> ecology is … intended to refer to the study of *the conditions of existence* that pertain to, and the interactions between, all the entities that make up our larger, *cosmic household here upon earth*.
>
> (Fox 1995, 32, emphasis added)

In my interpretation, based on his ecocentrism, Fox suggests that nature should not only be understood as the animate and inanimate parts of Mother Earth.

Additionally, we should recognize how the Earth is part of the wider context of the universe. Fascinatingly, Fox portrays the universe as a cosmic household, a place or home where we and our planet belong. According to another deep ecologist, George Sessions, at least in the Western tradition from Pythagoras to Spinoza and beyond, "theor[ies] of the cosmos" have been articulated (Sessions 1977, 481). Here, we should add, the cosmos and cosmologies play a crucial role to many indigenous peoples, both in the West and elsewhere (e.g., Abram 1996; Harding 2006). Sessions continues by saying that at least since Rachel Carson's influencing book *The Silent Spring* (Carson 1962), the cosmos has been re-imagined as what he labels as the "Age of Ecology" (Sessions 1987, 105). This means a rising awareness of the importance of the science of ecology to more adequately addressing the ecocrisis. Building further on deep ecology, ecophenomenology, and animism, in his book *The Spell Of The Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, David Abram portrays the universe as "the sensuous cosmos" of a more-than-human cosmology (Abram 1996, 185). In this setting, Abram is inspired by animism. The concept of animism can be outlined in various ways. One account which resonates with me, however, is put forward by Graham Harvey. In the study *Animism: Respecting the Living World*, he investigates the past and present animistic beliefs and practices. Based on this inquiry into human encountering with a wide range of elements in the more-than-human world and the cosmos (e.g., rocks, clouds, animals, and plants), Harvey understands animism in the following sense: "animists are people who recognise that *the world is full of persons*, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship to others" (Harvey 2005, xvii, emphasis added). To this story, he adds that animism is "lived out in various ways that are all about learning to act respectfully (carefully and constructively) towards and among other persons" (ibid.). Similar to Harvey, Abram engages with animism related to the local, embodied, and sensual encountering of indigenous peoples with the world. Animism refers, then, to ways in which to experience both organic (e.g., animals and plants) and inorganic (e.g., rivers and stones) parts of the Earth and the universe as alive (Abram 1996, 14)—alive in the wide, ecocentric manner which I portrayed earlier. In another book, *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*, Abram appears to link animism to language. If my observation is correct, Abram is captivated by the possibility that human language may have "arose first in response to an animate, expressive world—as a stuttering reply not just to others of our species but to an enigmatic cosmos that already *spoke to us* in a myriad of tongues?" (Abram 2010, 4, original emphasis; see Mathews 2003, 42). Or, as we learn from another deep ecologist and a student of Lovelock, Stephan Harding and his book *Animate Earth: Science, Intuition, and Gaia*, "We need to allow ourselves to be open to the *subjective agency* at the heart of every 'thing' in the world so that we can *speak and act* appropriately in their presence and on their behalf" (Harding 2006, 43, emphasis added). To achieve that goal, Harding continues:

> We must keep alive and nurture a sense of the 'otherness' of whatever phenomenon we might be considering, allowing a strange kind of intimacy to

> develop in which the urge to control is replaced by a quickening awe at the astonishing intelligence that lies at the heart of all things.
>
> (ibid.)

In turn, both ontologically and normatively, subjective agency establishes an "existential" and "felt" "quality" of "the whole of nature" (ibid., 44). With reference to Harvey and Abram as well as indigenous peoples, Harding assumes that subjective agency creates "a communion of persons in the widest more-than-human sense" (ibid.). In this context, Harding relates his understanding of animism to a well-known phrase articulated by Thomas Berry: "the universe is a *communion of subjects* rather than a collection of objects" (Berry quoted from Swimme and Berry 1994: 243, emphasis added; Berry quoted in Harding 2006, 27). Now, let us return to Abram's point about a link between animism and language. In light of what I have thus far underscored regarding our understanding of animism—especially the experience with the web of life of Gaia (Mother Earth) and the rest of the universe perceived as a togetherness of expressive and active persons—who or what speaks or expresses oneself may involve the unique and manifold voices of all these subjective agents of the cosmos.

Some scholars might be reluctant to characterize anything in the world other than humans as expressive, having a voice, or being alive, as ecophenomenology, deep ecology, and animism tend to do. To portray nonhuman nature in terms of being expressive is then considered as a psychologization of nature by humans. Consequently, to experience nature's expressiveness and speaking to or with nature is considered to be anthropocentric (Hverven 2023, 252–403). Also, such a psychologization can indicate an anthropomorphism. This term refers humans' ascription of human characters, emotions, or intentions to nonhuman entities. In this book, I am not aiming at such psychologization, quasi-anthropocentrism, or anthropomorphizing. Further, I find the argument as such problematic. By claiming that the expressiveness or the voice of nonhuman nature implies a psychologization, quasi-anthropocentrism, or anthropomorphizing by default designates an anthropocentric and ontological-dualist outlook. By holding that only humans can be characterized in terms of psychology and that only humans can psychologize other parts of the world, I claim, is to say, at least indirectly and perhaps nonintentionally, that there is an ontological divide between humans and nature. This divide makes it possible for humans to have a human psyche, which can be used, for instance, to psychologize nature in a human way. In virtue of human language, humans then force something onto nature that were not there in the first place.

Still, let me admit that by portraying the universe and cosmology as I do above, I may challenge an assumption some readers might have. Hans Jonas describes this assumption interestingly in his book *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*. According to Jonas, in Western thought from Descartes and onward, the universe is associated with death rather than life, with materialism instead of animism (Jonas 1966, 15). In turn, this new understanding of the universe creates a new cosmology. From Jonas' outlook, the "tremendously enlarged universe of modern cosmology is conceived as a field of inanimate

masses and forces which operate according to the laws of inertia and of quantitative distribution in space" (ibid., 9–10). Hence, Jonas seems to hold that the natural-scientific understanding of the universe and its connection to cosmology share a seminal premise: the ontology of death (ibid., 11, 15, 20, 21). Yet, as I have already explained by briefly introducing Fox's, Abram's, and Harding's deep ecology, there is more to be said about the universe and cosmology than the ontology of death. In this chapter, therefore, I explore this issue further, especially through the eyes of green political theorist and deep ecologist Freya Mathews. According to her, too, it can be argued that even the universe contains a communicative presence (Mathews 2003).

Although I, from my ecocentric outlook, consider animist expressiveness or aliveness of even inanimate parts of nature as relevant for my study, I wish to portray nature in a complex and holistic manner. I here understand the term nature as consisting of subjective, intersubjective, and objective aspects. Although different and unique, these aspects are interwoven parts of the web of life. Nature, in humans and elsewhere, is objective by ontologically being real. For instance, when we breath, this is partly objective in terms of being based on some uncontrollable dimensions of, for instance, air outside myself, upon which we depend to existence. Next, nature, of all sorts, is subjective by virtue of its unique way of being, which is different from other parts of the world. Thus, the subjective nature is related to how various beings develop their unique projects of existence. To illustrate, the subjective aspect—or, the expressiveness, if you wish—of a forest consists, partly, of its account of the gross primary productivity of the Earth's biosphere and plant biomass. The expressiveness of the forest is here linked to its unique way of producing and maintaining a rich diversity of forms of existence. Finally, nature's intersubjective aspect refers to the many and diverse ways all existence can, and to a large always already do, interact. By the term interaction, I consider both biotic and abiotic parts of the entire nature (e.g., the large amount of abiotic water in our bodies, which is an existential precondition to live and to survive). From my holistic point of view, everything is interconnected to everything. Through such interrelationships, therefore, all beings can experience each other by being interwoven through encountering, by affecting each other, and by registering the interwovenness of all other beings. I return to these three different, yet interchanged, aspects throughout this chapter. Let me also add that when I speak about the human nature, I presuppose that humans have nature and are part of nature.

To understand more about the relevance of ecophenomenology, deep ecology, and animism to ecological democracy, especially regarding the notion of nature, it is worth mentioning that Fox develops further Arne Naess, the founding father of deep ecology (Fox 1995). On top of that, Eckersley, a key figure in green political theory, is inspired by Naess and Fox (e.g., Eckersley 1992). Consequently, Eckersley's version of ecological democracy is based on an ecocentric approach to nature. Interestingly, inspired by Fox, her ecocentrism involves a psychological and a cosmological dimension (Eckersley 1992, 62, see 65, 115). Here, the cosmos is understood as a tree of life. According to that symbol, human nature is a leave on the unfolding tree of life. Based on her interest in deep ecology and

cosmology together with Earth system science, Eckersley seems to integrate the universe within her own ecological-democratic framework. If so, it makes sense to describe her outlook as the view from somewhere—properly understood as the perspective of the Earth as part of the cosmos. Or, in short, what I label as a political cosmology. Then, the ecological crisis should be addressed from the angle of not simply humans or the Earth but also the universe.

Now, after having introduced the view from the cosmos, let me zoom in on the various issues I raise in this chapter. First, Chapter 2 deals in more detail with what I define as the political cosmology of ecological democracy. I here develop the theoretical framework of the entire book and the conceptual categories that will later be used. The chapter also throws light on various significant, yet conflicting, understandings of the concept of nature in the discourse on ecological democracy, drawing on philosophy of nature and environmental ethics. I here support and further develop Eckersley's ecocentric approach to ecological democracy—and its affinity to deep ecology, ecophenomenology, and animism. Finally, I compare Eckersley and Dryzek regarding the political-cosmological framework ecophenomenology.

Additionally, Chapter 2 revisits the problem of nature which critical theorist Joel Whitebook originally formulated in the late 1970s. Interestingly, this problem of nature has been discussed by several green political theorists, as well. Within non-anthropocentric critical theory, this problem addresses the issues of how the concept of nature should be defined, what kind of moral value (e.g., instrumental, intrinsic, or inherent value) to which nature ought to be ascribed or assumed to have, and what kind of protection of nature such value requires. I try to point out why Axel Honneth's critical theory is incomplete due to its anthropocentrism, failing to acknowledge the obstacles generated by the problem of nature. Consequently, Honneth's theory and scholars following him can never recognize an inherent moral value of nonhuman nature. In this book, I argue that this is necessary to achieve the ideal of ecological democracy, even within the framing of critical theory. Indirectly, this critique of Honneth problematizes the fact that some seminal green political theorists draw on his thought (e.g., Schlosberg 2007). Alternatively, I highlight how Whitebook's non-anthropocentric critical theory seems to be better suited to tackle both the problem of nature and today's ecocrisis.

Lastly, Chapter 2 elaborates on the issue of metaphysical realism. I here deal with the metaphysical realism of Mathews and Roy Bhaskar. I also investigate whether ecological democracy should be based on a metaphysical realism. In my opinion, this is explicitly the case in Mathews and implicitly the case of Eckersley's ecocentrism. Finally, I coin the concept of critical-realist ecology. Such a realism, I insinuate, is a more rewarding metaphysical framing of ecological democracy.

2.1 The Political Cosmology of Ecological Democracy

Why include, in a book on ecological-democratic dealings with the ecological crisis, the issue of the ontology of nature? There are at least three reasons why this is a preferable approach. Taken together, these themes regard the ontological

basis of ecological democracy, an ecocentric perception of nature, and a political cosmology.

First, the ontology of nature is significant to deal with the issue of the foundation of democracy and its explicit or implicit idea of nature. Here, Robyn Eckersley argues, "the determination of social and political questions"—hereunder the principles and practices of ecological democracy—"must proceed from, or at least be consistent with, an adequate determination of … [ontologically] more fundamental" issues, such as the ontology of nature (Eckersley 1992, 28). This implies an "ontological primacy" to the "existential" and "internal relatedness of all phenomena" and their "ecological relationships" (ibid., 53). The ontological primacy and mutuality recognize, then, all existence and their unique and diverse existence projects and their unhindered unfolding. Eckersley also speaks about ontology in terms of a "relational ontology of the self" (Eckersley 2004, 98). This outlook holds that social structures (e.g., contexts of environmental policymaking) are constitutive of the contexts within which individual's creative agency (e.g., protest against the government's environmental policies) takes place.

Second, the ontology of nature is relevant to democracy models dealing with the ecocrisis due to the central role of the anthropocentric/ecocentric cleavage (Eckersley 1992, 3, 26). To Eckersley, among all ecophilosophical disagreements, this cleavage divides people the most (ibid.). In the discourse on ecological democracy, as well, this cleavage seems important, yet disputed (ibid.). Why may it be argued that the anthropocentric/ecocentric cleavage—or, more precisely, the anthropocentric/biocentric/ecocentric cleavage—is important? Why does it matter more than one think which ontology—or, more accurately, which ontological scope—each of these approaches to nature is based on? My answer to these questions is that it is required to explore this cleavage partly due to the fact that quite a few philosophers of nature and environmental ethicists already do so (ibid.). Then, one would not be able to deal with all the important facets and contributions of these debates regarding this cleavage. Eckersley formulates another reason for engaging with this cleavage thus:

> The fundamental problem with the liberal ideal of autonomy is that it rests on an incoherent and undesirable ontology—that of social and biological detachment. Given that ontology precedes ethics (i.e., underlying assumptions about being and reality constrain the field of ethical possibilities), it is necessary to questions these basic liberal assumptions concerning the self before it is possible to rethink what autonomy might mean in a new ecological age.
>
> (Eckersley 2004, 104)

Eckersley here problematizes liberal or representative democracy in terms of its acclaimed understanding of autonomy. This critique, I believe, is a defense of ecological democracy, too. By problematizing representative democracy in this setting, Eckersley wishes to explain why she thinks that ecological democracy is preferable vis-à-vis other democracy models. In doing that, she argues that as far

as ontology is central to a model of democracy and ontology precedes ethics, the ecological model is more adequate than other democracy models. Further, and indirectly building on that point, a democracy ideal needs an ontological grounding. In contrast, that model would not be based on certain ascertains about reality. In turn, without an idea of reality, democracy cannot be related to an actual world and our knowledge about reality.

Let me now say a few words about the standpoints that the above cleavage consists of, namely, anthropocentrism and biocentrism, to which I wish to add ecocentrism. Ontologically, anthropocentrism is a human-centered account of nature that locates humans at the center of the universe. Furthermore, anthropocentrism defines nature based on an ontological or Cartesian dualism between humans and nature. This divide is often justified by referring to certain characteristics, capacities, or interests (e.g., consciousness, language, rationality, or freedom), which are claimed including only humans. In contrast, due to nature's acclaimed lack of such characteristics, capacities, or interests, humans are viewed as being more cognitively complex or in some other way more developed than nature (Wetlesen 1992; Lysaker 2019).

Normatively, anthropocentrists often introduce a moral hierarchy that ascribes inherent value or status to humans alone. In turn, anthropocentrism ascribes nature merely instrumental value (i.e., nature can be used as means for human aims) or sometimes with intrinsic value (e.g., your cat at home may be more important to you than the meat you eat). Such moral ranking is based on a subjectively perceived instrumental value or in the light of an objective principle (e.g., utilitarianism's maximization formula; Wetlesen 1992; Lysaker 2019). Anthropocentrism, both ontologically and normatively, reflects what Arne Naess defines as shallow or reform ecology: "the central political questions … is essentially one of 'social engineering', modifying human behaviour through laws and regulations posed by ministries and departments of the environment" (Naess 1989, 162).

According to Warwick Fox, however, there exist two kinds of anthropocentrism (Fox 1995, 20). First, weak anthropocentrism, which is human-centered. Consequently, this stance accepts that humans' very persistence requires a view on nature which discards the instrumental attitude of strong anthropocentrism. Second, strong anthropocentrism, which is human-instrumental through technological mastery or through ways in which nature is univocalized in humans' image. The latter attitude implies that human nature can use—or, more precisely, overuse—the limited and constantly reduced resources of nonhuman nature merely as means to its own ends, needs, or preferences without the possibility to criticize that instrumental action.

Some supporters of anthropocentrism, in both weak and strong accounts, may ask what exactly the problem with this standpoint is. Ontologically, I believe, few or none anthropocentrists would deny nature's existence as such. So, similar to ecocentrism, the standpoint that I defend in this book, anthropocentrists might recognize even inorganic parts of nature (e.g., sun light, the air, and water) as important for humans. This is fine as far as it goes. From my standpoint, however, anthropocentrism is normatively problematic, and strong anthropocentrism

is more challenging than weak anthropocentrism. One reason why this is so is due to anthropocentrism, at least in its strong version, normative use may accept the instrumental use—not to forget overuse—of given and already limited as well as constantly reduced and extinct natural resources. Within the Earth system science framework (Chapter 1), it is documented that presently as many as six out of nine planetary boundaries are trespassed. Thus, we must slow down the acceleration of this transgression of the planetary boundaries and return to the safe operating space again. Empirically, then, to achieve this goal appears to be in conflict with anthropocentrism, at least in its strong and normative version. Concerning the latter, Eckersley puts forward what she labels as two litmus tests of ecological democracy; first, human population growth, and, second, wilderness preservation (Eckersley 1992, 29). According to Eckersley, anthropocentrism tends to direct its attention of human population growth toward social causes, whereas wilderness preservation is addressed in terms of urban and agricultural human environment concerning. In contrast, regarding human population growth, ecocentrists, such as Eckersley, tend to accept both lowering the growth rate and a long-term reduction in human numbers, while wilderness preservation is often approached by "setting aside of large tracts of wilderness, regardless of whether such preservation can be shown to be useful in some way to humankind" (ibid.).

Some scholars claim that anthropocentrism, both as an idea and in practice, has dominated societies and cultures at least during the last 400 years, at least in the West (Skrbina 2005; Vetlesen 2015). Even so, some argue that Western anthropocentrism has reached the entire world through the assumed negative effects of globalization and global capitalism (Vetlesen 2015, 22–23). Here, global capitalism is associated with the earlier defined strong anthropocentrism. Consequently, capitalism, through its acclaimed interlinked, reinforcing, and never-ending goals of growth and profit, has reached a global level of exploitation (ibid., 12, 36, 44, 105, 186, 190). Some also criticize technological innovations for playing a crucial role to this strong anthropocentric instrumentalism. In their view, technology accelerates the overuse of natural resources to be produced in the first place, and it is a key driver to find new territories (e.g., colonies) to continue the production of technology or other commodities. In his book *Denial of Nature*, non-anthropocentric critical theorist Arne Johan Vetlesen holds that "[a]t precisely the point in history [of ours] when unprecedented numbers of … natural resources are brought to the brink of extinction", the well-documented impacts of technology-facilitated and capitalist-driven overexploitation have been transformed into a global economic, cultural, and psychological order (ibid., 175). Further, technological innovations are, by some scholars, partly explained due to the scientific revolution and the reinforcing impact of various forms of mechanical thought (e.g., Cartesian dualism, Newtonian physics, Galilean mathematics, Baconian domination over nature and the universe, and Hobbesian atomism; Skrbina 2005, 265). Consequently, anthropocentrism has been paradigmatic by understanding everything from the human body via animals and plants to ecosystems to the entire universe as clockworks or machines. Humans therefore treat nature as "an impersonal thing or collection of things, without spontaneity, without intrinsic value, without 'rights' of any kind"

(ibid.). So, the dominating mechanistic view on nature during the last 400 years after the scientific revolution is often linked to technology and capitalism (Vetlesen 2015). Since capitalism often is related to liberalism, both these standpoints can be connected to the liberal or representative democracy, which is often criticized or even rejected by proponents of ecological democracy.

Ecocentrism, in contrast to anthropocentrism, goes under a large number of synonyms. To illustrate, this standpoint is sometimes labeled as an ecology-centered approach, whereas on other occasions it is called an ecosphere-centered, a geocentric, and an Earth-centered account of nature. Ecocentrism often dates back to Naess' deep ecology, the groundbreaking philosophy of nature and environmental ethics which he coined at the beginning of the 1970s (Naess 1973). Later, different theories have been developed from the ecocentric perspective and deep ecology style (e.g., Devall and Sessions 1985; Macy 1991; Fox 1995; Abram 1996; Harding 2006). In some cases, ecocentrism and deep ecology have been an important inspiration to several central green political theorists and their development of ecological democracy (e.g., Mathews 1991; Eckersley 1992; Plumwood 1993).

Ontologically, similar to most anthropocentrists, ecocentrists tend to include all parts of reality. Further, they view all that exist as uniquely and diversely interwoven with one another in a web of life, where the term life is understood in the widest sense which I explained earlier (e.g., the ecosphere, ecosystems, habitats, species populations, landscapes, rivers, mountains, and the Earth system; Wetlesen 1992; Lysaker 2019). As outlined, ecocentrism involves as a minimum the entire Earth system and in some cases even the whole universe. Eckersley suggests that ecocentrism gives an adequate explanation of "[humans] proper place in the rest of nature as *logically prior* to the question of what are the most appropriate social and political arrangements for human communities" (ibid., 28, emphasis added). As mentioned, ecocentrism, especially in Eckersleyian fashion, is my guiding star of the inquiry throughout this book. Eckersley defends ecocentrism on the following basis:

1 [Ecocentrism] recognizes the full range of human interests in the nonhuman world (i.e., it incorporates yet goes beyond the resource conservation and human welfare ecology perspectives);
2 [ecocentrism] recognizes the interests of the nonhuman community (yet goes beyond the early preservationist perspective);
3 [ecocentrism] recognizes the interests of future generations of humans and nonhumans; and
4 [ecocentrism] adopts a holistic rather than an atomistic perspective (contra the animal liberation perspective) insofar as it values populations, species, ecosystems, and the ecosphere as well as individual organisms.

(Eckersley 1992, 46)

Thus, the ecocentric version of non-anthropocentrism is collective by encompassing both individually living (or biotic) organisms and non-living (or abiotic)

supra-individual wholes (Wetlesen 1992; Lysaker 2019). Moreover, ecocentrism is ontologically holistic or anti-dualistic by rejecting the assumed ontological split between human nature and nonhuman nature. Rather, ecocentrists portray these parts as belonging to the same reality.

Normatively, ecocentrism is often associated with the concept of intrinsic moral value (Lysaker 2019), or what Eckersley labels as an ecocentric theory of moral monism (Eckersley 2002). This value is non-attributed, that is, it protects someone or something independent of any characteristics, capacities, or interests. Instead, ecocentrists look for basic needs (e.g., to be cared for because of one's vulnerability and dependency, or to have one's existence project unhindered) that are shared across the humans/nature divide, although differently experienced and/or practiced. Consequently, an intrinsic moral value is absolute and cannot be graded or lost. Instead, this value is the highest moral status that someone or something can hold. Such a value is, then, morally ranked higher than an instrumental value.

Since ecocentrism is associated with deep ecology, let me mention something which might be confusing. In the early Naess, we learn that the concepts of inherent value and intrinsic value are treated as synonyms (Naess and Sessions 1984 quoted in Devall and Sessions, 1985, 70). According to Jon Wetlesen, however, on the ranking of values, inherent value is above both the intrinsic and the instrumental value (Wetlesen 1999). Wetlesen continues: an intrinsic value is ascribed by humans to someone (i.e., other humans) or something (i.e., more-than-humans). Such value-ascription can be done either subjectively (i.e., based on the ascriber's personal experiences and evaluations while encountering the addressee of the value-ascription) or objectively (i.e., based on the ascriber's preferred moral theories and principles). To exemplify, pets or domestic animals (especially mammals) are superior to predators and should therefore be attributed a higher moral value. Such moral ranking can be justified in various ways, such as emotional (e.g., by virtue of persons' close relationship with an animal), cognitive (e.g., pointing to the animal's similarities to humans, such as brain capacity or other cognitive characteristics), or culturally (e.g., that different traditions have different views on which animals can be eaten or not). Interestingly, in Naess' 1989 book *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy* (which is a revised and expanded English translation of his book originally published in Norwegian in 1974), he reformulated the idea of nature's value. At least until the early 1980s, Naess referred to both inherent value and intrinsic value and described them as synonyms. In 1989, however, he only mentions the concept of intrinsic value regarding the deep ecology platform: "The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value" (Naess 1989, 29).

Wetlesen also suggests that we should make a distinction between ecocentrism and biocentrism—literally, life-centeredness (e.g., Martha C. Nussbaum, Tom Regan, Paul W. Taylor, Peter Singer, Albert Schweitzer, and Holmes Rolston; Wetlesen 1992). That version of non-anthropocentrism focuses ontologically on all or some, yet only individually or collectively living organisms (e.g., humans, other animals, plants, and micro-organism). Normatively, biocentrists tend to ascribe value

depending on certain characteristics, capacities, or interests of various living organisms as well as the ascriber's choice of moral theory and its principles. Noteworthy, biocentrists, too, probably ontologically recognize all existence—at least on the planet, if not in the cosmos—as being part of the world. However, as philosophy of nature and environmental ethics, they focus simply on individually or collectively living organisms. So, biocentrists would ontologically not necessarily reject ecocentrism. In contrast, however, they often normatively limit themselves by ascribing moral value only to living organisms. I find biocentrism relevant regarding, for instance, today's sixth mass extinction. Elizabeth Kolbert defines the term sixth mass extinction as periods of geological history when extinction rates are so much higher than the speciation rates, while at the same time many species living on the planet vanish simultaneously at the same geological time (Kolbert 2014, 16). Although this happens very occasionally, we are amid the acclaimed sixth mass extinction (ibid., 2). This event results in a massive decline or loss of species and biodiversity. Also, biocentrism is helpful, I think, to identify what some describes as biological annihilation. This term refers to an "ongoing decimation, eventually extinction" of animals (Vetlesen 2022, 6).

Third, and finally, the ontology of nature is adequate for ecological democracy due to this model's cosmological outreach. Building further on my addressing of the universe and cosmology above, let us explore green political theorist and deep ecologist Freya Mathews in this regard. She defines the concept of cosmology as "the large-scale structure, origin and evolution of the concrete world" (Mathews 1991, 11). I guess that is why deep ecologist Stephan Harding suggests that cosmologies aim at grasping both the origins of the Earth and its interconnection to the universe as a self-evolving entity (Harding 2006, 103). A cosmology advocates, therefore, what non-anthropocentric critical theorist Arne Johan Vetlesen refers to as "a total view of reality" (Vetlesen 2019, 15). From David Abram, another deep ecologist, we also learn that a cosmology is earthly by "worthy … attending closely to our encounters with other creatures, and with the elemental textures and contours of our locale" (Abram 2010, 4). Mathews further makes clear that by taking the actual world as its point of departure, the domain of cosmologies may involve more than material objects, such as forces, spirits, fields, minds, and deities, since they can create our actual world (Mathews 1991, 11). This indicates that cosmologies can be used by a community to orient itself in the entire world (ibid., 12). Further, in the broadest sense, the cosmology places that community within a wider cosmic circle by defining the relation of humans in the cosmos, as well as who the members of the community are within this broad context and how they relate to the rest of creation (ibid.). Finally, telling such stories is empirically documented as an invariable part of human history (ibid.).

Are the above ideas of the cosmos and cosmology relevant to ecological democracy? Mathews argues that there exist both good and bad cosmologies (Mathews 1991, 13–14). She here claims that atomism (i.e., nature is indifferent to humans' interests) is a bad cosmology. To my mind, we still find traces of atomism in today's anthropocentrism, at least in its strong, instrumental account. In the age of ecological crisis, therefore, we need new cosmologies—we need to re-imagine ecological

democracy to care for Mother Earth in the Anthropocene in virtue of ecological love and ecocentrism in practice. Notably, Eckersley, too, seems to attempt at showing the role of cosmology to ecological democracy. In her view, there is much to learn from natural sciences, even in the case of cosmology:

> [A] very limited conception of [natural] science … ignores the role played by [natural] science in providing meaning—especially in shaping our understanding of *our place in the cosmos*. As Fox argues, modern science has both an instrumental aspect and a *cosmological* aspect. The latter provides us with "an account of creation that is the equal of any mythological, religious, or speculative philosophical account in terms of scale, grandeur, and richness of detail."
>
> (Eckersley 1992, 115, emphasis added)

So, by following Fox' deep ecology to a large degree, Eckersley's interfacultary outlook underscores natural sciences' diverse role. In addition to being instrumental or technological, natural sciences can provide meaning to our place not merely in human societies or the Earth, but even the entire cosmos. Then, by building further on Foxian cosmological deep ecology, Eckersley's ecocentric approach to ecological democracy seems to articulate a cosmology—a comprehensive understanding of reality as one encountering entity. Eckersley formulates this cosmology thus:

> The transpersonal ecology approach is described as both *cosmological* and psychological because it proceeds from a particular *picture of the world or cosmos*—that we are, in effect, all "leaves" on an unfolding "tree of life"—to a psychological identification with all phenomena (i.e., with all leaves on the tree). Fox refers to this approach as transpersonal ecology because it is concerned to cultivate a sense or experience of self that extends beyond one's egoistic, biographical, or personal sense of self to include all beings.
>
> (Eckersley 1992, 62, emphasis added)

To Fox, deep ecology aims at a self-expansion through a process of identification, an idea which Fox borrows from Naess. Identification refers to the experiences of one's commonality with all existence. Fox presents three identification forms: personal (i.e., "experiences of commonality with other entities that are brought about through personal involvement with these entities"), ontological (i.e., "experiences of commonality with all that is that are brought about through deep-seated realization of the fact *that* things are"), and *cosmological* (i.e., "experiences of commonality with all that is that are brought about through deep-seated realization of the fact that we and all other entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality"; Fox 1995, 249–252, original emphasis). Both ontological and cosmological identifications are, Fox elaborates, far less personal and far more transpersonal. Further, the realization of cosmological identification takes place with the help of any cosmology (e.g., mythological, religious, speculative philosophical, or scientific). Here,

resonating with what I have already emphasized about the nature of cosmologies and the cosmos, Fox defines a cosmology as a "fairly comprehensive account of *how* the world is" and seeing the world as "a single unfolding process—as a 'unity in process'" (Fox 1995, 252, original emphasis).

Now, the interesting question is whether Eckersley's Foxian cosmology can strengthen her support of the ecological model of democracy she wishes to develop. On my reading, she replies affirmative to this question in the following way:

> Ecocentric emancipatory theorists [of ecological democracy] … have more in common with the classical tradition [of deep ecology] insofar as they are concerned to cultivate what might be called general "ecocentric virtues" in addition to the civic virtue of participation …. [T]he ecological crisis has been identified not simply as a crisis of participation or survival but also as a crisis of culture and character. To these theorists, a *radical reconception of our place in the rest of nature* [as part of the cosmos] is not only essential for solving our planetary problems; it would also offer a *surer path* for human self-development. It is in this context that primary ecopolitical questions concerning human needs, technology, and lifestyles must be debated.
>
> (Eckersley 1992, 117, emphasis added)

Here, as I interpret her, Eckersley sheds light on the cosmological place of all existence. Further, human nature is radically reconceptualized as part of the rest of nature. Also, Eckersley argues that her ecocentric cosmology offers "the *most* comprehensive, *promising*, and distinctive approach in emancipatory ecopolitical theory", namely, ecological democracy (Eckersley 1992, 27, emphasis added). Consequently, humans' appropriate place in the rest of nature and the cosmos is understood as "*logically prior* to the question of what are the most appropriate social and political arrangements for human communities" (ibid., 28, emphasis added). Ecocentrists, then, radically reconceptualize humans' place in nature by arguing that democratic-ecological issues "*must proceed from*, or at least be consistent", ecocentrism (ibid., emphasis added). Moreover, ecocentric cosmology is connected to certain general virtues, such as humility, compassion, knowledge of the local bioregion, and respect for the integrity and diversity of other life forms. In turn, these virtues are essential for ecological-democratic participation (Eckersley 1992, 117).

Taken together, then, the above three reasons why the ontology of nature is relevant for ecological democracy implies what I have already introduced as the idea of political cosmology. To expound this concept, the political is related to the model of ecological democracy—especially Eckersley's version, which involves the cosmos. Here, the term ontological means non-chosen and necessary preconditions applying to all temporal and special contexts on the Earth. Further, a political cosmology refers to the basis upon which the political is practiced and/or developing relational and institutional for such activity. By linking the political and the cosmology, I also argue that all existence on Earth and in the universe are political or, at least, politically affected. Finally, by building further on Eckersley's Foxian

cosmology, my own political cosmology wishes to show that political actions and interactions are not merely local, regional, national, or global; additionality, the political even reaches and is mutually related to the cosmos along the diverse ways I explained the term cosmology above. Such a political cosmology proposes a "new vision of politics" through which we may start to "imagine ourselves … as cosmological beings … whose foundations are that same creativity that brought forth a time-developmental universe, and whose struggles are those same ongoing struggles of life itself to give birth to new forms of beauty" (Brian Thomas Swimme's foreword in Herman 2013, ix).

I agree with Eckersley concerning what I reconceptualize as the anthropocentric/ecocentric cleavage and its related value hierarchy is the most controversial ecophilosophical issue—even today, 30 years after she argued this. I will, therefore, compare Eckersley and John Dryzek concerning this cleavage. To recall, in the discourse on the anthropocentric/ecocentric cleavage and the value hierarchy, there are two versions of anthropocentrism—a weak, human-centered, and historically less influencing as well as a strong, human-instrumental, and historically more affecting. Before doing so, however, let me explain more detailed what I touched upon in Chapters 1 and 2 regarding the distinction between ontology and ethics. In the research fields of philosophy of nature and environmental ethics, it can be argued that there is an important difference between ontology and ethics. Further, this distinction can be related to the anthropocentrism/ecocentrism cleavage in several ways. Ontologically, I believe, many, if not all, scholars of these fields will agree that their standpoints recognize both living and non-living parts of nature, and even in some cases, their standpoints involve the universe. Still, as should be evident by now, anthropocentrists, biocentrists, and ecocentrists would disagree on the issue of nature's moral value. Anthropocentrists ascribe moral value to humans alone, whereas biocentrists would do so to some or all living organisms. In contrast, ecocentrists go all the way by presuming a moral value of all existence on Earth and in some cases in the universe.

With the thus far addressed issues in mind, I will now compare Eckersley and Dryzek. To begin with, Eckersley criticizes Dryzek's concept of ecological rationality for implying anthropocentrism (Eckersley 1990, 1992, 110–111, 1996; see Dryzek 1983, 1987). Eckersley problematizes the following passage in Dryzek, in which he elaborates his idea of ecological rationality: "the human life-support capacity of natural systems is *the* generalizable interest *par excellence*, standing as it does in logical antecedence to competing normative principles such as utility maximization or right protection" (Dryzek 1987, 204, original emphasis; see Dryzek 1992). Further, Dryzek argues, what is at stake concerning this human welfare ecology perspective is "the capability of ecosystems consistently and effectively to provide the good of human life support" (Dryzek 1987, 36). To Eckersley, this Dryzekian outlook:

> is problematic from an *ecocentric* perspective because the moral referents in any consideration of ecological problems will *only ever be the human* participants in the dialogue.
>
> (Eckersley 1992, 110, emphasis added)

In fact, Dryzek himself defines the concept of the ecological rationality for maintaining human life-support systems as "anthropocentric" (Dryzek 1987, 35). Yet, he continues, ecological rationality is anthropocentric only in a "minimal" sense (ibid.). To be minimally anthropocentric implies that one "can meet competing forms of functional rationality (whether economic, social, legal, or political) on their own ground: the ground of specifically human interests" (ibid.). Not surprisingly, then, Dryzek argues that only those who can be recognized a "full subject status" may have "the potential to participate in social discourse" (ibid., 207). Dryzek here concludes: "Clearly, the entities of the *natural world* fail this test" (ibid., emphasis added).

The question is, then, if Dryzek's minimal anthropocentrism is weak or strong. His dismissal of instrumentalism in other areas—such as communication (i.e., a refusal of what Habermas refers to as instrumental and strategic communication) and economy (i.e., a rejection of instrumental capitalism) (e.g., Dryzek 1990, 1995)—gives him an incentive to at least refuse strong, instrumental anthropocentrism. In the opposite case, Dryzek could have underscored, without capable ecosystems, no human life support either. Still, does this reading of Dryzek as a weak anthropocentrist make sense? To me, we should not forget that Dryzek is informed by natural-scientific research. The early Dryzek denotes James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis (e.g., Dryzek 1990, 1995; see Lovelock 1979; Harding 2006), whereas the later Dryzek refers to Rockström's Earth system framework (e.g., Dryzek 2016; Dryzek and Pickering 2019). In doing that, at least implicitly, he ontologically draws on a world understanding which involves both living and non-living elements (Lovelock 1979, 116; Rockström et al. 2009a). Given that, this outlook may resonate with weak anthropocentrism. Then, his concept of ecological rationality is human-centered to the degree to which it rejects instrumentalism, while at the same time protecting natural resources to safeguard human life support rather than avoiding the extinction of natural resources as such. Thus, Dryzek supports weak anthropocentrism.

Yet, another point should be made about the anthropocentric/ecocentric cleavage in the Eckersley/Dryzek debate. I here think of what I take to be Dryzek's confusion of biocentrism and ecocentrism. This is the case when Dryzek interprets Eckersley under the subheading of "Biocentric and Anthropocentric Models, and their Inadequacies" (Dryzek 1995, 17). The problem here, I believe, is that the title might give the readers a wrong impression by, first, replacing the anthropocentric/ecocentric cleavage with a biocentric/ecocentric cleavage and, second, relating Eckersley to biocentrism instead of ecocentrism. Further, Dryzek writes that the "term 'ecocentric' or 'biocentric' implies that intrinsic value is located in nature" (ibid.). This statement can, I think, be read in various ways. One way is to say that since Eckersley supports ecocentrism, her standpoint ontologically includes even biocentrism (though ecocentrism normatively moves beyond biocentrism) since the former stance is more inclusive than the latter. Also, the statement can be interpreted as wrongly associating Eckersley with biocentrism in the first place, while she defends ecocentrism. As I explained, biocentrism and ecocentrism are two different standpoints on the non-anthropocentric side of the specter—which

is most apparent in normative terms. Relevantly, Eckersley explicitly states in the title of one of her seminal books, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach*, which is the book Dryzek interprets, that she adopts ecocentrism. In the same book, she mentions biocentrism only three times (Eckersley 1992, 155, 194, 197). In contrast, however, Eckersley clearly states that she defends ecocentrism:

> I prefer *ecocentrism* to *biocentrism* for the reasons given by Warwick Fox in "The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and its Parallels," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989):7–8. In particular, the prefix "eco" (unlike the prefix *"bio"*) encompasses not only individual organisms that are biologically alive but also such things as species, populations, and cultures considered as entities in their own right.
>
> (Eckersley 1992, 194, note 74, original emphasis)

It should be beyond all doubt, then, that Eckersley supports ecocentrism. Also, ecocentrism should not, at least according to Eckersley, be confused with biocentrism, as Dryzek does. This confusion seems to be at play regarding Dryzek's idea of green reason, too, which I interpret as close to or a synonym of ecological rationality (Dryzek 1990). If so, ecological rationality is relating to the biosphere. However, the biosphere, or the ecosphere, is ontologically related to the entire Earth system and vice versa. Again, an ecocentric perception of nature, at least ontologically speaking, could to a greater extent than in both Dryzek's own standpoint and his interpretation of Eckersley include the Earth system. In turn, the ecological democracy framework might address today's ecological crisis more efficiently since this crisis affects both animate and inanimate aspects of the Earth system (Chapter 1). In this regard, it should be noted that when the anthropocentric/ecocentric cleavage is related to participation and issues, Dryzek asks if it does make sense to refer to "ecocentric or biocentric democracy?" (Dryzek 1995, 17). I here argue that Eckersley's reply would be that it depends. Despite that both Dryzek and Eckersley advocate ecological democracy and do so within a non-anthropocentric frame, they still depart from each other regarding their understanding of what it here takes to be labeled as ecological, at least normatively. To Dryzek, ecological democracy simply requires biocentrism, whereas to Eckersley it demands ecocentrism.

In a 1990 article, Dryzek seems to develop further the idea of ecological rationality from the 1980s by broadening his notion of communication. He argues that communication is a two-way phenomenon. First, it is about humans' communicative competence because we are humans with communication mechanism in general and language in particular, the latter being—anthropocentrically, I suggest—ranked as more advanced among humans than of most other species (Dryzek 1990, 207). To Dryzek, the latter is exemplified by Habermasian rational communication. Second, non-verbal communication incorporates, for instance, body language, facial displays, body movements, and pheromones. Consequently, communication involves ways humans are not only humans but nature in terms of human nature (ibid.). Thus, humans communicate due to being natural, too. Dryzek

explains that the latter even applies to "other primates, cetaceans, and insects alike" (ibid.). This is especially so in the case of non-linguistic communication forms. Considering the above natural-philosophical map, and since non-verbal communication is shared across the human–nature divide, Dryzek could here have included even a wider specter of communication—say, involving abiotic parts of nature and thus be labeled ecocentric or ecological communication (e.g., the animist expressiveness of the abiotic stones of a holy mountain). In contrast, however, Dryzek only mentions living organisms among those parts of reality with such communicative competence. In turn, Dryzekian communication might be closer to biocentrism than either anthropocentrism or ecocentrism. I here claim that it obscures more than it reveals when Dryzek time and again speaks about the natural world. Instead, he should have been more accurate by saying that he focuses simply on living organisms and whether his portray involves individual living organisms (e.g., cetaceans and insects), collective living organisms (e.g., primates), or both. The reason why I find this detail level significant is that it is easier to relate to, for example, natural research on species extinction and biodiversity loss as significant elements of the ecological democracy framework.

Interestingly, in the same 1990 paper, Dryzek introduces the concept of ecological signals, which he elaborates during the 1990s (Dryzek 1990, 1995). Signals here means "[t]he content of … communication … involv[ing] attention to feedback signals emanating from natural systems" (Dryzek 1995, 24). On my reading, this idea rearticulates ecological rationality and thereby extends his initial concept of communication. Dryzek explains further his notion of ecological signals thus:

> The key would be to treat communication … as *extending* to entities that can act as *agents*, even though they *lack* the self-awareness that connotes *subjectivity*. Agency is not the same as subjectivity, and only the former need be sought in nature … [since external] nature is not passive, inert, and plastic. Instead, this world is *truly alive*, and pervaded with *meanings*.
>
> (Dryzek 1995, 20, emphasis added)

Based on this distinction between agency and subjectivity, as a minimum, Dryzek occurs to claim that humans' recognition of agency in the more-than-human world would guarantee respect for "natural objects and ecological processes", too (ibid.). Then, ecological processes "transcend the boundaries of species" and thereby involve, for instance, "the creation, modification, or destruction of niches" as well as "cycles involving oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, and water" (ibid.). Humans' recognition of agency and respect of signals in nature—at least in the biotic parts of it—demands what Dryzek describes as an equally careful interpretation (Dryzek 1995, 20–21). Consequently, humans' communicative interaction with nature "can" and "should" be defined as an "eminently rational affair" (ibid.). To me, this is problematic, however, since Dryzek insists on rationality, which I interpret as an appeal to anthropocentrism—at least a weak one—in terms of a human-centered capacity of reason based of the ontological divide between human and nature. Eckersley

here adds to my observation that Dryzek's point about humans interpreting natures' signals is "a far cry from the special competencies specified" since reading these signals do not rise such validity claims which is found in Jürgen Habermas' communication theory upon which Dryzek develops the idea of ecological signals (Eckersley 1999, 37).

Fascinatingly, when Dryzek refers to ecological processes and their many aspects—which includes even abiotic ones—he seems to come closer to Eckersley's ecocentrism. With reference to Abram, who combines insights from Naess' deep ecology and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Dryzek claims that the nonhuman nature is neither passive nor silent, as the Cartesian tradition of the globalized West holds, but rather full of purposes, meanings, and values—irrespective of what human nature ascribes to the nonhuman nature (Dryzek 1990, 206–207). Dryzek also seems to support another claim made by Abram: through bodily perception, humans may reinterpret the more-than-human-world (ibid., 207). We should also recall that Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis portrays Mother Earth as consisting of both biotic and abiotic elements. Perhaps it is helpful to look closer, then, at Abram's interpretation of the Gaia hypothesis as a new way of perceiving the world. To see where this leads, consider Abram's statement about:

> The air is so close to us that we tend to leave it out of our thinking entirely … The air that surrounds us is invisible to our eyes; doubtless this has something to do with why we usually act and speak as though there were nothing there. We refer to the space between things, or the space between two people; we do not speak of the air between us, or the air between oneself or a nearby tree.
>
> (Abram 1985, 1–2).

The point Abram occurs to make is that though certain phenomena cannot be seen, they are still there. Abram says that:

> This is attested by our everyday language—we say that we dwell on the Earth, not that we live within the Earth. Yet if the Gaia hypothesis is correct, we shall have to admit that we live *in* this planet rather than on it. In direct contradiction to the earlier scientific assumption that life on Earth's surface is surrounded by and adapts to an essentially random environment, Gaia indicates that the atmosphere in which we live and think is itself a dynamic extension of the planetary surface, a functioning organ of the Earth.
>
> (Abram 1985, 2, original emphasis)

So, if Abram is correct, humans live in the Earth, in the air—we even live in nature. To be sure, Abram is no foreigner to the affinity between sensual existence in the world and a sense-based language to capture nature. By nature, here ecocentric means all existence on the Earth. An Abramian experience of nature, then, indicates that since perception is communication, language encompasses a much wider register than in the case of verbal language or rational communication (ibid., 4).

Each time we breathe through our body, then, we actively interact with the Earth and its atmosphere (ibid.). Although Dryzek gives the impression that he partly follows in the footsteps of Abram, the opposite is closer to the truth. His search for ecological signals ends, rather, in the rejection of exactly what could have opened such an Abramian ecophenomenological doorway. Dryzek explains that his standpoint must not be mixed up with "green spirituality advocated by deep ecologists, goddess worshippers, and others who see divinity in nature" (Dryzek 1995, 29, note 3). Perhaps the implication of this view is also the rejection of Eckersley's ecocentrism, which partly builds further on deep ecology. If so, the disagreement between Eckersley and Dryzek continues.

In the 2010s, Dryzek makes some unexpected steps. It should be remembered that in the 1990s, he rejected the Abramian wide register of communication based on sensuality and reception. Still, he reformulates the concept of ecological rationality and ecological signals as both ecosystemic reflexivity (Dryzek 2016) and ecological reflexivity (Dryzek 2015a; Dryzek and Pickering 2017, 2019). Since the idea of ecological reflexivity is the latest concept Dryzek has coined, especially in his book *The Politics of the Anthropocene*, which is co-authored with Jonathan Pickering, in the following I focus on this concept. Ecological reflexivity is defined in terms of a capacity based on which one "listens and responds to signals from the Earth system, and has the foresight to anticipate potentially catastrophic changes in the system" (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 18, see 17, 147, 152). Further, this listen and respond model consists of three main components (ibid., 36): first, a recognition component (i.e., listening for changes in social-ecological systems; monitoring impacts on social-ecological systems; anticipating future conditions and impacts); second, a reflection component (i.e., learning from past successes and failures; rethinking core values and practices; envisioning possible futures); and finally, a response component (i.e., rearticulation of core aims, values, and discourses; reconfiguration of functions and practices). In my reading, these components are part of an ongoing process of listening and responding. Further, they are associated with ecological democracy. On top of that, ecological reflexivity aims at being a rich human characteristic involving many capacities. Still, the question is whether ecological reflexivity also involves non-verbal communication, such as senses and emotions, which was a central feature of Dryzek's earlier ideas of ecological rationality and ecological signals. As far as I can see, the latter issue is not addressed by Dryzek.

In a recent paper co-authored with Javier Romero, "Grounding Ecological Democracy", Dryzek continues his project of rearticulating ecological reflexivity (Romero and Dryzek 2021). He now links such reflexivity of ecological democracy to recent developments in biosemiotics, an abbreviation of biological semiotics or semiotic biology. Pioneered by, for example, Jakob von Uexküll, biosemiotics is the synthesis of the science of biology and semiotics, respectively. The production and interpretation of signs, symbols, and meanings in communication are here explained as "exist[ing] in and [being] necessary to all living systems" as nature's communicative networks (ibid., 412). Dryzek labels biosemiotics of ecological democracy as ecological communication. Dryzek defines the latter term thus: "[humans] can

communicate because [humans] are nature, and nature has allowed [humans] to communicate today through a process of natural evolution that has among other things yielded linguistic codes" (ibid., 411–412). Ecological communication encompasses at least four components: first, both human nature and nonhuman nature; second, both linguistic and non-linguistic communication; third, individual and collective parts of nature; and finally, both biotic and abiotic factors of nature (ibid., 411–413). Regarding the latter component, biotic (or, gestural) communication takes place through learned or somatogenic gestures and signs (i.e., auditory, vocal, olfactory, gustatory, or tactile) in both linguistic and non-linguistic terms, whereas abiotic (or, non-gestural) communication involves the abiotic parts of nature (i.e., climatic, edaphic, and hydrographic parts; ibid., 414). To exemplify, abiotic communication can happen while hydrographic (i.e., abiotic) elements of the Antarctic ice sheet melts entirely, which might result in global raised sea levels by approximately 60 meters. In such a situation, Dryzek claims, in the Anthropocene, can Rockström's Earth system science be described as "particularly sophisticated way to interpret fluctuation in *abiotic* factors … as well as biotic factors … in the interests of enabling collective human life to flourish" (ibid., 415, emphasis added). Further, in contrast to using only one sense among the sense apparatus' five senses, as in his former notion of ecological listening, Dryzek's present idea of ecological communication appears much broader by involving all senses of humans' bodily perceptions—namely, touch (i.e., tactile perception), taste (i.e., gustation perception), sound (i.e., hearing perception), smell (i.e., olfaction perception), and sight (i.e., vision perception)—which are fundamental to function well and orient oneself in the world (ibid., 410, 412). Still, I believe, there is an asymmetry in this picture indicating an anthropocentric standpoint in the weak understanding of this term. I here think of how Dryzek appears to focus on abiotic factors only if it safeguards human lives. If this is correct, he does not appear to be engaged in ways in which, for example, the abiotic water of a river can be experienced by indigenous peoples as expressive and alive along the animism I explained above from the angle of Abram, Mathews, Harding, and others.

Noteworthy, Dryzek argues that "everything is intertwined in a complex dynamic network of abiotic and biotic factors" (Romero and Dryzek 2021, 420). At the same time, Dryzek explains, he focuses on "two types of communication: abiotic and biotic, and show how they can be understood through semiotics, biosemiotics and physiosemiotics" (ibid., 408). While listing these various approaches to biosemiotics, Dryzek never mentions *ecosemiotics*. My suspicion here is that Dryzek creates a parallel problem as in the case of biocentrism versus ecocentrism. I here have in mind the fact that Dryzek now uses the term biosemiotics for both biotic and abiotic communication. Like the issues I raised before, he now overshadows what I argue are certain seminal differences between biosemiotics and ecosemiotics (e.g., Kull 1998). Let me admit that there seems to be little agreement among the various semiotic schools with respect to how biosemiotics and ecosemiotics should be defined, and whether these terms are synonyms, overlap, or deal with distinct parts of reality (ibid.). Still, some central scholars in the field argue that the term ecosemiotics—that is, an abbreviation of ecological semiotics

or semiotic ecology—is more adequate than biosemiotics while referring to nature or the environment disaster in ecological terms (ibid.). Ecology here means a non-anthropocentric understanding of humans as smaller parts of the huge Earth system and which is natural-scientifically documented. Consequently, ecosemiotics aims to transcend the dualism between human and nature. Further, ecosemiotics includes both biotic and abiotic components of nature, whereas biosemiotics by definition simply deals with biotic components. Also, some scholars working with this wide perception of semiotics relate their work to the ecological crisis (e.g., Tønnessen 2020). Then, however, it would be more plausible if Dryzek linked his concept of ecological communication ecosemiotics instead of biosemiotics. Even so, in addition to the influential semitic school of the already mentioned Uexküll, Charles S. Peirce is another pioneer—who Dryzek mentions (Romero and Dryzek 2021, 409). In a rather cosmological and animist manner, we learn from Peirce that "the entire universe … is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs" (Peirce 1992, 2.394). This ecological and cosmological semiotic avenue never occurs to be part of Dryzek's study. Still, in Dryzek's view, ecological communication can be insightful while being exposed by the ecological crisis—especially by "asking the right questions, and listening carefully to the answers" considering the broadest accessible sensual register (Romero and Dryzek 2021, 412). Here, Dryzek in facts holds, one can learn much from how indigenous peoples raise and answer such questions. Although not mentioned explicitly, I guess this view resonates with the above animist-cosmological picture of Abram, Mathews, Harding, and others. Nonetheless, to Dryzek, biosemiotic ecological communication assists to recognize agents in nature through its interpretable biotic and abiotic signs—which signals can be interpreted differently and imply disagreements, which, in turn, can qualify and bridge the various interpretations (ibid., 413). However, to really be sensual and to learn from indigenous people, according to Abram, Mathews, Harding, and others, we need to go beyond simply using anthropocentric language—we must listen carefully to the sounds and the tones of the wind, to mention only one among many unique and diverse phenomena that are significant to oral languages and the contours and scales of its local landscapes, sensuous terrains, and earthly surroundings:

> To indigenous, oral cultures, the ceaseless flux that we call "time" is overwhelmingly cyclical in character. The *senses* an oral people are still *attuned* to the land around them, still conversant with the *expressive speech* of the winds and the forest birds, still *participant* with the *sensuous cosmos*.
>
> (Abram 1996, 185, emphasis added; see Harding 2006, 43)

On Abram's understanding, indigenous' language use is cyclical instead of linear, sensuous instead of rational, expressive instead of alphabetized, and cosmic instead of human. I interpret Abram to say that oral people's language is both biotic and abiotic. It is biotic by being spoken by humans, and it is abiotic while sensually recognizing, for example, the existence and expression of the natural-scientifically non-organic wind. By listening to or in other manners being aware of and attuned to the wind's expressive speech, the wind in itself has its own unique project of

existence. The wind, therefore, appears to exist beyond what natural sciences or Dryzekian ecological communication can grasp.

What, then, about Eckersley? To my knowledge, she does not appeal to communication theory the ways in which Dryzek does. Still, based on her ecocentrism and her interest in cosmology, I suggest that Eckersley's standpoint may resonate with Peirceian ecosemiotics. What is more, from her ecocentric viewpoint, Eckersley can criticize Dryzek's concept of ecological communication for being anthropocentric—at least in a weak or minimal sense—because language in his context is human. If so, humans are described as superior to all other beings, despite other similarities, since humans have the capacity of language. Even so, Darwin-inspired anthropocentrists may claim that human language is an evolutionary progress. Against these accounts of language, however, Dryzek argues that they run into an "ontological bias" (Romero and Dryzek 2021, 417). Here, he has in mind that "only humans have human language, but it is not their only means of communication"; non-linguistic communication is central to humans' everyday life, as well (ibid.). Regarding Darwinian anthropocentrists, Dryzek explains that despite "[t]hat humans have language does not prove their biological or evolutionary 'superiority'" and language is "simply one characteristic among many present in the animal world" (ibid.). Concerning the early Dryzek's weak or minimal anthropocentrism, it is not clear to me whether the later Dryzek is a non-anthropocentrist, as well. He now wishes to "counteract" or even "overcome" anthropocentrism (Romero and Dryzek 2021, 418) by appealing to a thinking "that is neither anthropocentric nor biocentric" (ibid., 421). On my reading, this implies to recognize that humans in nature can communicate in terms of reciprocity and equality. Against the earlier portrayed ecophilosophical map—consisting of the three main standpoints, namely, anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism—one could expect the later Dryzek to ingest his new standpoint to be ecocentric. Surprisingly, therefore, Dryzek still defends his previously articulated ecological rationality (ibid.)—perhaps with only, yet significant, adjusting with respect to humans' communication with not simply biotic, but even abiotic components of the Earth system. When Dryzek appears to reject what he calls a "simple biocentrism", perhaps we are back to start in terms of a Dryzekian complex biocentrism (ibid., 418). Still, what Dryzek calls the communicative networks of nature in which humans are situated—that are horizontal, egalitarian, and interrelated (ibid., 418–420)—seem to articulate an ontological ecocentrism: "everything is intertwined in a complex dynamic network of abiotic and biotic factors" (ibid., 420). Simultaneously, Dryzek himself warns against a "narrow anthropocentric" understanding of these networks and the ecological rationality they entail (ibid.). Instead, Dryzek calls for a "richer" definition of ecological rationality in terms of biotic and abiotic ecological communication (ibid., 421). From my angle, Dryzek here comes quite close to Eckersley's ecocentrism.

Through my intervention into the Eckersley/Dryzek debate, I hope to have made clear that both the early and the later Dryzek ends up in a weak-anthropocentric terrain. In contrast, Eckersley continuously wanders in an ecocentric landscape. Conserving the testcase of my comparison of the two—a political

cosmology—Eckersley gives the impression of being closer to this outlook than Dryzek. This is because she, in contrast to Dryzek, opens the door to the cosmological thought of deep ecology, whereas the former appears to argue that deep ecology is not relevant to ecological democracy.

2.2 The Problem of Nature: From Whitebook to Honneth and Back Again

In this subchapter, I address the discourse on the problem of nature. There are several reasons why I do so. First, Joel Whitebook, who coined that phrase, develops a non-anthropocentric critical theory with relevance for my book. Second, Whitebook has influenced the development of ecological democracy by several central green political theorists (e.g., Dryzek 1990; Eckersley 1990).

In the age of the environmental disaster, we learn more from Whitebook's 40 years old original ecological insight than from Axel Honneth, one of critical theory's gravitation centers today. In contrast to what I interpret as Honneth's anthropocentrism, I argue, Whitebookian ecocentrism is more appropriate in the Anthropocene. Yet, I believe, Honneth's three-folded account of nature is worthwhile remembering, for instance, to adopt it today in the setting of the ecocrisis.

In the above discourses, the concept of nature is used somewhat different from mine. Let me, therefore, recall my own multidimensional and triangular definition of nature which I introduced in Chapter 1 (see Honneth and Joas 1988, 1; Naess 2006/1985; Deranty 2009, 40; Rosa 2019, 35–37). I outline this concept as subjective nature (which sometimes is dubbed as first, internal, inner, intrapsychic, or intrasubjective nature), intersubjective nature (which sometimes is dubbed as second or human nature), and objective nature (which is sometimes dubbed as external, outer, third nature, or nature in itself). Subjective nature involves uniquely being bodily and experientially in the world through which the world opens itself. Intersubjective nature incorporates various webs of life and interactions between these systems. Finally, objective nature refers to the parts of the world which exist in themselves and on their own premises. When I differentiate between these three dimensions of nature, I still understand them holistically; they are mutually interactive and reinforcing parts of the same complex framework. Here, all these dimensions are in relationship to and depend on each other. Consequently, this multidimensional definition of nature assumes an on-going triangulation between the subjective, the intersubjective, and the objective aspect of nature. Also, the multidimensional approach to nature is based on an ontological holism that departs from Cartesian, ontological dualism.

In 1979, Whitebook famously published the journal article "The Problem of Nature in Habermas" (Whitebook 1979). Whitebook here refers to the "ecological crisis" in the sense of a possible "epochal transformation on the scale of world" (Whitebook 1979, 69, see 51, 52, 53, 61, 63, 64). Inspired by this article, in the

following, I deal with the problem of nature. Although Whitebook's focus is Habermas, I adopt his perspectives more generally. Strikingly, the term the problem of nature simply appears in the title of Whitebook's paper rather than throughout the paper. Still, I find the following passage relevant to explain the core of this problem:

> According to Habermas, while there is an intimate connection between the domination of external [i.e., objective] and internal [i.e., subjective and intersubjective] nature, the two processes do not *follow the same logic*. Horkheimer's and Adorno's failure to differentiate satisfactorily between the two led to the fateful impasse. To correct this situation and to avoid those mistakes, Habermas introduces his dualistic framework: while the logic of instrumental rationality governs the domination of external nature, the logic of communicative rationality governs that of internal nature.
>
> (Whitebook 1979, 43, original emphasis)

From Whitebook's standpoint, the problem of nature surfaces when the above intimate link between subjective nature and intersubjective nature, on the one hand, and, on the other, objective nature is approached by dualistic framework. As a result "while the logic of instrumental rationality governs the domination of external [i.e., objective] nature, the logic of communicative rationality governs that of internal [i.e., subjective and intersubjective] nature" (Whitebook 1979, 43). Whitebook continues by arguing that by following Habermas—or, for that matter, Honneth—in the sense of an anthropocentric, dualistic critical theory, one defends a standpoint which "necessarily *precludes any* reconciliation with [objective] nature" (ibid., 41, emphasis added). While no one would want to violate the dignity of the subject, the following question must nevertheless be raised: *Can we continue to deny all worth to nature and treat it as a mere means without destroying the natural preconditions for the existence of [human] subjects?* Likewise, can the work of nature be secured without devaluing the dignity of the subject? (Whitebook 1979, 53, original emphasis).

I believe that the above questions are as relevant today as back then for the problem of nature and beyond. Whitebook himself appears to reply to these questions by holding that we should transcend anthropocentrism. One of the reasons is that the "adequacy [of Habermasian intersubjective critical theory] to the unprecedented ethical problems raised by ecology crisis remains *questionable*" (ibid., 52, emphasis added). This is due to being "*thoroughly anthropocentric*" and therefore ruling out "any conception of nature as an 'end-in-itself'" (ibid., 52, original emphasis). As explained, ontologically, anthropocentrism may include everything existing, and normatively, anthropocentrism rank humans above the rest of the world. Consequently, Whitebook observes:

> The dignity and rights of the moral and legal [human] subject have been secured by *severing* the subject from the *realm of natural existence*. Because

> they are characterized by self-consciousness or language, subjects are considered qualitatively different from the rest of natural existence. This is why they command respect and ought to be treated as ends-in-themselves. It is often feared that anything that threatens to disturb this distinction—which the concept of *nature as an end-in-itself* certainly does—also threatens the dignity of the subject.
>
> (Whitebook 1979, 53, emphasis added)

As I interpret Whitebook, he distances himself from anthropocentrism. Instead, he supports ecocentrism. To recall, in philosophy of nature and environmental ethics, one often differentiates between ontology and normativity; anthropocentrists can ontologically, yet not normatively, recognize the entire nature (including abiotic parts, such as water), whereas ecocentric non-anthropocentrists recognizes the entire nature, both ontologically and normatively. Whitebook refers to nature as such, without relating this concept to particular parts of nature (e.g., animals), and he morally defends the worth of nature and claims that nature has an end-in-itself. In sum, his standpoint qualifies to be labeled as ecocentric. Eckersley appears to support my interpretation in her own reading of Whitebook:

> We need to revise and extend … [intersubjective and anthropocentric critical theory] to a fully blown ecocentric ethic that acknowledges [even] the internal relatedness and reciprocity embedded in ecological relations in general that, in a very literal sense, sustain us all.
>
> (Eckersley 1990, 760–761)

Eckersley interprets Whitebook's concepts of and distinction between (human) agents and (nonhuman) subjects as a relevant path forward for Whitebookian ecocentrism: "It is not necessary", or so the argument goes "to be a moral agent in order to be a morally considerable subject" (ibid., 761). As a subject, the entire nature can be affected by the ecological crisis, and should, therefore, somehow participate or otherwise be represented.

How does Honneth, then, address the Whitebookian problem of nature? Already in 1980—only one year after Whitebook published his seminal paper on this matter—Honneth approached the problem of nature. He did that by inquiring the relationship between the objective nature and humans' subjective and intersubjective nature. Honneth introduced his perspectives in the book *Social Action and Human Nature*, co-authored with Hans Joas (the book was a revised version translated to English in 1988 with a foreword by Charles Taylor, a book which was originally published in German in 1980). In my reading, the early Honneth here views both human nature and more-than-human nature in ways that are relevant to the problem of nature. At the opening page of *Social Action and Human Nature*, he partly relates his outlook to environmental movements and the ecocrisis as:

> a concern with themes having to do with nature: with external [i.e., objective nature] nature and a humane relationship [i.e., intersubjective nature] to it,

> as well as with the inner [i.e., subjective] nature of the human being and its humane development.
>
> (Honneth and Joas 1988, 1)

In similar ways, the following quote highlights the early Honneth's account of nature:

> The legitimacy of the question of the [ontological] relationship of the [intersubjective nature of the] human being to [the objective] nature and of [the subjective] nature in the human being is today beyond all doubt.
>
> (Honneth and Joas 1988, 3)

In my interpretation, in the above quotes, Honneth subscribes to my earlier introduced multidimensional definition of nature. He does so by drawing on a threefolded model that includes subjective, intersubjective, and objective nature. Honneth here relates the subjective nature to bodily sensuousness (Honneth and Joas 1988, 14–16, 23, 116), he links the intersubjective nature to social interaction (ibid., 61–62), and the objective nature is associated with encounters with ecological and biological aspects of the world (ibid., 1, 9). All these forms of nature are unique and different from each other, yet they play essential roles and are necessary parts of the same framework. Honneth also seems to indicate that since they are interweaved and depend on each other, all the forms of nature are part of triangular dynamics. Further, in the early Honneth's view, there exists an ontologically mutual relationship between these aspects of nature, which today is beyond all doubt. The Honnethian approach to nature defends, therefore, ontological holism instead of Cartesian dualism.

Famously, in *Social Action and Human Nature*, Honneth states that:

> Our approach to [philosophical] anthropology regards itself as self-reflection of the *social and cultural sciences* on their *biological foundations* and on the *normative* content of their bodies of knowledge, considered in relation to determinate *historical* and *political* problems, and its viewpoints is that of a humanisation of nature. This is to be understood in three ways. First, the human being humanises nature; that is, he transforms it into what is life-serving for himself and thereby creates … the cultural shapings of his nature. Second, the human being humanises nature within himself in the course of the long civilisation process that has been engaged in by the human species. Lastly, the human being himself is a humanisation of nature, being *an upstart out of the animal kingdom*; in the human being, nature becomes humane.
>
> (Honneth and Joas 1988, 9–10, emphasis added)

In the above passage, Honneth holds, among other things, that we humans have our origin in the objective nature. Then, natural sciences, such as ecology and biology, should be part of philosophical studies of humans' subjective and intersubjective nature. Against this background, Honneth engages in "themes of various

social movements", such as the "ecological" (Honneth and Joas 1988, 1). He here appeals to "a heightened awareness of the *destruction of the environment* and the exhaustion of the supplies of raw materials in a complex manner that is difficult to disentangle" (ibid., emphasis added). This "menaces the very conditions of human beings' physical existence, and which is capable of destroying their material living conditions in the foreseeable future" (ibid., 1–2). These life-threating consequences of unrestrained exploitation of the objective nature partly arise from "[t]he growing emotional distance and alienation of societies from immediate contact with nature" (ibid., 2). To Honneth, such emotional distancing and societal alienation—leading to "the destruction of vital experience of [the objective] nature"—internalize an understanding of an expansion of freedom that ignore its "self-evident preconditions" (ibid.). Honneth concludes that "the ecologically grounded doubt about the emancipatory potential of industrial growth has called forth doubts" (ibid.). Although giving no answers, Honneth raises the question of what "the guiding idea of the ecologically inspired resolve to achieve political change" might be (ibid., 3). This issue is raised, I think, to signify the motives and the historical context within which the problem of nature is addressed by the early Honneth. According to Honneth, crucial parts of the ideas of progress that was part of both liberal and socialist ideologies were "shaken to their very foundations" due to, for instance, societies' productive forces and technology's mastery of the objective nature (ibid.). So, due to their destruction of the environment, these ideologies could no longer be "a reliable guarantee" for social development and expansion of freedom (ibid.).

I find Honneth's above perspectives relevant to the problem of nature. By seemingly being informed by ecology, and not only biology, Honneth—at least ontologically, if not normatively—recognizes the more-than-human nature in all its diversity. Yet, it occurs somewhat difficult to decide whether he defends, for instance, weak anthropocentrism (which could acknowledge all beings, without requiring an intrinsic moral value) or ecocentrism, as does Whitebook (which acknowledges nature both ontologically and normatively). Remarkably, Jean-Philippe Deranty observers that Honneth's "intellectual journey started on the basis of a *very strong* concern with *ecological* issues" (Deranty 2009, 112, emphasis added). However, later this journey became a "missed opportunity" (ibid., 178; see 471). Left behind, then, was the issue of "the *normative* meaning of nonhuman persons and natural environments" (Deranty 2005, 153, emphasis added; see Deranty 2009, 373, 470). Subsequently, the later Honneth's Habermasian, intersubjective framing of critical theory was converted into "thoroughly anthropocentric" (ibid., 296). He therefore "rule[d] out *any* conception of nature as an '*end-in-itself*'" (ibid., emphasis added). Rather, he was "denying all worth of nature" (ibid., 297). From Honneth's standpoint, "the unprecedented ethical problems raised by ecology crisis remains questionable" (ibid.). The same goes for Honneth's "early proximity with ecological themes, through the emphasis on human beings' 'sensuousness'" (ibid., 71). Partly, what led Honneth to this loss of nature was the ways in which his thought was "immediately obstructed by the Habermasian insistence on the necessity and normative innocence of an objectifying [i.e., instrumental] attitude

toward [the objective] nature" (ibid.). Thus, "[t]hose ecological, naturalistic elements disappear in the course of Honneth's development, as a result of his… interpretation of intersubjectivity" (ibid., 341). Consequently, Deranty continues, Honneth's:

> initial entry into critical theory could have led him to propound a *much more expansive* theory of morality, one that would have made his ethics of recognition into a serious model for *political ecology [e.g., ecological democracy]*, clearly one of the most urgent theoretical tasks of our time.
>
> (ibid., 376, emphasis added)

However, in the later Honneth, there seems "to be little room for any ethical duties toward non-human beings, except only indirectly" (Deranty 2005, 168). This critique seems to be confirmed by Honneth himself. In the afterword to the second edition of the German version of his 1985 book *The Critique of Power* (which first came out in English in 1996), Honneth explains that:

> a place for the reference to the human relationship to [the objective] nature was *not properly considered* in the concept of the 'social' … [, and thus I] let the aspect of the social relation to the [the objective] natural world *remain too far in the background*.
>
> (Honneth 1996/1985, xxi, emphasis added)

Thus far, I have presented what I take to be the core elements of the thought of Whitebook and Honneth regarding the problem of nature. Now, I shall discuss their standpoint vis-à-vis this problem. I am sure there are other aspects that could be addressed. However, I wish to comment on their view of nature. In my interpretation, Whitebook supports an ecocentric perspective on nature. He does so for the following reason: by defending a standpoint based on an understanding of nature as an end-in-itself implies ecocentrism. Thus, I here interpret the idea of nature as an end-in-itself as synonymous with the normative dimension of ecocentrism. As outlined, ecocentrism involves two aspects: an ontological aspect covering all existence and a normative aspect assuming that the entire nature, and sometimes even the universe is an end-in-itself or has an intrinsic moral value. As far as Whitebook normatively refers to nature in virtue of intrinsic moral value, this presupposes a view on nature that ontologically covers all existence, as well.

What, then, about Honneth? I find Deranty's reading of Honneth in this context fascinating and thought-provoking. Deranty characterizes Honneth's standpoint, for example, as defending the normative meaning of or the ethical duties toward nonhuman persons, nonhuman beings, and natural environments. If that interpretation is correct, Honneth, too, may come close to ecocentrism. Yet, there is no logical implication from speaking about the normative meaning or the ethical duties in the case of the more-than-human nature (if Honneth does so) to ecocentrism. As I read *Social Action and Human Nature*, there are no traces of a natural-philosophically and/or environmental-ethical adequate justification. Surely, Honneth seems preoccupied

with the ecological crisis and the role, for instance, environmental movements and natural sciences can play in this setting. He also develops a three-folded understanding nature including objective nature, which is an affected party in the Anthropocene. This is fine as far as it goes. Yet, it demands more to be labeled as an ecocentrist. My worry, however, is that Honneth never occurs to consider nature as an end-in-itself along the lines as does Whitebook, as Deranty suggests. Let me admit that nor in Whitebook do we find a sophisticated natural-philosophically and/or environmental-ethical adequate justification. Nonetheless, as Deranty observes, although Honneth's normative theory about nature has an "irreducible practical dimension, its application can only be *indirect*" (Deranty 2005, 169, emphasis added). So, considering what Honneth refers to as an "ecologically based asceticism", it is up to the concrete political struggles of the members of a society to turn norms (e.g., environmental-ethical) into practice (Honneth quoted in ibid.). If I understand Honneth correctly, while he is concerned with the ecocrisis, he will never propose any framework similar to ecological democracy since such ideas could override his ecological asceticism. Anyhow, Honneth runs into the following paradox: he is decreasingly engaged in today's ecological crisis, though we have increasingly scientific knowledge and subjective experiences showing its severe, pervasive, irreversible, and long-lasting damage to both human nature and nonhuman nature. All things considered, I suggest that Honneth's standpoint is anthropocentric. If so, when he refers to a heightened awareness of the destruction of the environment, this is only considering the sustainability required by the existence, the survival, and the good life of humans. Still, I believe, Honneth supports weak anthropocentrism. As a critical theorist, he is critical toward various forms of instrumentalism. Thus, Honneth would reject strong, instrumental anthropocentrism.

In this subchapter, I dealt with the problem of nature. In this setting, I presented and discussed Whitebook and Honneth. I showed that Whitebook defends ecocentrism, whereas Honneth supports weak anthropocentrism. In the Anthropocene, therefore, the former is more relevant than the latter while developing ecological democracy. Yet, Honneth's three-folded framing of the concept of nature strikes me as more comprehensive and nuanced than Whitebook's framework. Perhaps, then, can we learn from both while addressing today's environmental tragedy.

2.3 The Metaphysics of Ecological Democracy

In this final subsection of Chapter 2, I deal with the theme of metaphysical realism. The goal of this subchapter is to challenge post-metaphysical critical theory (e.g., Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth), which I introduced in Chapter 1. Also, I wish to further elaborate on non-anthropocentric critical theorist Arne Johan Vetlesen's engagement with the metaphysical theory of Freya Mathews and Roy Bhaskar (Vetlesen 2015, 2019). Vetlesen seems to be inspired by both of them, yet he never compares their ideas. Thus, this is part of the goal of this subchapter.

Mathews and Bhaskar are two seminal scholars in the field of metaphysical realism. Additionally, as explained in Chapter 1, Mathews is a leading scholar in

deep ecology as well as green political theory and its development of ecological democracy (e.g., Mathews 1991, 1996). To some, it may be strange to compare Mathews and Bhaskar since their philosophical projects can be understood as quite different from each other. Mathews can be read as primarily being preoccupied with philosophy of nature and environmental ethics and second with metaphysical issues, whereas Bhaskar might be read as primarily being preoccupied with metaphysics and philosophy of science and second with environmental matters. Interestingly, however, not only Mathews' but also Bhaskar's account of metaphysics can be linked to environmental issues (e.g., Bhaskar 2012a; Høyer and Naess 2012; Vetlesen 2015, 2019). In my reading, both suggest that a change in metaphysics would make it possible to address the ecological disaster more efficiently. I argue, therefore, that ecological democracy, too, requires a metaphysical-realist underpinning to become as efficient as promised.

I begin my inquiry of the above issues with Mathews. In Mathews' seminal book *For Love of Matter: A Contemporary Panpsychism*, she dedicates an entire chapter to the theme of metaphysical realism. Mathews here defends her own account of realism, namely, panpsychism. Mathews explains the intuition behind her understanding of panpsychism thus:

> [E]very instance of matter is not merely manifest and visible, but actually *there, present to itself*. There is a "felt" dimension to it—it *"feels" itself*, not in the sense that we feel heat or sharpness or pain, but in the sense that there is an innerness to its reality as well as an outerness. By this I mean not merely that it possesses a material interior. Material interiors, the insides of things, can, after all, be conceived only in terms of outerness—the (external) appearance that things would present to us were they opened up to our view. The material insides of things are thus, conceptually speaking, only a hidden form of outerness. However deeply we, as observers, penetrate into the core of an object, all we ever find in it is externality.
>
> (Mathews 2003, 25, emphasis added)

In my interpretation, Mathews attempts to demarcate how to imagine the innerness of things in at least three ways (Mathews 2003, 25). First, humans' imagining of the innerness of things in the sense of imagining these things as holding an internal set of appearances. Second, our imagining of the innerness of things as having an external set of appearances. Finally, humans' imagining of the innerness of things as "imbued with an interiority analogous to ours, where our interiority is a subjective form of self-presence that can never be externalized, never exposed to the outside, no matter to what degree we are physically dissected" (ibid., emphasis added). By assuming that things can partake in an interiority which matters as such, Mathews proposes an ontological holism. Thus, her realism rejects Cartesian ontological dualism. Unlike Mathews, therefore, Cartesians argue that there exists an ontological divide between mind and matter. Additionally, Cartesians would probably say that the kind of interiority Mathews addresses as both mind and matter simply exists in the mind. To Mathews, however, panpsychism is the most

convincing argument regarding how to overcome ontological dualism. She uses this concept in a broad manner encompassing:

> [A]ny view that implicates *mind in matter and matter in mind*, and thus—most importantly for the purposes of the present book—imputes an inner "psychic" principle to all physicality.
>
> (Mathews 2003, 27, emphasis added; see Chapter 3)

By advocating the existence of mind in matter and matter in mind, panpsychism focuses more on materiality than mentality (Mathews 2003, 27). Further, panpsychism comprehends, yet exceeds metaphysics of, say, deep ecology (ibid., 29). Also, by re-envisaging matter holistic, Mathews investigates the radical implications of panpsychism in the sense of a psychic reactivation of matter concerning humans' epistemological and psychospiritual orientation in the world (ibid.). To do so, she suggests, we should reanimate the world both spiritually and morally with the implication that "matter actually matters" (ibid.).

Now, Mathews introduces her metaphysical-realist argument. To be sufficiently ontologically holistic and to reanimate matter of everyday life, panpsychism requires a realist foundation (Mathews 2003, 29). This is Mathews' argument: "only by adopting a nondualistic perspective can we provide a conceptual and epistemological account of the reality of things" (ibid.). Further, Mathews links this holistic aspect of panpsychism to a critique of anthropocentrism by arguing that "a philosophy that cannot account for the reality of the world is of little use for any but the most anthropocentric forms of environmentalism" (ibid.). Given that, "if the world cannot be shown really to exist, then it can scarcely be shown to matter in its own right" (ibid.).

Fascinatingly, rather ecophenomenological like David Abram and Stephan Harding, Mathews connects her realism to humans' bodily flesh. She here claims that like our corporeality, matter exists in itself (Mathews 2003, 32). During the day, while being both awake and asleep as well as conscious and unconscious, humans' corporeality is present to itself. So does the human flesh continues to exist in its unique and diverse manner regardless of one's mind is conscious or not. Mathews continues by explaining that her realism argument understands subjectivity inherent in matter generally by comparing it to the unconscious subjectivity inherent in the living flesh (ibid.). My bodily flesh is there in itself and can be observed externally as something that occupies time and space in the world, while at the same time I can subjectively and from within experience my own corporeality. As I interpret Mathews, her realism argument attempts to overcome not only the Cartesian dualism, but also the dualisms of subjective/objective and inner/outer, to mention only a few of the divides that she addresses, yet rejects. By analogy, like the flesh has all these characteristics, so can matter in general be described by these aspects, too. Consequently, panpsychism understands "the universe as one" (ibid., 46):

> [T]he physical manifold at large, the universe, is understood as an indivisible *unity* organized along the lines of a self-realizing system. Being a

> self-realizing system, it possesses reflexivity and to this extent the universe is imbued with a subjectival dimension. Its subjectivity is as fundamental to its metaphysical nature as is its physicality since its physicality is given only in the context of the self-referentiality, the reflexivity, required for its self-actualization.
>
> (Mathews 2003, 74, original emphasis)

Within this cosmology, Mathews relates her realism argument to what she portrays as a communicative subject. This denotes communication of both the human self and the wider world. Here, the former is embedded in the latter as a finger is an embedded part of my body. By presupposing that the reality exists both from an inner and an outer perspective, "the world can thus speak to us or signal its presence through a wealth of synchronistic and poetic manifestations" (Mathews 2003, 42). Again, Mathews echoes Abram and Harding. Just think of the Tvergastein—the mountain where deep-ecologist Arne Naess built his own cabin, which inspired him to develop his own ecosophy T (T after the name of that mountain). To Naess, Tvergastein was an example of a place in deep-ecological terms: a certain place where you, as an ecological self, naturally feel at home. In turn, your experiences relate to such surroundings in unique, diverse, and rich ways (Naess 1992, 339). The reason why I find an affinity between Naess' account of a place and Mathew's realism is that she refers to experiences of the self in the world in a "uniquely coherent way" (Mathews 2003, 43). She reflects around how "authentic signals", say, from Tvergastein, "are capable of revealing meanings that would not have been available" otherwise (ibid., 42). Thus, we "encounter" the world consisting of both organic and inorganic parts, such as the inorganic rocks partly creating Tvergastein (Mathews 2003, 82). To encounter—or what Mathews also describes as the priority encounter (over knowledge) as well as the ethos and practice of encountering—is key in her thought. Mathews writes that encountering occurs when:

> [T]he meanings the world manifests to us in the dialogue between self and world are, like dreams, relativized to the dynamics of our own particular psychophysical process. When we engage with world energically then, we find ourselves also engaged in a poetic exchange uniquely appositely attuned to our own deepest concerns.
>
> (Mathews 2003, 147)

While encountering the world, what Mathews portrays as the love of matter occurs in-between humans and more-than-humans as mystery left intact (Mathews 2003, 78). We can face to face, then, deeply meet the world through the mystery of poetic encountering (ibid., 126).

I now move to Bhaskar. On my reading, the core of his critical realism is found in his classic work, *A Realist Theory of Science*:

> [T]he *intransitive* objects of knowledge are in general *invariant* to our knowledge of them: they are *real* things and structures, mechanism and processes,

> events and possibilities of the *world*; and for the most part they are *quite independent* of us. They are not unknowable, because as a matter of fact quite a bit is known about them…. But neither are they in any way dependent upon our knowledge, let alone perception, of them.
>
> (Bhaskar 1975, 12, emphasis added)

I take Bhaskar's reference to the world to be ontologically holistic. If so, it covers the entire world, including the natural one, and not simply the human or social parts of the world. Given that, critical realism ontologically includes both animate and inanimate elements. Further, these parts of the world exist independently of, yet are related to humans' experience with, knowledge and/or interpretation of these parts of reality.

Later, in his book *The Philosophy of MetaReality: Creativity, Love, and Freedom*, Bhaskar further expands his realist framework. Now, he relates critical realism to love and the cosmos thus:

> There is one principle above all which must bind any totality together, that is the principle of *unity* which underlies all unity—and that is the cohering, healing, uniting, de-alienating force of love. *Love* is the ground-state quality which binds the *universe* together.
>
> (Bhaskar 2012b, 229, emphasis added)

From Bhaskar's view, humans live in a shared universe. Subsequently, we are connected to all other beings in the cosmos. Similar to Mathews' idea of the love of matters, Bhaskar holds that love binds humans and the rest of the universe together.

In 2012, in the volume *Ecophilosophy in a World of Crisis: Critical Realism and the Nordic Contributions*, co-edited with Karl Georg Høyer and Petter Naess (who should not be confused with Arne Naess), Bhaskar addresses the relationship between critical realism and environmental issues. In his own chapter titled "Critical Realism in Resonance with Nordic Ecophilosophy", Bhaskar states that "[t]he destruction of nature is not only murder, but suicide, and must be treated as such" (Bhaskar 2012a, 22). This thought-provoking quote makes me curious about the relationship between critical realism and ecophilosophy. In the introduction to the anthology, the editors explain that there are as many as seven areas of common ground between critical realism and ecophilosophy (Høyer and Naess 2012, 1–8).

First, critical realism and ecophilosophy share their focus on ontology. They do so, for instance, by presupposing an ontological holism encompassing human nature and nonhuman nature. This does not infer a conflation between ontology and epistemology. Rather, both standpoints support the anti-positivist claim that knowledge about reality is fallible. Further, they oppose irrealism and radical social constructionism as well as postmodern relativism and nihilism. Critical realism and ecophilosophy also argue that there is more to life than what we can grasp by natural science and other sciences.

Second, the interconnection between critical realism and ecophilosophy describes the world as differentiated, stratified, and consisting of open systems. The idea of such systems is that everything is related to everything: the world consists of "the simultaneous operation of a multitude of different causal mechanisms" (Høyer and Naess 2012, 2). In my reading, it is further argued that one should always look for complexity in all existing systems. Then, Høyer and Naess propose, the perspective of open systems helps us to disclose that both human nature and the more-than-human world are ontologically parts of the same cosmos.

Third, critical realism and ecophilosophy drawn on an interdisciplinary methodology. The inference of such a multi-facultary design is to undertake research not simply within a narrow interdisciplinary frame (e.g., natural science defined as science as such or a sociologist collaborating with a social anthropologist), but even wider across faculties or at least being informed about relevant research within other faculties (e.g., an Earth system scientist collaborates with a philosopher and a social geographer). In the Anthropocene, a trans-facultary methodology is significant since the studied phenomenon, namely, the ecocrisis, is complex. Against this backdrop, Høyer and Naess continues, trans-facultary approaches help scholars to avoid drawing false inferences by ignoring the possible manifold of interpretations of that complexity.

Fourth, both critical realism and ecophilosophy are preoccupied with the theme of agency and structure as well as their interconnections to action and sociality. According to critical realists and ecophilosophers, there ontologically exists a mutual and reinforcing relationship between agency and structure. In practice, this means that without structures, there are nowhere agents can act (e.g., voting for a climate party during the election); and vice versa, without such actions, no structures (e.g., the voting booth) will be created and recreated.

Fifth, important to both fields is the ontological holism encompassing human nature and nonhuman nature. From the human side, this infers not simply that we are part of the nonhuman nature; additionally, it implies that humans' basic need (e.g., care, nutrition, housing facilities, and material products) and flourishing (e.g., developing one's personal and unique characteristics and capacities) must partly be met in virtue of natural resources. Flourishing in this sense can take place by recognizing the joy, health, and learning one gains by engaging in the mutual dependency of and co-presence with human nature and nonhuman nature.

Sixth, there is a common ground concerning how critical realism and ecophilosophy address the aspects of fact, value, and social critique. Here, these traditions argue that what is and what ought to be done and interconnected. Such value realism, however, should be critically approached concerning its descriptive premises. If the latter is false, then the normative conclusion must be changed, too. So, "the practice-level norms should … be changed in order to conform to more fundamental values" (Høyer and Naess 2012, 6). Additionally, critical realists and ecophilosophers share the aim of social critique. For instance, if the scientific knowledge about the Earth overshoot day (i.e., the calculated calendar date on which humanity's consumption of natural resources for the year exceeds and the Earth's capacity to regenerate those natural resources has been excided that year) does not imply

that the world society departs from business as usual, then these scholars criticize that societal situation.

Seventh, and finally, critical realism and ecophilosophy both defend the standpoint of non-anthropocentrism. This view offers good guidance by recognizing an inherent moral value of the entire reality. This aspect also offers a shift away from Eurocentric rejection of ontological holism and animistic practices of indigenous peoples (e.g., the Yanomama tribe in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest or the Sámi people of Sápmi in the Nordic hemisphere), along the lines I explained above around Abrams' and Harding's approach to animism. Further, Høyer and Naess explain, non-anthropocentrism welcomes all spiritual traditions, world religious, and ancient civilizations due to their possible significant insights in themselves and the relevance of these insights today (e.g., to the ecocrisis).

Thus far, I have presented the metaphysical realism of Mathews and Bhaskar. Now, I will compare and discuss panpsychic realism and critical realism to better understand how these views can relate to this book. I know that there are other aspects that could be dealt with in this respect. Yet, I raise the issue of non-anthropocentrism. I do so because I believe that non-anthropocentrism goes to the heart of the matter of ecological democracy—especially the Eckersleyian-ecocentric account which I defend. The question is, then, if Mathews' and Bhaskar's metaphysics, too, defend ecocentrism.

Let us begin with Mathews. Deep ecology is most often based on an ecocentric view on nature. So, the logical upshot of Mathews' support of deep ecology is a subscription to ecocentrism. In Mathews' seminal book, *The Ecological Self*, she explains that the goal is to foster "a theory which prescribes a particular normative stance to Nature", namely, a standpoint that is "basically ecocentric" (Mathews 1991, 117). Mathews adds that she defines ecocentrism as having "a bottom-line significance—it rests on a fundamental moral principle, though this principle is not necessarily one to which all other moral principles may be reduced" (ibid.). Thus, she introduces "three levels of value": first, a background value that is objective (i.e., an "intrinsic value that attaches to the cosmos as a whole on account of its status as a self" which is "universally distributed, permeating organisms and inanimate objects alike"); second, an intrinsic value that is both objective and subjective (i.e., it "inheres in the things which possess it and is not relativized to the needs and desires, or interests, of external observers or agents"); and third, and finally, an instrumental value (e.g., utilization of natural resources) (ibid., 117–118, original emphasis). As I read her, the background value and the intrinsic value are the two most basic and significant levels of value. Further, regarding the connection between panpsychism and ecocentrism, Mathews explains that "the good of self is inextricably tied to the good of world or place, and individuals must accordingly take responsibility for the care of their world or place" (Mathews 2005, 79).

What about Bhaskar then? If we follow the above outline by Høyer and Naess, there is a connection between Bhaskar's critical realism and non-anthropocentrism. Yet, to me, it is harder to tell which kind of non-anthropocentrism he defends. Surely, as Bhaskar himself, too, underscores, there is a shared ground between

critical realism and ecophilosophy. Yet, we should ask what exactly he mean by non-anthropocentrism and ecophilosophy; should this stance be interpreted deep-ecologically like in Mathews or otherwise? Noteworthy, Bhaskar or other contributors to the edited volume never occur to define the concept of ecophilosophy as such. Still, as I interpret Bhaskar, he refers to Nordic ecophilosophy, especially its first, Norwegian generation of Arne Naess (Bhaskar 2012a, 9–10). Then, he may defend an ecocentric non-anthropocentrism similar to Mathews. In contrast to Mathews, however, Bhaskar does not articulate a systematically normative justification of ecocentrism. However, Bhaskar at least justifies why he thinks that critical realism defends non-anthropocentrism. This view is based on "three-fold set of relationships": first, an ecological asymmetry (i.e., "the existential independence of nature from human beings"); second, "the essential dependence of human beings on nature"; third, and finally, the natural character of human beings (i.e., "the non-dualistic nature of the relationship between human beings and nature, such that human beings are natural" in the sense that humans "not only depend upon, but are constituted by, nature" and "so are natural") (ibid., 11). I find the latter perspective interesting vis-à-vis Mathews; both appear to argue that nature exists independently of humans, yet humans are contained by nature and affect nature (e.g., today's ecocrisis). Further, since Bhaskar seems to refer to nature in a general way and does not simply mention a minor part of it (e.g., animals or plants), I interpret his view on nature to be as comprehensive as the Mathewsian, ecocentric one. Let me add that Bhaskar appears to some degree to follow Naess and other ecophilosophers regarding facts as offering a rational basis for values (ibid., 14). Still, Bhaskar criticizes ecophilosophy because:

> while human ethics is, in virtue of being action-guiding, necessarily concerned with the principles that govern human conduct, it cannot surely follow that these principles should encapsulate a false anthropic understanding of the place of human beings in the cosmos.
>
> (ibid.)

Despite his seemingly defense of kind of ecocentrism, he claims that values "depends only on the possibility of language and ethics" (ibid.). As I read this quote, Bhaskar is afraid that ecocentrism can end in anthropomorphism (i.e., understandings of the world based on humans' projection of their psychic realities). Instead, he suggests, we should acknowledge that values, and thus the ecocentric account of normativity, is based on human-made ethics. Given that, we humans should embrace that fact when we act ethically. To this worry, Mathews comments that "if mythology is understood as the process whereby a normative structure is extracted from a cosmological base, then we can allow science to function as the source of cosmology, while still maintaining that cosmology has a mythological role" (Mathews 1991, 45). In brief, Mathews is not afraid that ecocentrism can imply anthropomorphism. Instead, she suggests, ecocentrism, cosmology, and science can be part of the same framework.

In this subchapter, I wished to inquire what I view as the metaphysics of ecological democracy. Here, I not only engaged in metaphysics as the view on nature and nature's value but also wanted to shed light on the assumed wider picture of the link between ecological democracy and the cosmos. I here discussed Mathews' and Bhaskar's accounts of metaphysical realism. In doing so, I found Mathews' outlook more promising than Bhaskar's. This is particularly because she offers a more systematic and philosophical framework to understand and justify ecocentrism, which is the view I defend in this book.

3 Ecological Sensibility

The Encountering of All Existence

I now move to what I label as ecological sensibility. Chapter 3 aims at outlining this idea and its key role to several seminal green political theorists. I focus on ecological sensibility in Robyn Eckersley's development of ecological democracy. In this chapter, I also reread the non-anthropocentric critical theorist Hebert Marcuse, who coined the idea of ecological sensibility. In this book, building further on Freya Mathews' notion of encountering (Chapter 2), I understand ecological sensibility as an ontological interconnection and interaction involving the encountering of all existence. Further, I wish to prove how Marcuse's idea is relevant to ecological democracy in the Anthropocene. I also link ecological sensibility to critical theorist Hartmut Rosa. I here argue that Rosa's concepts of acceleration, alienation, and resonance articulate a non-anthropocentric critical theory. From my angle, Rosa's approach reminds of both Marcuse and Eckersley together with being relevant to the discourse on ecological democracy. According to Rosa, acceleration produces high-speed societies in terms of, for instance, overconsumption of the planet's already limited natural resources. This overconsumption is partly generated by the growth and profit of global capitalism. Still, Rosa argues that acceleration can be slowed down and alienation from acceleration can be remedied through resonance. Rosa is, at least implicitly, inspired by Charles Taylor's concepts of attunement, resonance, and nature's voice. These terms refer to a correspondence between human nature and nonhuman nature, which Taylor himself links to ecological ethics and politics. Thus, I compare Rosa to Taylor. I here wish to shed light on how they address naturalism and non-naturalism, as well as anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism, central themes to this book. In this setting, experiencing resonance involves the sensing and listening between human nature and nonhuman nature, which may contribute to remedying today's ecocrisis. I interpret Rosa's notion of resonance ecophenomenologically. This field draws on deep ecology and phenomenology (Brown and Toadvine 2003; see Abram 1996). More precisely, ecophenomenology addresses the ontological and moral status of human nature and nonhuman nature from experience (Brown 2003, 3). As I will show later in this chapter, Rosa's thought appears to be quite close to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, which can be non-anthropocentrically interpreted. Consequently, I suggest, Rosa defends ecophenomenology by appealing to

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the perceptual and sensual interconnection and engagement of and between human nature and nonhuman nature. That is, Rosa's ecophenomenology can draw to attention to ecological-democratic engagement through resonance. Let me underscore that my reading of Rosa may depart from what the reader might be used to. To my knowledge, Rosa's theory of resonance is often read social-philosophically. Here, social relationships between humans in societies are the focus instead of nonhuman nature. Nonetheless, on my account, Rosa's resonance theory is preoccupied with nonhuman nature, too. Further, this issue seems to have become increasingly important to Rosa. Finally, Chapter 3 explores the idea of ecological sensibility in light of Mathews' concept of ontopoetics and David Abram's idea of magic. I here build further on my interpretations of Mathews and Abram in Chapter 2. To recall, Mathews is preoccupied with a panpsychic metaphysics involving encountering and love within the framework of the universe. On his side, Abram engages with animism as a particular kind of experience of aliveness even of inanimate matter. In Chapter 3, I understand Mathews' ontopoetics as a kind of ecological sensibility. Similarly, I wish to show how Abramian magic and storytelling is related to ecological sensibility. I also want to highlight how Abram draws on a Merleau-Pontyian ecophenomenologically, which resonates with Rosa.

3.1 Toward a New Sensibility: Rereading Marcuse in the Anthropocene

Herbert Marcuse is a seminal thinker in several contexts. First, together with, for example, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, he is one of the most influencing voices of the first generation of critical theory or the Frankfurt school (e.g., Anderson 2000). Further, in his age, Marcuse embraced the emancipatory activities of the counterculture, the student movements, and the new social movements—hereunder the green movement—of the 1960s and 1970s (Eckersley 1992). Finally, Marcuse has inspired several seminal green political theorists in their development of ecological democracy (e.g., Eckersley 1992; see Plumwood 1993, 2002; Barry 2014).

In my interpretation, there are several affinities between Marcuse's green oriented critical theory and the kind of green political theory, which partly is the core of my book. In the following, I explore three aspects that I find the most interesting and relevant. First, Marcuse's critique of instrumental rationality and his idea of a new science and technology; and second, his critique of Cartesian dualism and his proposal of an ontological holism; and, third and finally, the Marcusian account of ecological sensibility.

First, in contrast to some of the leading figures of the first and second generation of critical theory, Horkheimer and Adorno as well as Jürgen Habermas, respectively (e.g., Anderson 2000), Marcuse was positive regarding what he determined as a new technology or what some scholars have dubbed a new science (Marcuse never uses the latter term, but always the first). In his classic book *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial*

Society, Marcuse criticizes what he describes as instrumental rationality. This kind of rationality, he claims, is present especially in natural sciences:

> To the degree to which this operationalism becomes the center of the scientific enterprise, rationality assumes the form of methodical construction; organization and handling of matter as the mere stuff of control, as instrumentality which lends itself to all purposes and ends—instrumentality *per se*, "in itself"
>
> (Marcuse 1964, 159, original emphasis)

In contrast, therefore, Marcuse introduces the idea of a new science and a new technology. He describes this outlook as follows:

> They are *possibilities* of the advancing technological rationality and, as such, they involve the *whole of society*. The technological transformation is at the same time *political* transformation, but the political change would turn into *qualitative social change* only to the degree to which it would alter the direction of technical progress—that is, develop a *new technology*. For the established technology has become an instrument of destructive politics. Such qualitative change would be *transition to a higher stage of civilization* if technics were designed and utilized for the pacification of the struggle for existence. In order to indicate the disturbing implications of this statement, I submit that such a new direction of technical progress would be the catastrophe of the established direction, not merely the quantitative evolution of the prevailing (scientific and technological) rationality but rather its catastrophic transformation, the emergence of a new idea of Reason, theoretical and practical.
>
> (Marcuse 1964, 232, emphasis added)

In my reading, Marcuse's idea of a new technology and a new science suggests two visions of society's development: either the traditional vision which understands science and technology as a positivistic and an instrumental use of—natural—resources in a one-dimensional society, or the traditional vision which is Marcuses' own preference, a transformation and transition of the entire, complex society in which science and technology are qualitatively adopted partly by respecting the more-than-human world. In contrast to Adorno and Horkheimer of the same generation of critical theory, or Habermas of the second generation and Axel Honneth of the third generation, Marcuse was both positive and negative to science and technology. Marcuse was positive concerning the possibilities of science and technology used for qualitative societal transformation and transition, yet he was negative if science and technology is used instrumentally, for example, to control people. Also, Marcuse speaks of the objective nature (e.g., landscapes) in terms of a "source of pleasure" (Eckersley 1992, 104). Further, by studying nonhuman nature through the lens of the new science and technology, humans can uncover "undisclosed aspects of nature that could inspire and guide human conduct" (ibid.).

As I see it, Marcuse's portray of a new science and technology is like many green political theorists' adoption of what I, in this book methodologically, have labeled inter-facultary research. Today, to address the ecological crisis scientifically, though this is surely not the only aspect, Eckersley and John S. Dryzek, to mention two influencing scholars in this context, build further on natural scientists such as James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis and Johan Rockström's Earth system thesis. In turn, decades after Marcuse's appeal to a new science and technology, Eckersley, Dryzek, and other green political theorists developing ecological democracy draw in similar ways as Marcuse on natural sciences to construct a more robust framework for their approach to criticizing the present instrumental aspects of natural and other resources in the name of societal progress.

Second, Marcuse criticizes Cartesian dualism and proposes an ontological holism. As I explained in Chapter 2, Cartesian dualism understands the world as ontologically separated into parts that are disconnected. For example, this view claims that there exists an ontological split between human nature and nonhuman nature, or the dualisms of mind/body, public/private, man/woman, and reason/emotion, to mention only some of the most influencing ones (Plumwood 1993, 43). In this regard, in *One-Dimensional Man*, we learn that:

> Modern scientific philosophy may [according to Descartes' ontological dualism] well begin with the notion of the two substances, res cogitans and *res extensa*—but as the extended matter becomes comprehensible in mathematical equations which, translated into technology, "remake" this matter, the res extensa loses its character as independent substance. … [Nonetheless,] [t]he Cartesian division of the world has also been questioned on its own grounds.
>
> (Marcuse 1964, 155–156, original emphasis)

If Cartesian dualism is correct, or at least acted on as if it was a true understanding of the world, this "would clear [i.e., open] rather than block the road toward the establishment of a one-dimensional scientific universe" (Marcuse 1964, 156). However, such blocking can be avoided by adopting a new science and technology. Interestingly, seemingly consistent with the inter-facultary method I explained earlier, Marcuse refers to both natural science and philosophy: to both the 1932 Nobel Prize receiver for his contribution to quantum mechanics physicist Werner Karl Heisenberg and Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. As these researchers originating from different faculties, Marcuse holds that Cartesian dualism is based on false premises. Instead, today, natural scientists, philosophers, and other scholars have showed that one may overcome the resurrection of nature and reconcile the assumed ontological division between human and nature. So, rather than developing one-dimensional and oppressive society, we should develop society in a holistic and an emancipatory direction. Then, Marcuse continues, we recognize complexity and diversity—even by empathically encountering the existence and expressiveness of nonhuman nature.

Third, and finally, I find Marcuse's idea of a "new sensibility" and a "radical sensibility" relevant for my book (Marcuse 1972, 59, 63). I interpret these concepts as what I define as ecological sensibility (Lysaker 2020a). In his book *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, in a chapter titled "Nature and Revolution", Marcuse introduces the notion of ecological sensibility:

> [T]he active, constitutive role of the [ecological] *senses* [of the entire body] in shaping reason, that is to say, in shaping the categories under which the world is ordered, experienced, changed. The senses are not merely passive, receptive: they have their own "syntheses" to which they subject the primary data of experience. And these syntheses are not only the pure "forms of intuition" (space and time)
>
> (Marcuse 1972, 63, emphasis added)

The next passage, too, is insightful regarding Marcusian ecological sensibility:

> Our world emerges not only in the pure forms of time and space, but also, and simultaneously, as a *totality of sensuous qualities*—object not only of the eye (synopsis) but of all human senses (hearing, smelling, touching, tasting). It is this qualitative, elementary, unconscious, or rather preconscious, *constitution of the world of experience*, it is this primary experience itself which must *change radically* if social change is to be radical, qualitative change.
>
> (Marcuse 1972, 63, emphasis added)

Given that Marcuse here speaks about ecological sensibility, this phenomenon refers to a bodily capability through which humans sensuously can resonate, communicate, and interact with nonhuman nature in its entire complexity. Here, he underscores, all the senses of the human sense apparatus (i.e., sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing) are at work to experience the world.

Further, Marcusian ecological sensibility points to moral and political engagement. Marcuse suggests, I believe, that experiencing ecological sensibility can radically change society. Then, ecological sensibility is an emancipatory capacity with a subversive potential related to society's transformation through qualitative leaps (Marcuse 1972, 16–17, 36, 63). According to Marcuse, ecological sensibility "desublimates the idea of freedom without abandoning its transcendent content" (ibid., 71). Successively, "the senses are not only the basis for the epistemological constitution of reality, but also for its transformation and transitions should, its subversion in the interest of liberation" (ibid.). Marcuse also holds that without change in the individual, no change in the society, which takes place when the private and the public are interrelated (ibid., 48). Marcuse's ecological sensibility is political in another sense, too: "What is happening is the discovery (or rather, rediscovery) of [the nonhuman] nature as an *ally* in the *struggle against* the exploitative societies in which the violation of [the nonhuman] nature aggravates the violation of man" (ibid., 59, emphasis added). Here, ecological sensibility is "the medium in which social change becomes an individual need, the mediation between the

political practice of 'changing the world' and the drive for personal liberation" (ibid.). Interestingly, he notes that the "discovery of the liberating forces of [the nonhuman] nature and [its] vital role in the construction of a free society becomes a new force in social change" (ibid.). Accordingly, the "radical transformation of [the nonhuman]] nature becomes an *integral part* of the radical transformation of society" (ibid., emphasis added).

Based on my interpretation of what I label as ecological sensibility, Marcuse occurs to relate human nature and nonhuman nature as follows: to be sensuous and to act motivated by one's sensibility open the landscape of "a *new* relation between man [i.e., human nature] and [the nonhuman] nature" (Marcuse 1972, 59, emphasis added). He describes the relationship between human nature and nonhuman nature in light of domination, too: "[d]omination of man through the domination of nature" (ibid., 61). So, to Marcuse, the objective nature is not constituted by an ontological dualism, but rather an ontological holism. As a result, nature is divided into various unique and different, yet interconnected parts. I Chapter 2, I described this understanding of nature as a complex framework consisting of subjective, intersubjective, and objective nature. Further, Marcuse adds to this picture that double domination takes place "not only in an ecological but also in a very existential sense" (ibid., 60). Fascinatingly, Marcuse suggests that by widening our circle of concern, we may "recogniz[e] [the nonhuman] nature as a *subject* in its own right—a subject with which to live in a common human universe" (ibid., 60, original emphasis).

Let me admit that though Marcuse refers ecology in various contexts, he does not occur to explain if he does so only ontologically or even normatively. Further, he connects his idea of ecological sensibility not simply ontologically concerning new sciences describes nature, but also to the normativity of subversive politics. Marcuse here seems to refer to politics on behalf of both human nature and objective nature. Also, he never occurs to speak about only some parts of the objective nature (e.g., animals). Finally, he suggests that the objective nature should be recognized as a subject as such. Thus, he can neither be labeled as an anthropocentrist or a biocentrist. I suggest, therefore, that Marcuse defends ecocentrism.

It should not surprise anyone, then, that Marcuse has inspired several seminal green political theorists, such as Eckersley. Surely, Marcuse developed his ideas many decades before the natural-scientific studies of the Earth system and the Anthropocene, which has been important to the field of ecological democracy. Yet, his idea of new science seems to be open even to consider such later natural-scientific findings. All things considered, to reread Marcuse in the Anthropocene occurs to be a relevant stepping stone to re-imagining ecological democracy.

3.2 Resonance and the Cosmos: Rosa and Taylor in Exchange

"If acceleration is the problem, then resonance may well be the solution" (Rosa 2019, 1)—thus opens Hartmut Rosa *Resonance: A Sociology of the Relationship to the World*. This statement appears to be the shortest conceivable summary of this 660-pages book. Rosa is inspired by Charles Taylor. In 1998, Rosa published

his doctoral thesis as a book, titled *Individuelle Identität und kulturelle Praxis: Politische Philosophie nach Charles Taylor* (Rosa 1998). Since then and until the thus far latest stage of his theoretical endeavor, Taylor is without doubt still important to Rosa. In his book *Resonance*, Rosa confirms this while using the Taylorian terms resonance and attunement (Rosa 2019, 112; see Rosa 2015, xxxi, 2019, 484, note 46). In this subchapter, therefore, I compare Rosa and Taylor. I do that to evaluate how they address the issues of anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism as well as of naturalism and non-naturalism (or anti-naturalism).

The above concepts are disputed and can be defined in several ways. As explained in Chapter 2, anthropocentrism is either human-centered (i.e., weak anthropocentrism) or human-instrumental (i.e., strong anthropocentrism), whereas non-anthropocentrism is either biocentric or ecocentric. To recall, biocentrism focuses on living organisms (e.g., animals), whereas ecocentrism involves all existence, even the so-called inorganic matter (e.g., air and water) and supra-individual wholes (e.g., ecosystems). Moreover, in my context, naturalism refers, roughly, to the view that philosophy should be more narrowly allied with natural sciences, even when studying human nature, while non-naturalism rejects this standpoint. Additionally, there exists a golden mean between naturalism and non-naturalism: weak naturalism. The latter stance is naturalistic by considering natural sciences as relevant for philosophical discourse and weak in virtue of raising critical questions regarding natural-scientific knowledge (e.g., Habermas 2003, 22).

To compare Rosa and Taylor regarding the above issues, I will present some of the core ideas of their theories. First, I describe Rosa's acceleration theory and resonance theory. Thereafter, I display Taylor's notions of attunement and nature's voice. I also focus on the role of the ecological crisis in their frameworks. Since Taylor has inspired Rosa, one could expect that they address the ecocrisis similarly. There is more, however, to say about that aspect.

In Rosa's book *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (which was originally published in German in 2012 and translated to English in 2015), he introduces the mature version of his acceleration theory. This is a multidimensional social theory consisting of three different, yet mutually connected and reinforcing dimensions of social acceleration. Rosa's overarching understanding of social acceleration is "quantitative growth per unit of time" (Rosa 2015, 160, 162). In my interpretation, these social acceleration forms are subcategories of the overarching definition of social acceleration.

First, social acceleration is defined as technical and instrumental acceleration (Rosa 2015, 71). According to Rosa, this acceleration form dominates modern societies. This acceleration is described quantitatively and is the easiest among the acceleration forms to measure. Such technical-instrumental acceleration takes place in terms of communication, production, and transport. To illustrate, the first acceleration form is documented when the train trip from Berlin to Jena is much faster today than, say, hundred years ago.

Second, Rosa defines social acceleration as social change (Rosa 2015, 74). Then, speed changes as what can be described as an acceleration regarding

action orientations, social practices, associational structures, as well as theoretical, practical, and moral knowledge. Examples of such acceleration are changes in family and living patterns, fashions, lifestyles, work, political relations, and religious ties.

Third, and finally, Rosa describes social acceleration as an increase in speed regarding our pace of life (Rosa 2015, 78). Here, he thinks about subjective experiences of time passing faster and faster without feeling that you are reaching anywhere. Here, acceleration is objectively reinforced by the instrumental acceleration and/or the pace of social change. This happens by being burnt out from self-inflicted stress and pressure or self-destructive strategies, such as multitasking.

Rosa explains that there are both internal and external driving forces behind all these acceleration forms. The internal driving forces are those three acceleration forms described above, namely, instrumental technology, social changes, and life pace. These three external driving forces both condition and accelerate each other. The external driving forces, too, are three in number. The first external driving force is economic (Rosa 2015, 161). This involves capitalism's never-ending and ever-evolving pursuit of growth and profit. The other is cultural (ibid., 174). Here, he is concerned when Christianity is constantly losing its footing due to society's modernization and that its promise of eternal life is increasingly being lost. This leads to us preferring to live an eternal life on Earth and is expressed in the fact that we are terrified of losing opportunities for experiences. Eternal life on Earth is then understood as living twice as fast and experiencing twice as much. Third, and finally, Rosa speaks about a social-structural external driving force (ibid., 185). Here, he thinks about how today's society is becoming increasingly complex. It requires a functional differentiation between different parts of society. He further believes that there is a battle over prioritization; who will go first? According to Rosa, this driving force helps to minimize breaks at work and dead time in our spare time. Simultaneously, time is invested in the task of synchronizing this complexity and differentiation. Together, the three external driving forces result in a "self-propelling circular process" of acceleration (ibid., 23).

As a seminal voice of the fourth generation of critical theory, Rosa wishes to diagnose our own age. According to Rosa, the implications of social acceleration might be what he describes as a "frenetic standstill" in the sense of a "directionless movement" (Rosa 2015, 314). The end-result of social acceleration is, then, what he portrays as a down escalator:

> [T] he most important finding of the discussion on the ramifications of accelerated social change is that high rates of change produce a growing pressure to adapt for both individuals and organizations. This leads to the widespread feeling that one is standing not just on a slippery slope but on terrain that is itself slipping away (at varying speeds), as if one were on "slipping slopes" or a down escalator: in order to maintain one's position, to avoid lost opportunities, and to meet the requirements of synchronization, one has to constantly monitor and keep pace with changes in the social environment. One

> has to compensate for phases of standstill or temporary withdrawal with an increased catchup tempo.
>
> (Rosa 2015, 306)

As I read Rosa, the above negative effects of social acceleration create situations in which you have to work hard to simply stay in place (in the downward moving escalator) and that you have to work even harder to be able to move up. In the opposite case, you will move downward (in the downward moving escalator).

Interestingly, Rosa links his acceleration theory to the ecological crisis as follows:

> [A]s a result of [modernity's] unintended consequences mastery *over* nature threatens to turn into the annihilation or destruction *of* nature or into an annihilation of the basis of human life *by* nature in the form of an ecological catastrophe.
>
> (Rosa 2015, 59, original emphasis)

Rosa seems to hold that what we today negatively associate with the ecological crisis was historically considered by many as positive results of modernization, at least in the West. In this context, Rosa argues, the ecocrisis is the most devastating form of social acceleration:

> [W]herever the time pattern of society overstrains the reproductive and regenerative capacities of the *natural environment*, what is potentially the most devastating form of desynchronization shows up: in other words, social acceleration threatens to lead to *ecological catastrophe*.
>
> (Rosa 2015, 319, emphasis added)

Since Rosa in his acceleration theory refers to the natural environment and a potential ecological catastrophe, it is relevant to ask to which of the understandings of nature—anthropocentrism, biocentrism, or ecocentrism—he subscribes. Etymologically, the prefix ecological involves the entire nature (i.e., both animate and inanimate parts). This indicates that Rosa's view on nature is ecocentric. Nonetheless, he does not seem to explicitly discuss this issue. Since even anthropocentrism ontologically can include the entire nature, yet not normatively (Chapter 2), Rosa may limit himself to the latter standpoint. If so, however, he must reject strong anthropocentrism. In my view, only weak anthropocentrism is defendable for Rosa since his theory criticizes the instrumentalism of acceleration (e.g., overconsumption of natural resources; see Rosa 2015, 336, n. 69).

Since Rosa understands resonance as a fruitful tackling of acceleration, let us move to his resonance theory. In the book *Resonance* (which was originally published in German in 2016 and translated to English in 2019), he defines the concept of resonance multidimensionally. Resonance consists of both a descriptive dimension and a normative dimension. Descriptively, resonance is "a basic human capacity and need" (Rosa 2019, 171, see 174). This descriptive feature comprises

two other aspects. First, "human subjectivity and social intersubjectivity basically develop via the establishment of fundamental resonant relationships", and second, "human beings are existentially shaped by their longing for resonant relationships" (ibid., 171). As resonance is a basic human need, humans are vulnerable to situations in which this need remains unfulfilled. Finally, due to this vulnerability, Rosa defines resonance normatively as a "measure of the successful life" (ibid.). Consequently, this normative measurement can be used to identify and criticize unfulfilled resonance relationships between the self and the world. On this note, Rosa explains, "mutually accommodating resonant spaces" are needed to achieve resonant relationships (ibid.). From the Rosaian viewpoint, then, one needs to study what can be characterized as either resonance-facilitating or resonance-inhibiting practices, institutions, and modes of socialization that are fundamental to societal development (ibid.).

A further building block of Rosa's resonance theory is what he describes as subjects' bodily relationships to the world:

> The *world*, in turn, can then be conceived as *everything that is encountered* (or *that can be encountered*). It manifests as the ultimate horizon within which things can happen and objects can be found … This *whole* meanwhile turns out to be something both more than and different from the sum of all parts. The world is that which is always already given as prior to any consciousness. Subjects find themselves always already *embedded in* or *enveloped by* and related to a *world as a whole* ….
>
> (Rosa 2019, 34, original emphasis)

As bodily, these relationships to the world situate us through sensory experiences. These experiences include breathing, drinking, eating, communicating, walking, laughing, crying, sleeping, and loving, to mention only some of the world relationships that Rosa mentions (Rosa 2019, 47–83). From Rosa's angle, world relationships also cover a wide register of human togetherness, namely, emotional, evaluative, and cognitive (ibid., 110–140). Also, the world is ontologically defined as holist, and Rosa thereby rejects Cartesian dualism (ibid., 31–32). Alternatively, Rosa supports a three-part world understanding. Here, the world consists of three different, yet interchanging dimensions. First, the subjective world of existential and corporeal experiences; second, the social world of humans' intersubjective lifeworlds and interaction; third, and finally, the objective world of things (ibid., 36–37). As noted, my multi-dimensional definition of the concept of nature (Chapter 2) is partly inspired by Rosa's account of three worlds. He never gets tired of mentioning that his resonance theory embraces "everything at once" (ibid., 37):

> [B]eing situated in the world always means that subjects must define their *relationship* to the world – i.e. to their fellow human beings, their environment, their time, and history, as well as to the world or "cosmos" as a whole, their own mortality, and their position – with respect to what is considered to constitute a good life.
>
> (Rosa 2019, 133, original emphasis, see 195)

Ontologically, then, the world and the world relationships embrace everything that exists—even the cosmos or the universe as a whole. As I interpret Rosa, the notions of the world and the universe involves both animate and inanimate elements. One could expect, therefore, that he subscribes to ecocentrism. Still, at least ontologically, even most anthropocentrists include the entire nature. Yet, Rosa normatively connects his resonance theory to the good life (Rosa 2019, 451). Indeed, he wishes to establish resonance as a metacriterion or a normative monism of the good life. It should be underscored that he despite speaking of normativity in such terms, he argues that resonance can only occur through momentary experiences instead of being something universal and lasting. This is fine as far as it goes. However, Rosa never occurs to explain if the reference to the world and the universe in his resonance theory only involves humans and our good life (i.e., weak anthropocentrism) or if this perspective aims to shed light on what the good life might be to, say, a mountain (i.e., ecocentrism).

As part of this comprehensive sociological and phenomenological world map, Rosa introduces what he describes as "axes of resonance" and "spheres of resonance" (Rosa 2019, 195). These axes and spheres are fundamental to the resonance theory, and though they are different, they are interconnected. Rosa introduces three resonance axes to portray various overarching kinds of resonant relationships between the self and the world. The resonance axes run in different directions: vertically, horizontally, and diagonally. First, Rosa labels the vertical resonance axis as existential. Here, the subject stands in resonant relationships with overarching, existential dimensions of life and what it means to be part of the world. Second, the horizontal resonance axis is defined as the social one. Here, we find resonant relationships between the subject and other people. Third, and finally, what Rosa refers to as the diagonal resonance axis involves resonant relationships running between the subject and external objects, and this axis is therefore material.

Within each of the resonance axis, we find what Rosa characterizes as different resonance spheres. Such spheres regard different other parties with which the subject can resonate. First, on the vertical, existential resonance axis, Rosa puts existence, nature, life, art, religion, history, or the world as a whole or totality which exists beyond or above the self as well as ways in which the self experiences that the world speaks to oneself (Rosa 2019, 195, 258–306). Second, on the horizontal, social resonance axis, we find parties such as family, friendship, love relationships, romantic bonds, and democratic politics (ibid., 195, 202–225). Rosa here criticizes what he takes to be the dominating liberal model of representative democracy and its focus on voting. Due to voting (e.g., you enter the voting booth alone and without any contact with others you take the decision of which political party to vote for), the representative democracy mutes the actual resonance voice of humans' bodily senses as more adequate manner to participate democratically by responding, moving, and touching others and the world (ibid., 215–225). Third, and finally, on the diagonal, material resonance axes are school, work, sports, consumption, and material things (ibid., 195, 226–257).

All the resonance axes and resonance spheres potentially generate either resonance or alienation (Rosa 2019, 195). Rosa underscores that in his resonance

theory, "resonance and alienation do not represent a simple dichotomy, but in fact are complexly interrelated" (ibid., 170). To develop his concept of alienation, Rosa builds further on Rahel Jaeggi, another seminal and current critical theorist of the same fourth generation as Rosa (Jaeggi 2014). Accordingly, alienation surfaces through a "relation of relationlessness" (Jaeggi quoted in Rosa 2019, 184). This means that the self experiences the world as indifferent or even hostile. Additionally, alienation involves experiences of a "mute" or a "deaf" world (ibid.). Then, one feels that the above relationships of the three resonance spheres "no longer 'speak'" to you (ibid.). Alienation then makes you incapable of being bodily touched and affected by others. Thus, alienation, as the antithesis of resonance, hinders societal transformation from states of coldness into warm relationships in all the resonance spheres. One more important aspect is that alienation to some people can be understood as something bad rather than something good. Dialectically speaking, however, such experience of relations of relationlessness can in some cases be labeled as good—at least in hindsight. From Rosa's angle, at the root of resonant experiences lies alienation (e.g., pain and unreconciliation; ibid., 188). At the heart of this dialectics of negation lies a back-and-forth movement: to experience the joy or relief of coming home (i.e., resonance), one must also have been away (i.e., alienated). This Rosaian idea of resonance (partly) through alienation can be related the field of philosophy of nature, as well (Hverven 2022a). Rather than merely understanding the experience of alienation due to environmental damage as a move from a full identification with nature (e.g., a reciprocal bond of kinship between human nature and nonhuman nature) to alienation from nature, it can be argued that the heal that rift depends on something else than returning to some idea of a stage when the relationship between human nature and nonhuman nature was not alienated. Then, the standard story about alienation— "alienation from nature is unconditionally bad, identification with nature is unconditionally good, and alienation from nature and identification with nature are mutually exclusive phenomena"—must be transcended. This implies that more of the first automatically creates more of the latter and vice versa (ibid., 332). On planet Earth in the Anthropocene, rather, "alienation from nature—in its current state, as damaged—is not unconditionally bad, and identification with nature is not unconditionally good" and "identification and alienation should not be considered mutually exclusive" (ibid., 333). Against this background, it can be argued that Rosa's ideas of resonance and alienation may play the same roles as identification and alienation in the context of philosophy of nature and environmental ethics. Given that, alienation from the objective nature can be understood as partly bad and partly good; it is bad since such alienation makes you senseless while needing, trying, and wanting to get in touch with and being touched by that nature through bodily resonance, and it is good because alienation from the objective nature can make you aware of what is at stake, while the nature in the Anthropocene becomes further damaged and the experience of alienation reminds you what is already lost.

Further, as noted, on the vertical, existential resonance axis, we find nature—or, with reference to the title of a subchapter in his book *Resonance*, what Rosa portrays as "the voice of nature" (Rosa 2019, 268–280). He here continues his

engagement regarding the ecological crisis. Rosa explains how natural scientists, too, from Pythagoras via Johannes Kepler to present-day string theory of particle physics and astrophysics, portray the world in terms of resonance:

> The idea that the cosmos speaks or even *sings* to us is by no means only a religious or mythical, premodern notion. … [The] Pythagorean concept of a *music of the spheres* formed from the movements of celestial bodies, especially the planets, and applied … to the modern heliocentric worldview … [by showing] that the laws of astronomy corresponded to the laws of music. (Rosa 2019, 268–269, original emphasis).

By interpreting resonances within the framework of the cosmos in natural-scientific terms, as well as being inspired by the romantic and expressivist outlook (he here refers directly to Taylor), Rosa continues, speaking or listening to the objective nature often makes it hard to say exactly where nature begins and humans take over (Rosa 2018, 270, 484, note 46). Then, nonhuman nature is a potential resonance resource in the case of our longing for connecting with resonant nature deeply and genuinely.

Nature is at the core of Rosa's resonance theory in yet another way. I here think of his reference to the ecological crisis as such. In the introduction to *Resonance*, Rosa explains that his theory addresses "three great crisis" in our age—presented in the following order and assumingly is the first environmental crisis the most important to Rosa: first, the environmental crisis (e.g., due to disturbances of the relationship between human nature and more-than-human nature); second, the democracy crisis (e.g., due to disturbances of the relationship between humans and the social world); third, and finally, the psychological crisis (e.g., such pathological disorders of one's subjective self-relationship as burnout, anxiety, stress, and depression) (Rosa 2019, 2, 427). These three crises, Rosa claims, are both caused by and the consequences of problematic world relationships, thereby representing a "self-reinforcing circular problem" (ibid., 2) produced by an aimless, endless coercion toward escalation. In turn, such an escalation implies problematic, or even dysfunctional and pathological, world relationships. So, self-reinforcing circular problem of the environmental, democracy, and psychological crisis is problematic on both an individual level and a societal level. He also holds that the "root" of the environmental crisis is that the "structurally institutionalized and culturally legitimized strategy of *expanding humanity's share of the world* paradoxically results in a progressive *loss of world* and thus in the muting of axes of resonance" (ibid., 427, original emphasis).

Still, as mentioned, there are ways out of these crises. In a nutshell, Rosa here identifies an unfulfilled promise of what he labels as a "sociology of the good life" (Rosa 2018, 2). One way to achieve the Rosaian goal of a good life and thus overcome the three crises—especially the environmental one—is with the help from the voice of the objective nature rather than muting nature both within us and outside us. However, this requires that we do not lose nature as a resonance resource. It also demands that rather than muting nature, we must recognize nature

as "capable of responding to us and thus giving us orientation" in the world (ibid., 274). As far as I can see, the idea of nature's voice as a resonance resource which is independent of humans may assume that this part of the world has an inherent moral value (Chapter 2). If so, Rosa defends ecocentrism, with a seemingly animist flavor to it.

Now, let us move to Taylor. In his book *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, he articulates his ideas of attunement and nature's voice. Taylor does so within the framing of what he labels as moral phenomenology:

> We *sense* in the very *experience* of being *moved* by some higher good that we are moved by what is good in it rather than that it is valuable because of our reaction. We are moved by it seeing its point as something infinitely valuable.
>
> (Taylor 1989, 74, emphasis added)

Against this backdrop, Taylor introduces what he portrays as attunement, namely, to be in tune with someone or something. Under the heading "The Voice of Nature", we learn that today's controversies over ecological politics (e.g., political discourses on ecological limits) are battles over two different and nonreconcilable understandings of nature (Taylor 1989, 384). One of these standpoints is based on an instrumental reason that aims at objectifying nature, whereas the other is what Taylor refers to as the romantic or expressivist understanding of nature. On the latter case, nature is a source from which humans have been cut off and back to which we must find our path (ibid., 382). The aspirations of this romantic-expressivist outlook is "*bringing us back in contact with nature*, healing the divisions within between reason and sensibility, overcoming the divisions between people, and creating community" (ibid., 384, emphasis added). To achieve that, one must be open to nature's voice within and without us as well as finding our place in nature for personal growth (ibid.). Attunement is here key by pointing to the assumption of an original single unity and a return to this unity through a reconciliation of human nature and nonhuman nature, a synthesis that make possible humans' higher-level flourishing and fulfilling our lives as meaningful (ibid., 386). By following this romantic-expressivist path, Taylor understands attunement as being in tune even with a larger ecological context:

> We ought to recognize that we are *part of a larger order of living beings*, in the sense that our life springs from there and is sustained from there. Recognizing this involves acknowledging a certain *allegiance* to this larger order. The notion is that sharing a mutually sustaining *life system* with other creatures creates bonds: a kind of solidarity which is there in the process of life. To *be* [bodily and sensuousnessly] *in tune with* life is to acknowledge this *solidarity*. But this is *incompatible* with taking a purely instrumental stance towards this *ecological context*.
>
> (Taylor 1989, 384, emphasis added)

Etymologically, the prefix ecological regarding the terms ecological context may involve the entire nature (i.e., both animate and inanimate parts). In contrast, however, Taylor ontologically seems more preoccupied with the larger order of living beings and life systems. Given that, based on his rejection of instrumentalism, he can defend weak anthropocentrism instead of a strong one. Normatively, I find it hard to judge how far his outlook goes. Yet, since Taylor appeals to a solidaric bond of allegiance between human nature and more-than-human nature, at least concerning the organic part of it, there might be evidence at hand showing that he supports a biocentric approach to nature.

Related to the above, in the conclusion of *Sources of the Self*, Taylor holds that today a cosmic order of meanings and moral sources is no longer publicly accessible. Yet, we can search for such an order through our "personal resonance" (ibid., 512). In doing that, Taylor wants us to see that:

> [T]here are other important issues of life which we can only resolve through this kind of insight; for instance, why it matters and what it means to have a more deeply resonant human environment and, even more, to have affiliations with some depth in time and commitment. These are questions which we can only clarify by exploring the human predicament, the way we are *set in nature* and among others, as a locus of moral sources. As our public traditions of family, *ecology*, even polis are undermined or swept away, we need new languages of personal resonance to make crucial human goods alive for us again.
>
> (Taylor 1989, 512, emphasis added)

Based on such personal resonance, we can get in touch with the wider circles of reality; our inward orientation is at the same time an outward orientation. On this note, Taylor adds the following:

> [T]his exploration is not only important for its experiential relevance. It would greatly help in staving off *ecological disaster* if we could recover a sense of the *demand* that our natural surrounding and wilderness *make on us*.
>
> (Taylor 1989, 513, emphasis added)

Again, Taylor's view on nature can point in different directions. However, by referring to ecology combined with the idea of a demand that the nonhuman nature can make on human nature, he might echo an ecocentric view claiming that the former has a value in themselves, for instance, when making such demands. Moreover, through personal resonance, we may, to a greater extent, tackle today's ecological disaster. To achieve this goal, Taylor introduces his concept of strong evaluations:

> [T]hey involve discriminations of right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or

> choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged. So while it may not be judged a moral lapse that I am living a life that is not really worthwhile or fulfilling, to describe me in these terms is nevertheless to condemn me in the name of a standard, independent of my own tastes and desires, which I ought to acknowledge.
>
> (Taylor 1989, 4)

According to Taylor, strong evaluations create some inescapable frameworks within which one can morally judge and morally act. So, despite that we live in a diverse world, due to certain moral sources, we can articulate strong evaluations as part of an on-going learning process. Further, to become a "full human agent" as well as to "exist in a space defined by distinctions of worth", strong evaluations are demanded (Taylor 1985, 3). Subsequently, strong evaluations create spaces in which a "richer ontology" arises (Taylor 1995a, 39). In contrast, the concept of weak evaluation lacks all the above-portrayed characteristics. What is more, Taylor connects strong evaluations and anthropocentrism as follows:

> [I]f our moral ontology springs from the best account [i.e., the strong evaluation] of the human domain we can arrive at, and if this account must be in *anthropocentric* terms, terms which relate to the meanings things have for us, then the demand to start outside of all such meanings, not to rely on our moral intuitions or on what we find morally moving, is in fact a proposal to change the subject.
>
> (Taylor 1989, 72, emphasis added)

So, to exercise strong evaluations supposedly requires anthropocentrism, at least a weak one. This claim is perhaps even more clearly formulated in the next quote:

> [*N]o non-anthropocentric* good, indeed *nothing outside* [humans'] subjective goods, can be allowed to trump self-realization, the very language of morals [i.e., strong evaluations] and politics tends to sink to the relatively colourless subjectivist talk of 'values'.
>
> (Taylor 1989, 507, emphasis added)

Further, Taylor warns against non-anthropocentrism when it is associated with naturalism:

> [A]gain our understanding has been *clouded by a naturalist* epistemology and its focus on the natural science model. Because following the argument in favour of a theory in natural science requires that we *neutralize our own anthropocentric reactions*, we too easily conclude that arguments in the domain of practical reason ought not to rely on our spontaneous moral reactions.
>
> (Taylor 1989, 71, emphasis added)

From the angle of the definitions I put forward at the beginning of this subchapter, it is not entirely clear what Taylor here means by the terms anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism. In the case he has in mind a strong, instrumental anthropocentrism, this is problematic to the extent to which it accepts, for instance, the yearly and global overshoot of natural resources. However, since the idea of strong evaluations occurs to rule out instrumental actions, Taylor rather defends a weak anthropocentrism. Noteworthy, even weak anthropocentrism ontologically recognizes all existence, though only humans are assumed to have an intrinsic moral value. Let me put a third alternative on the table that appears to be relevant to Taylor. According to hermeneutic anthropocentrism, "the fact that humans can only interpret and understand the world from a human perspective, and within a human conceptual framework" (Hverven 2022b, 294, my translation). Consequently, only humans as language animals can act morally based on categories and distinctions that are formulated by humans and for humans. Hermeneutic anthropocentrism resonates, then, with Taylor's understanding of humans as language animals who can articulate, for instance, strong evaluations.

Thus far, I have suggested that in most cases, Taylor appears to defend weak anthropocentrism, while in others it might be more appropriate to describe him as a non-anthropocentrist, either as a biocentrist or an ecocentrist. This account is confirmed by the following observation:

> [Taylor] wants to open up a *nonanthropocentric* perspective on the good, to allow us to see the "sovereignty of good" over the moral agent. *Sources of the Self*, Taylor's major contribution to moral philosophy, is explicitly a "retrieval" of this nonanthropocentric perspective which, as he believes, philosophy since the Enlightenment has been motivated to occlude.
>
> (Kerr 2004, 84, emphasis added)

Here, Taylor's notions of moral ontology—which he defines as "the background picture which underlies our moral intuitions" (Taylor 1989, 41)—and moral sources—which is perceived historically as three large domains of grounding for moral standards, namely, theistic, naturalist, and romantic-expressivist (ibid., 495)—pursue "recognition of some good for human beings which springs from some *other* than purely human source" (Kerr 2004, 102, emphasis added).

This non-anthropocentric reading is partly based on Taylor's paper on deep ecology, titled "Heidegger, Language, and Ecology". Here, Taylor reads Martin Heidegger in the context of deep ecology as providing "a deep ecological position", or even, "the basis of "deep" ecology" (Taylor 1995b, 100, 125). In Taylor's view, "Heidegger's philosophy of *ecology* is sui generis" (ibid., 100, emphasis added). Further, Taylor argues, Heideggerian ecological thought discloses "something *beyond* the human makes demands on us, or *calls* us" (ibid., 100–101, emphasis added). "But this source can't be", Taylor continues, "identified with nature or with the universe" in any naturalistic sense (ibid.). At first sight, Taylor seems to contradict himself by appealing to deep ecology, which partly is based on the

natural science of ecology and thus not rejecting naturalism. However, I believe, the following passage illuminates why Taylor apparently suggests that it possible to subscribe to deep ecology and naturalism simultaneously:

> This stance [i.e., annihilating wilderness and letting trees fall] does violence to our essence as language beings. It is a destruction of us as well, even if we could substitute for oxygen and compensate for the greenhouse effect. This way of putting it might make it sound as if ecological philosophy [was] after all a shallow one, grounded ultimately on human purposes. But we have already seen how this misconstrues his view. For the purposes in question are *not simply human*. Our goals here arc fixed by something we should properly see ourselves as *serving*. So a proper understanding of our purposes has to *take us beyond ourselves*.
>
> (Taylor 1995a, 126, emphasis added)

Here, we learn that Taylor points beyond humans to learn about what it takes to be a human. Further, in my reading, this reference point is partly based on humans' struggle against annihilation of nonhuman nature. Finally, to realize once essence as a human, we must recognize our strong evaluations are partially based on something outside ourselves, something we must serve. This moral reasoning inspired by deep ecology reminds of ecocentrism.

I now move to the second issue of this subchapter, namely, naturalism and non-naturalism. How, then, Rosa addresses the issue of naturalism and non-naturalism—does he support the naturalist view that philosophy should allied with and be reinforced by natural sciences to study nature or, rather, the non-naturalism outlook rejecting such an alliance? For a more nuanced discussion, let me add to the table a third position, weak naturalism. The latter stance is a golden mean between naturalism and non-naturalism (e.g., Habermas 2003, 22). Weak naturalism aims at drawing on both naturalism and non-naturalism, while moving beyond both of them. Effectively, weak naturalism is naturalist by considering natural sciences as relevant for philosophical discourses, and it is weak in terms of doing so raising critical questions regarding such natural-scientific knowledge.

Let me begin my exploration of Rosa's addressing of the above issues with his idea of the world. To recall, this ontological understanding of the world involves everything at once (Rosa 2018, 37)—even the cosmos (ibid., 12, 68, 133, 265–266, 268–269, 320). Literally speaking, this ontology is wide enough to include all that exist—on Mother Earth and in the universe. Within this framing, Rosa includes his perspectives on resonance, nature's voice, and the ecological crisis, to mention only a few, yet relevant aspects. Rosa then understands the world phenomenologically and sociologically, but even inter-facultary. As explained in Chapter 1, an inter-facultary methodology draws on various disciplines across faculties, such as when the philosopher Rosa partly builds further on natural sciences. One significant example of this inter-facultary methodology is his engagement around astronomy and mathematics (i.e., Johannes Kepler and Pythagoras), particle physics and astrophysics, as well as geological studies of the

Anthropocene (ibid., 268–274). The fields of particle physics and astrophysics, for instance, refer to natural-scientific studies of the fundamental particles in the universe as well as forces that constitute matter and radiation. In particle physics and astrophysics, the idea of an elementary particle refers to a subatomic particle which is not formed by other particles. These particles, at least within a natural-scientific method based on observance, are elementary in the sense that they study abiotic phenomena. Moreover, in the 1900s, particle physics is partly linked to quantum physics and quantum mechanics, for which Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr are the founding fathers. Rosa here sheds light on how the two latter research fields have developed string theory (ibid., 268–269, 310, 427–428). Similar to Marcuse's idea of new science, then, Rosa brings together several natural sciences (e.g., astronomy, mathematics, particle physics, astrophysics, and geology) and link them to social sciences, the humanities, and other disciplines. As a result, these elements constitute his phenomenological and sociological map of the world. In doing so, he develops a methodological framework which moves way beyond the positivism dispute, which is so central in Rosa's own tradition, critical theory. To exemplify, Rosa's reference to string theory sheds interesting light on such an inter-facultary methodology. To remind us of what Rosa himself does not explicate, yet is relevant, string theory is the idea that everything in the universe, all particles of inanimate matter and light are embraced of microscopic vibrating strings. Here, Rosa seems to support some kind of naturalism since he partly uses natural-scientifically evidence to show the adequacy of the resonance theory. This reading, I think, is confirmed by Rosa himself while he suggests that the resonance theory aims at "helping to bridge … harsh dualisms" (ibid., 170). Consequently, the resonance theory "*connects* those phenomena that naturalistic … philosophy holds to be strictly separate: mind and body, reason and emotion, individual and society, nature and spirit" (ibid., emphasis added, 171). From my angle, Rosa's ambition to reconcile dualisms should involve the division between naturalism and non-naturalism, as well. If so, Rosa appears to subscribe to weak naturalism.

In the book *Critical Theory and New Materialisms*, co-edited with Christoph Henning and Arthur Bueno, Rosa ostensibly develops further his weak naturalism. Here, he explains that "for the most part of the 20th century, to criticize [e.g., to articulate critical theory] was to *de-naturalize*, and to be critically minded meant to be a *nonnaturalist*" (Rosa et al. 2021, 5, emphasis added). Paradoxically, then, critical theory, while being fostered to criticize, for instance, power abuse, itself converted "hegemonic in many … theories" to the degree to which "the realm of nature became *ever more irrelevant*" (Rosa et al. 2021, 4–5, emphasis added). Part of this paradox, I suggest, is how some critical theorists, such as Axel Honneth, become less engaged in the ecological crisis and the more scientific knowledge we have regarding its characteristics of being existential, planetary, and acute (Chapter 2). In historical hindsight, therefore, Rosa suggests the following picture:

> For Critical Theory, "nature" is the name of a problem. For a long time in history, the oppression and exploitation of the poor, of women, of workers

> and minorities, as well as the clashes between political powers that brought destruction and misery onto so many, seemed to be *natural facts*.
>
> (Rosa et al. 2021, 3, original emphasis)

In this context, the problem of nature means something different than the way I used this term in Chapter 2. To recall, non-anthropocentric critical theorist Joel Whitebook and others adopt the notion of the problem of nature to describe various natural-philosophical understandings of nature and different environmental-ethical assumptions about nature's moral value. In contrast, when Rosa speaks about the problem of nature, he focuses on why nature is a problem in light of the history of critical theory. Since several influencing voices of critical theory associates injustice and exclusion with natural facts, nature, too, has been defined as problematic rather than something positive. Thus, though Whitebook, Marcuse, and the early Honneth belong to this tradition, the mainstream viewpoint of critical theory has been to ignore nonhuman nature or other phenomena that are coupled with this nature, such as the ecological crisis or the presumed laws of natural sciences. Regarding weak naturalism, Rosa explains, it has, for a long time, been difficult to defend within critical theory, and due to the orthodoxy of non-naturalism (or anti-naturalism):

> [*A]nti-naturalism* kept an upper hand – sexism, classism, racist stereotypes, they all seemed to be backed by a belief in natural forces, so the safest way to be critical was to be "*against nature*". … critical theorists didn't quite get to develop their ideas on nature systematically. Therefore, the dispersed flashes of insight in some of their texts on "another" nature need to be uncovered and put in conversation with new materialist conceptual innovations. This is an endeavor that we want to start with in the present volume. For with New Materialism, we witness *a new "naturalist turn" within the humanities*.
>
> (Rosa et al. 2021, 6, emphasis added)

Interestingly, Rosa here speaks about a new naturalist turn. As a seminal scholar of the fourth generation of critical theory, Rosa's resonance theory and its weak naturalism can, therefore, provide good guidance regarding the idea and practice of this naturalist turn.

Finally, I explore Taylor's approach to naturalism and non-naturalism. As Rosa's Lehrmeister, one could expect that Taylor, too, defends a weak naturalism. The opposite, however, is closer to the truth. Taylor has addressed the issue of naturalism all the way back to the 1960s (Meijer 2018). He has, however, approached naturalism somewhat differently during this period. Yet, a common denominator is prima facie his attack on naturalism from different philosophical discourses, covering ontology, philosophical anthropology, phenomenology, ethnics, and politics (ibid.).

In his paper "Ethics and Ontology", for example, Taylor defines naturalism (or what he here names ethical naturalism) as an outlook that views "humans as part of nature … [by] seeing their behavior and life form as ultimately explicable in terms

that are consonant with modern *natural science*" (Taylor 2003, 306, emphasis added; see Taylor 1985, 1989, 1995a). The shared target of his various approaches to naturalism seems to be Taylor's confrontation with what he understands as reductive theories concerning, for example, instrumentalism, utilitarianism, behaviorism, proceduralism, objectivism, relativism, subjectivism, and projectivism (Taylor 1985, 1989, 1995a, 2003). This is especially the case concerning post-Galilean natural sciences suppress or altogether deny humans' experience and practice of strong evaluations (Meijer 2018, 2). In contrast to Taylor's non-naturalist standpoint, we find the above-described curiosity toward the natural science of ecology. So, to the extent to which he draws on deep ecology, he does not seem to reject naturalism altogether. Given that, one can ask if Taylor, too, articulates an account of weak naturalism. To recall, weak naturalism is naturalist by contemplating natural sciences as appropriate for philosophical discourses, and it is weak in terms of doing so raising critical questions regarding such natural-scientific knowledge. If this reading makes sense, the Lehrmeister is closer to Rosa than what was first assumed.

Let now summarize my exploration of anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism as well as of naturalism and non-naturalism (or anti-naturalism). Concerning the first theme, as a minimum, both Rosa and Taylor defend weak anthropocentrism. Also, ontologically, their weak anthropocentrism recognizes the existence of both animate and inanimate parts of nature. It should be added that in some respects, Rosa and Taylor appear to move into a biocentric terrain and even sometimes drawing ecocentric. In any case, both Rosa and Taylor are preoccupied with the ecological crisis. At the core here is their experiential approach. One main difference between Rosa and Taylor, however, is Rosa's inclusion of not only the Earth but also the universe. As I explained in Chapter 1, this outlook is demanded to draw on Earth system science and geological studies of the Anthropocene. However, if the link between Taylor and deep ecology is reasonable, some deep ecologists involve the cosmos (Chapter 2). Normatively, whether Rosa and Taylor agree or disagree depends on their definitions of nature. However, since I find at bit hard to say exactly if they subscribe to weak anthropocentrism, biocentrism, or ecocentrism, it is also difficult to conclude on this last matter. Yet, ideally, as I showed above, it can be argued that both Rosa and Taylor represent ecocentrism. In Rosa's case, I refer to the universe's resonance on its own sings or speaks to humans, whereas in Taylor's case, I have in mind his interest in deep ecology. To the degree my observations are correct, both Rosa and Taylor defend a weak naturalism. Given that, this viewpoint is more open to their respective accounts of ecocentrism. Given the latter, I believe, both Rosa and Taylor can in their unique ways address today's ecological crisis.

3.3 Ontopoetics: The Heart Is My Home

All this is my home
these fjords the rivers the waters
the frost the sunshine the storm

The night and day side of these landscapes
joy and sorrow
sisters and brothers
All this is my home
and I carry it in my heart
How to explain
that the heart is my home
and that it moves with me

Nils Aslak Valkeapää, 1985, 214, my translation based the Norwegian version of on the poetry collection *Ways of the Wind*, which was originally published in Sami in 1985 titled *Ruoktu váimmus*.

Is it possible to fall in love with nature—feeling that all existence, including the cosmos, is our home, carrying this feeling of deep connection in our heart, sensing that our home in nature moves with us? Yes, I believe this is possible, and it is much easier than you may think. We can together, hand in hand, lay down our naked, sensing flesh, lay it down in the grass, in the ocean, in the forest, while lying in the snow or walking to the mountain top—and simply be, breath, feel. We all need to breath with our embodied lungs to survive, and our feelings and senses help us to navigate in the world, to see, and to recognize that all this is our home. To feel, to feel again, how the matter beneath our bodily flesh supports us or the landscapes open themselves to us and to care for all existence. And by carrying the cosmos with us, involving its grass, oceans, forests, and mountains in our hearts, we may find a new path for our protection of Gaia and the universe. To do that, together, by reading, dwelling in Nils Aslak Valkeapää's poem, we can find another portal for our existence—a co-inhabitation of our own life, Mother Earth, and the cosmos. By virtue of poetry or other creative life forms, we can be assisted in recognizing this portal, which has been there forever, and that we now, in the age of the ecological crisis, need to be disclosed again; we need to fall in love with nature—again. Surely, not all of us write poetry like Valkeapää or read poems. Still, I believe, all existing beings are creative. One can be creative in eternal ways and offer this creativity as a gift to the world. To me, in the above poem and elsewhere, Valkeapää—the Sami poet, artist and activist as well as the Nordic Council Literature Prize receiver—captures, expresses, and practices ontopoetics in fascinating and insightful ways through its poetic portray of animistic practices of indigenous peoples. From my experience, such practices can be portrayed as the cosmological encountering of the flesh.

Some scholars would argue that I create a false or too optimistic picture of ecological love or cosmological love. I agree that it is important to remember the various ways in which one's actual capacity to love in such a manner can be

hindered (Vetlesen 2015). This can involve the growth and profit imperative of global capitalism, or psychological and relational barriers (ibid.). Here, in contrast to what Marcuse preaches, new technology may accelerate global capitalism by, for instance, producing goods faster or by transporting the goods to markets around the world (Chapter 3). Psychologically, as Hartmut Rosa points out, our attempt at practicing ecological love can be hindered (Chapter 3). Due to the driver of acceleration, we can become alienated toward, for instance, nonhuman nature. Or, our over consumption of natural resources can make it impossible to find places where we can feel that nature still moves with us. Then, bodily experiences of, say, the explosion of colors and energy in the spring can become numb, cold, and relationlessness to us.

Having both these aspects in mind, the possibilities and the hindrances of ecological love, I now want to connect the idea of such love to the concept of ontopoetics and what I have already mentioned as the cosmological encountering of the flesh. To better understand my intuition here, in this subchapter, I first explain Freya Mathews' account of ontopoetics. Thereafter, I compare Mathewsian ontopoetics to David Abram's ecophenomenological approach to what he describes as the magic of storytelling. When rereading the Sami poet Valkeapää through the lens of both ontopoetics and the magic of storytelling, I believe, we may see the world anew. I also suggest that Rosa's ecophenomenological idea of resonance can become even richer by understanding this experience in light of Mathews and Abram. We can shed light on the way forward for non-anthropocentric critical theory, too.

The idea of ontopoetics can be understood in several ways. Yet, Mathews, whose notion of panpsychic encountering I introduced in Chapter 2, thus defines ontopoetics:

> [T]he *communicative engagement* of self with world and world with self. Such engagement … may take many forms, but in each instance it will involve not merely a causal interaction but an *exchange of meaning*. The presupposition of ontopoetics … is that the world is not merely an object-domain, as represented by physics, but also a *field of meaning*, a potentially *communicative presence* with a psycho-active dimension *of its own* that may be '*sung' into responsiveness to us*.
>
> (Mathews 2017, 77, emphasis added; see Mathews 2009, 1–3)

In Mathews, ontopoetics reveals a presence of the psycho-active universe in panpsychic terms. According to her, this presence can be characterized by being meaningful, communicative, and responsive interaction—in all directions, and not merely on behalf of human agency (Mathews 2009, 2). Ontopoetics ranges over a wide and diverse range of sources and expressions. Here, Mathews mentions, for instance, poetry, dreams, narratives, myths, intuitions, imaginations, theories, religious rituals, along with stories of places and landscapes (Mathews

2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2017). From my understanding, Valkeapää's poetry is a good example of ontopoetics. In another poem from the collection *Ways of the Wind*, he writes that:

> Do you hear the sounds of life
> the river splash
> the rush of the wind
> That's all I want to say
> that's it
>
> Valkeapää 1985, 114, my translation

Ontopoetics, in practice, is, then, the speaking—or, perhaps more precisely, the call—of the river or other expressive and invocational practices (Mathews 2007b, 72, 2009, 2). Further, such engagement is symmetrical in terms of viewing all existence as being ontologically on the same level; humans are not ranked above other parts of reality. In turn, we can listen to and learn from, say, the call, speak, and the response of the expressive river splash or be in contact with the rush of the wind through all the senses of our flesh. Then, Mathews explains, ontopoetic practices turn those humans involved into more sensitive and more emotional beings, more aware and grateful of all the gifts of the world.

The way Mathews understands ontopoetics is closely knit to what she defines as a poetic order:

> [O]ntopoetics is the study of *the poetic order,* the poetic meanings that structure the core of things and that will, if we choose to engage with those meanings, structure the successive incarnations that make up our own passage into the future!
>
> (Mathews 2007b, 81, emphasis added)

In Mathews view, the interconnection of ontopoetics and the poetic order is a particular world-disclosing practice:

> Wherever this communicative engagement [of ontopoetics] is actualised, it is manifest in a *poetic order* – an order of poetic revelation – that unfolds alongside the *causal* order. This poetic order, or order of meaning, exceeds the causal order but in no way contradicts it.
>
> (Mathews 2007b, 72, original emphasis)

The poetic order of ontopoetics constitutes, then, "the world's poetic responsiveness" (Mathews 2007b, 72). Moreover, this poetic responsiveness can create the poetic order both intentional and unintentional (ibid., 73). Here, too, the world's invocational aspects play a crucial role (ibid.). To recognize these aspects, provide ways in which to "'sing up' the world in which … [humans] dwell and [make] that world an active participant in communal life" (Mathews 2007a, 8).

Here, too, Mathews' vision of encountering, which I introduced in Chapter 2, seems to be key:

> [T]he presuppositions and beliefs we bring to *our encounter with* the world act as a kind of *invocation* – they call up reality under a particular aspect or aspects [that are revealed] to us in the course of the encounter
>
> (Mathews 2009, 3, emphasis added)

On this note, Mathews further argues, instead of an insistence that humans have the sole authorship of the world, we are invited to "offer ourselves up as terrain for poetic inscription" (Mathews 2009, 4). In turn, we might open ourselves to the communicative presence and encountering by virtue of the world as a poetic order.

However, if the more-than-human world shall be able to uncover itself communicatively, diversely, and meaningfully by itself call or response to other parts of the universe, the ecological crisis must be tackled radically different than today. As I explained in Chapter 1, the ecological crisis is existential, planetary, and acute, and we have already lost much time and many lives. In my reading, this is partly why Mathews articulates her vision of ontopoetics as a poetic order, which is radically embedded in our shared web of natural relations. And by doing so, it seems reasonable to speculate, as Mathews does, whether ontopoetics may become the fundament of the next phase in the natural-philosophical critique of ontological dualism (Mathews 2007a). As I explained in Chapter 2, Robyn Eckersley's ecocentrism, which partway draws on deep ecology, is partly natural-scientifically based on ecology. To recall, due to how ecology indicates an ontological holism, these standpoints reject Cartesian dualism (Callicott 1989). Here, Mathews seems to hold that while ecology was a necessary part of the picture in the first, natural-philosophical phase, we now need something additionally—ontopoetics, involving a new realist metaphysics, which I dealt with in Chapter 2.

Now, after having introduced Mathews' idea of ontopoetics, let us move to Abram. If one can summarize ontopoetics as the metaphysics of narrative, expressive, communicative, and meaningful engagement between all calling and responsive existence of the cosmos, I think, we find traces of ontopoetics in Abram, too. Still, one significant difference between their accounts seems to be Abram's stronger phenomenological focus, while Mathews chose a more metaphysical pathway.

In Abram's dealing with magic, in my interpretation, he comes close to or even speaks about ontopoetics. In the book *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, he speaks about magic and how it is related to experience. To Abram:

> Magic … in its perhaps most primordial sense, is the experience of existing in a world made up of multiple intelligences, the intuition that every form one perceives—from the swallow swooping overhead to the fly on a blade

> of grass, and indeed the blade of grass itself—is an *experiencing* form, an entity with its own predilections and sensations, albeit sensations that are very different from our own.
>
> (Abram 1996, 9–10, original emphasis)

So, like ontopoetics, magic involves all existence of the Earth. Further, it does so in all these beings' uniqueness and diversity. Abramian magic recognizes not only human intelligence (e.g., rationality or even instrumental rationality) or other species with certain degree of intelligence (e.g., chimpanzees) but also recognizes a much wider range of intelligence. Abram here apparently holds that magic is a way to open oneself to and translate the many kinds of intelligences that we can experience in the world—even among the inanimate parts of the more-than-human world (e.g., rivers, the wind, or mountains). Not to forget, magic involves a deep experience of an alive world through the interwovenness between animate and inanimate beings and elements.

Abram also links magic to what he portrays as the magician's ecological role or the shaman's ecological function:

> The magician's intimate relationship with nonhuman nature becomes most evident when we attend to the easily overlooked background of his or her practice—not just to the more visible tasks of curing and ritual aid to which she is called by individual clients, or to the larger ceremonies at which she presides and dances, but to the content of the prayers by which she prepares for such ceremonies, and to the countless ritual gestures that she enacts when alone, the daily propitiations and praise that flow from her toward the land and *its* many voices.
>
> (Abram 1996, 10, original emphasis)

Again, there appears to be a small step from Mathewsian ontopoetics to Abramian magic. In both cases, we learn about the communicative nature. They also highlight how all the voices of the world can, and should, be spoken to or listened to.

What, then, about Mathews' metaphysical dimension of ontopoetics; do we find a similar metaphysical framing of magic in Abram, as well? At first sight, the reply seems to be no to this question. The distance occurs to be too far from Mathewsian metaphysical ontopoetics to Abramian phenomenology of magic. However, at closer inspection, Abram occurs to link his phenomenological inspiration from Maurice Merleau-Ponty and others to some sort of metaphysics (i.e., a philosophical study of the fundamental nature of reality) in terms of what he argues is a fundamental interconnection between the sensual body and the metaphysics of the world. From Abram's angle, this metaphysics can be described as follows:

> Indeed, if I attend to my direct sensory experience, I must admit that that horizon I see *is* curved around me, as surely as the sky overhead is arched, like a dome, like a vault. Examining the contours of this world not as an immaterial mind but as a sentient body, I come to recognize my thorough inclusion within this world in a far more profound manner than our current

> language usually allows. Our civilized distrust of the senses and of the body engenders a metaphysical detachment from the sensuous world—it fosters the illusion that we ourselves are not a part of the world that we study, that we can objectively stand apart from that world, as spectators, and can thus determine its workings from outside. A renewed attentiveness to bodily experience, however, enables us to recognize and affirm our inevitable involvement in that which we observe, our corporeal immersion in the depths of a breathing Body much larger than our own.
>
> (Abram 1988, 85, original emphasis)

In the above passage, Abram appears to articulate a metaphysics. He does so by focusing on ways in which the sensuous world can be interwoven. Here, the body refers to both the sensuous bodily experiences of humans or other animals and a wider, metaphysical horizon of the Earth as a breathing, sensing body—or, perhaps more accurate, the breathing, sensing body of an earthly cosmos (Abram 2010). Regarding the cosmos, according to Abram, the universe should be portrayed as "the commonwealth of breath"; the world and its ecology in the sense of breath—breathing through the animal and Earth body as an invisible, indispensable, sacred, mysterious air, and experiencing that this breath is continuous with the air in the air of the Earth, connecting everything to everything else, even to the cosmos, where the air and thus the breath originate. Although the air and its breathing can be forgotten or ignored, yet the breathing air and the air of breathing cannot cease. Anyhow, since all existence, on Gaia and in the cosmos, partly depends on breathing and air—which in the age of ecocrisis must be clean air rather than polluted air—the breathing cosmos should ethically be remembered, recalled, and responded to (Abram 1996, 225, 2018, 263, 270).

Regarding the narrative or expressive aspect of ontopoetics, this dimension resonates, I believe, with Abram's interest in face-to-face storytelling. According to Abram, especially in oral, indigenous cultures, stories and telling those stories play significant roles. In this context, the language of storytelling is perceived as "a property of the sensuous life-world" (Abram 1996, 154). Therefore, storytelling "responds directly to the felt expressiveness of other species, of the elements, of the intelligent, animate earth" (ibid.). One such role of storytelling is to affirm the kinship between human nature and more-than-human nature while stories are told and retold through generations (ibid., 148–151). Another related role of storytelling is what Abram describes as "the sedimented knowledge" accumulated in the "narrative layers" of stories told again and again by our ancestors (ibid., 181). Storytelling, and at some point in time being allowed to retell the stories of your own culture, is a way to "actively preserve the coherence" of that culture, including its practical knowledge, moral guidance, and social restrictions (ibid.). In oral cultures, such story-based maintenance takes place through trickster tales, myths, narrative chants, and legends (ibid.). Abram underscores a further role of storytelling, namely, how stories, at least within oral cultures, are "deeply bound to the earthly landscape inhabited by that culture" through which the stories bind humans to their land (ibid., 182). Since storytelling "continually weds the human community to the land", Abram argues, to tell stories is "a primary form of human

speaking" (ibid., 163). Regarding the moral guidance of storytelling, he further suggests that such activity should be described in terms of a moral power (ibid., 156–163). Then, stories tell about "[t]he moral efficacy of the landscape—this power of the land to ensure mindful and respectful behavior in the community" (ibid., 156). The last role of storytelling is what Abram describes as the importance of place (ibid., 154–163, 172–177, 182–183). Storytelling, like ceremonial acts, as "an ancient and necessary mode of speech that tends the earthly rootedness of human language" (ibid., 163). These narrated events "always happen somewhere" and "that locus is never merely incidental to those occurrences" (ibid.). Instead, storytelling events "belong, as it were, to the place, and to tell the story of those events is to *let the place itself speak* through the telling" (ibid., emphasis added). Although narrative events are situated in concrete places visibly unfolding, the stories are related to a larger cosmological terrain, too. From Abram's outlook, in this terrain, all existing beings—be it animate (e.g., human nature, animals, or plants) or inanimate (e.g., the water of rivers) parts of the same nature—are recognizing as beings on par with each other (ibid.).

I have thus far described Mathews' metaphysical ontopoetics and Abram's ecophenomenological magic. I will now summarize my findings. I hope to have demonstrated that they share several central aspects. I here think of their engagement with narrative, expressive, communicative, and meaningful engagement between all calling and responsive existence of Gaia and the cosmos. Additionally, both Mathews and Abram articulate a metaphysical underpinning of ontopoetics and magic. Yet, I think, Mathews' metaphysics is more theoretical and abstract than that in Abram's case. In contrast, the Abramian ecophenomenology builds metaphysics further on his more concrete and sensual philosophy of nature. I also suggest that Mathews' metaphysics cover a larger part of the reality, that is, the entire universe than does Abram. In contrast, Abram's metaphysics seems more limited to the Earth. I here think of the sense in which his account of narrative events and the wonders of the animate cosmos first and foremost is situated at the local, concrete, and experiential places of storytelling. From my angle, concerning ontopoetics, there is much to learn from both Mathews and Abram. By combining their insights, therefore, a richer approach can occur. Finally, as I read them, Mathews and Abram supports ecocentrism. They both build further on deep ecology, which is based on an ecocentric approach to nature. This means that Mathews and Abram defend the view that nature—including all of existence, both organic and inorganic parts and their interconnection—has an intrinsic moral value and should be protected thereof. As I read them, though Mathews and Abram share this ecocentric core, they seem to approach that standpoint somewhat differently. While Mathews, too, appeals to experience, she has, as I described earlier, developed a comprehensive framework within which the ecocentrism of deep ecology is normatively defended (Mathews 1991). In contrast, Abram begins from experience, and, as far as I can tell, he never includes such a more technical environmental-ethical approach as found in Mathews. The latter, however, does not necessarily exclude the former. Given that, the Abramian account of ecocentrism can be part

of and enrich the Mathewsian framework. Yet, if one is not fascinated by Mathews technical environmental ethics, perhaps Abram's outlook excludes the Mathewsian one. That said, I find both Mathews' and Abram's approach to ecocentrism insightful, and I believe that we can equally learn much from them.

We may one day wake up to the magic of ontopoetics—to the cosmological encountering of the flesh, to the breathing Earth, and to the poetic universe of Valkeapää. In such a Sami cosmos, we may become more ecologically sensual toward the commonwealth of the world and the council of all beings. We then ontopoeticly wake up ourselves to become more alive, more emotional, and more flourishing. We may also become more bodily situated in the cosmos and develop of our spiritual capabilities of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting the landscape or the place in front of us. In turn, we may learn how our own sensing flesh ontopoeticly can recognize and communicatively engage with the magic and meaningful presence of trees, rivers, and mountains, with everything existing and being present as magic and wonder. One day we wake up to ontopoetics—and responsibly choose to follow its call.

4 Ecophenomenological Ethics

Caring for Mother Earth

In continuation with the ecophenomenological insights of the previous chapters, in Chapter 4, I wish to articulate a planetary ethics. This normative approach is planetary in the sense of putting forward a moral ideal of what it takes to care for Mother Earth. I view this outlook as the moral core of this book. I here choose to speak about Mother Earth instead of, for instance, Gaia (e.g., Harding 2006, 2022). Yet, I should mention that I find Stephan Harding's notion of Gaia relevant for my book. In addition to his ecophenomenological, animistic, and deep-ecological perception of Gaia, or Mother Earth, he proposes that Gaia should be imagined as part of the universe: "Gaia is the physical, animate Earth herself, and at the same time the animating soul and living energy coursing through the entire cosmos" (Harding 2022, 64). Although I find this perspective fascinating, I will not address this theme in the following. Still, let me tell the reader that I follow Harding to some extent, for example, by considering the concepts Gaia and Mother Earth as synonyms and as notions which can enrich each other (Harding 2006, 46–47).

In what follows, I investigate the issue of ecophenomenological ethics as the caring for Mother Earth in three steps. First, I deal with what I coin as the concept of existential preconditions. I here argue that both human nature and nonhuman nature share certain preconditions that are existential. The concept of existential preconditions refers to some ontological conditions of all existence which are neither chosen nor can be chosen away. Rather, these preconditions are irremovable to all beings—human and more-than-human—and one must find ways in which to recognize them and tackle them in one's everyday life. From my angle, the existential preconditions especially involve vulnerability and dependency. In turn, by recognizing these shared features of human nature and nonhuman nature, one simultaneously recognizes even the latter party as vulnerable while being affected by the ecological crisis. Then, by recognizing this vulnerability, we disclose the mutual dependency between all existing beings concerning care and protection.

Second, I deal with what I describe as being an affectable moral subject without being a full-blown agent. Here, I suggest that we should redefine both our notion of human nature and nonhuman nature as potentially affected parties of the ecological crisis. I also relate this idea of affected parties to the ecocentric definition of

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nature. Although some parties may lack the full capacity of human agency, I wish to explain why all existing parties should be morally recognized as affected by the ecological crisis and therefore affectable and potentially affected moral subjects.

Third, and finally, I coin the concept of ecological love, and show why we in the age of the ecocrisis should be sensitive toward experiences with such love. As explained, ecological love is the love toward all existence and can be cultivated by virtue of an ecological sensibility grounded in an ecocentric perception and sensing of nature, for instance, as I portrayed ontopoetics and magic in Chapter 3. Such love also refers to the moral action and responsibility of human nature vis-à-vis nonhuman nature understood in ecocentric terms. Additionally, ecological love aims at portraying how we can overcome the potential passivity and inactivity of ecological grief and anxiety. These emotional reactions are caused by the experiences of ecological destruction and ecological loss due partly to what Chapter 3 portrayed as accelerating acceleration concerning the overconsumption of already limited natural resources and what I in Chapter 1 explained as the problems of the Anthropocene and the planetary boundaries of the Earth system. Still, in light of Rosa's portray of the possibility of a societal transformation and transitions from acceleration to resonance, I believe, it is possible to exchange ecological grief with ecological love. Let me add that based on the cosmological approach (Chapter 3), perhaps the concept of ecological love should be defined as cosmological love, as well.

4.1 The Existential Preconditions of Human Nature and Nonhuman Nature

In ethics or other normative disciplines, objectivism versus relativism (or some other combination of these concepts) is a long-standing dispute. In this discourse, some argue that ethical theories can be objective in terms of demand that all humans act in accordance with its principles or guidelines. In contrast, however, those supporting relativism hold that ethical principles or guidelines can only occur within contexts. What, then, about ethics in our present age of the ecological crisis? We seem to need some kind of ethics since the ecological crisis is acute, among other things (Chapter 1). Ethics may, therefore, play several crucial roles. One such role is to articulate an environmental-ethical theory, such as deep ecology (Chapter 2). Then, ethics can articulate principles or guidelines, for instance, the deep-ecological platform. By acting in accordance with or being inspired by such a platform, we humans may orient ourselves in the age of the ecocrisis in another and assumingly better manner than by following anthropocentric or instrumental forms of ethics.

In this subchapter, I raise the issue if ethics in the age of the ecocrisis can be both objective and relative? From my angle, the idea of ecological love, which I further outline later in this chapter, needs some kind of normative underpinning. I argue that the foundation of ecological love is both universal and concrete. In universal terms, such an ethics encompasses the entire planet and all its co-habitants. It is concrete, however, in the sense of being experiential. I label this concrete

universalism, a combination of both a universal and concrete framing of my own planetary ethics (Lysaker 2023). Further, I argue that this ethical fundamental of ecological love should be based on what I define as certain existential preconditions. As mentioned, these conditions include both human nature and nonhuman nature. In light of the concrete universalism, these existential preconditions are universal by being premises of all beings, whereas being concrete in terms being experienced.

Let me begin my exploration of the above issues by defining the concept of existential preconditions. I here build further on Arne Johan Vetlesen, a seminal non-anthropocentric critical theorist. He has dealt with this concept since the 1990s (Lysaker 2020b). In his book *Perception, Empathy, and Judgment: An Inquiry into the Preconditions of Moral Performance*, Vetlesen thus explains the aim:

> My study sets out to examine the preconditions of moral performance in the individual subject. What essential cognitive and emotional *resources in the subject* are required for the subject to recognize the other as moral addressee….
>
> (Vetlesen 1994, 4, original emphasis)

He then elaborates this aim by linking it to his idea of existential preconditions as follows:

> [M]y own approach… investigate[s] the necessary… preconditions for a subject's successful constitution and recognition of *moral phenomena*, [and] the preconditions I examine… apply equally to all moral agents…
>
> (Vetlesen 1994, 15, original emphasis)

Vetlesen now moves on by describing the concept of preconditions, and thus:

> [T]he general and logical preconditions [enable]… moral perception and moral judgment *per se*. In other words, because I have set out to explore the necessary preconditions involved at the distinct levels of moral performance, there can… be… [only] the joint contributions of empathy and representative thinking… required for moral performance to come about…
>
> (Vetlesen 1994, 352, original emphasis)

Vetlesen also designates the notion of preconditions as the basis upon which humans can arrive at "*the* moral point of view", which "always" depicts this viewpoint "in the singular" and "in 'the' human agent" (Vetlesen 1994, 350; original italics). Inspired by both Zygmunt Bauman and Emmanuel Lévinas, during this early stage of his philosophical development, it is noteworthy that Vetlesen continues articulating his original idea of human preconditions within the discourse of what he refers to both an ethics of proximity and an ethics of closeness (Lysaker 2020b, 59). In this context, Vetlesen states that "the I's experience with a you, a close other, as a *fundamental condition* for the ethical subject formation means

that the relationship towards the you is ascribed a significant status" (Vetlesen and Nortvedt 1994, 161, emphasis added, my translation). Let me give another example of how Vetlesen situates human preconditions connected to an ethics of proximity or closeness:

> [T]he move undertaken here is to posit the relation to the other as ontological not epistemic…. [Such] a connectedness on the level of being is deeper than that of knowing. We come to realize that our coexistence with others is nothing less than definitive of what it means to be human…. [Thus,] our very being qua humans is less of an option than our various undertakings as subjects seeking knowledge about entities encountered in the world. Properly speaking, what involves who and what we are seems not at all an option…
>
> (Vetlesen 1997, 6, original emphasis)

Here, his idea of preconditions is "[g]round[ed] [in] ethical relationship[s] in being" (Vetlesen 1997, 7). In effect, Vetlesen conceives the preconditions as something "non-optional" by means of the "bare givenness of intersubjectivity" (ibid.).

Later, after having laid the ontologically shared, unchosen, and asymmetric as well as the phenomenology of senses and experiences as the foundation of the existential preconditions, Vetlesen introduces a list of such conditions. The list consists of five concrete existential preconditions, namely, vulnerability, dependency, the frailty of interpersonal relationships, existential loneliness, and mortality (Lysaker 2020b, 63). A few years later, in his book *A Philosophy of Pain*, in the chapter titled "The Unalterable Fundamental Conditions of Existence", Vetlesen summarizes the development of his idea of preconditions as follows:

> Feelings in general and their affective aspect in particular reveal the ontological dimension of human existence, pointing to the *given* and the *unalterable*, i.e. non-choosable, about certain fundamental conditions of existence. Feelings relate to us, bring us into contact with and to recognition of aspects of existence over which we have no control.
>
> (Vetlesen 2009, 69, original emphasis)

Vetlesen further explicates his initial insight regarding preconditions and emotions:

> Dependence, vulnerability, mortality, the fragility of relations and existential loneliness: these are examples of the *unalterable fundamental conditions* of life. That we are thrown into a world with dependence (on food, on the care of others, on meaningful experiences, etc.) we can never completely detach ourselves from, and with death as that which finally makes all our possibilities impossible (Heidegger) means that we live our lives in insurmountable vulnerability.
>
> (Vetlesen 2009, 69, emphasis added)

Additionally, which is key, Vetlesen underscores that the "reality of the fundamental conditions is… *general*, whereas the way in which we handle them is *individual*" (Vetlesen 2009, 70, emphasis added). That being so, we should consider that "[*h*]*ow* we live – in the sense of relating to these fundamental conditions and their unalterable givenness – does… *vary* from one person to the next" (Vetlesen 2009, 70, emphasis added). In the early and mid-1990s, Vetlesen operated with a thinner account of the notion of preconditions, as he apparently had not yet developed the mature version of the list of concrete preconditions. By presenting such a list, however, Vetlesen currently views the idea of existential preconditions as thicker, that is, less general and more concrete. The aim here seems to be to give a fuller picture of the nature of the preconditions. Also, by introducing such a list of concrete preconditions, Vetlesen appears to wish to cover a wider range of phenomena with this new articulation of his old idea. Still, despite the philosophical development from the thinner to the thicker and more plural account of his original idea, perhaps the most important common denominator is the ontological nature of these different approaches to the notion of preconditions.

To a great degree, I find Vetlesen's conceptualization of the existential preconditions convincing. Also, I find his introduction of the list of concrete preconditions quite promising. Still, I hold that this list of five existential preconditions could be subsumed under what I take to be the two most fundamental preconditions, namely, vulnerability and dependency. Given that, both the human precondition of vulnerability and dependency are temporally prior to and ontologically more fundamental than mortality, the frailty of interpersonal relationships, along with existential loneliness. To illustrate my point, as soon as humans are born, we are vulnerable. However, as newborns, humans have not yet developed reflexivity, judgment, or other capabilities that are required to subjectively experience or agent-wise reflect upon mortality, existential loneliness, or frail interpersonal relationships. Consequently, when identifying preconditions that are shared by all humans—even by newborns—vulnerability and dependency are the most obvious candidates proposed by Vetlesen. Furthermore, in the case of what Vetlesen refers to as the frailty of interpersonal relationships, this aspect of the human life-form identifies our vulnerability, as well. Such mutual bonds may be damaged or broken. In turn, humans are dependent on others who are caretaking or otherwise maintaining these vulnerable relationships. Similarly, in the case of existential loneliness, such experiences are generated by, for instance, loss of meaning and death anxiety. However, the precariousness of human life begets such experiences and turns us into dependent creature, since these existential experiences give rise to a basic need for being with others to cope with such loneliness. Finally, regarding the existential precondition of mortality, too, I argue that it can be subsumed under the preconditions of vulnerability and dependency. Here, the fact that humans are mortal and aware of their mortality can be viewed as an extreme version of vulnerability since mortality exposes humans to the constant risk of dying. Furthermore, mortality poses the constant risk that significant others that you depend upon to survive (e.g., parents, friends, or lovers) may die—even ultimately will die. To handle the vulnerability that is linked to human mortality, then, we should recognize

the precondition of dependency. If so, this would probably increase our awareness of our shared vulnerability with regard to death.

In addition to the above ontological aspects, Vetlesen normatively links each of these five concrete preconditions to his own ethics of proximity or closeness. To exemplify, in the case of the existential precondition of vulnerability, he holds that mutual caregiving among humans is an answer to something fundamental and given in humans' existence. Consequently, to live a dignified life, one depends on others' care. One way to interpret the normative nature of the existential preconditions is to define them as based on what I earlier introduced as a concrete universalism. Along the lines of the concrete universalism, I believe, his normative outlook is universal by being based on the Vetlesenian preconditions, which are equally shared by all. Additionally, this normative framework is concrete since everyone experiences and practices these conditions in unique ways in their everyday life throughout one's lifetime.

On my interpretation, the existential preconditions underscore the difference between a moral agent and a moral subject: one's subjective experience of not being born as an agent but rather maturing into full-blown agency. Hence, long before we develop the capacities of agency—if we ever do so, as we may be hindered by being, for instance, newborn, sick, elderly, or disabled—fellow humans must recognize us as a significant other who are affected by being vulnerable and dependent. This can be briefly summarized as what I call human existential life graph—our life is always already going up and down. Normatively, there is at least one important take-away message here: the need to recognize that—to a greater or lesser extent, and for a shorter or longer period—not all humans can become full-blown moral agents. However, by existing and being affected by the world and other's activities, they are moral subjects. Therefore, since all humans are conditioned by and can experience their own vulnerability and dependency, others should recognize and protect them as morally affectable subjects.

Interestingly, in his book *The Denial of Nature: Environmental Philosophy in the Era of Global Capitalism*, Vetlesen introduces his own mature non-anthropocentric critical theory. In doing that, he adopts the above distinction between being an addressee and an agent. Within this non-anthropocentric approach to the concept of preconditions, he argues that "addressees need not be agents" (Vetlesen 2015, 144). Captivatingly, this viewpoint echoes the early Vetlesen's book *Perception, Empathy, and Judgment*, as well. Here, he argues the following: "beings that are not moral agents may still be moral addressees; the former is not required for the latter" (Vetlesen 1994, 169). To illustrate, nonhuman nature should be morally recognized and protected simply by being moral addresses, even if they currently do not qualify as a moral agent and might never do so. Still, as affected parties—say, regarding the ecological crisis—they are moral subjects and should therefore be cared for.

Within the setting of his non-anthropocentric critical theory, as I read him, Vetlesen defines the concept of existential preconditions by including nonhuman nature, as well. In fact, as early as at the beginning of the 1990s, we find traces of such a non-anthropocentric articulation of this idea. In the introduction to his book

Perception, Empathy, and Judgment, Vetlesen explains that despite his exploration of the human preconditions, he moves beyond such an anthropocentric limitation: "note that this does not imply that I hold only humans to have a moral standing. Far from it" (Vetlesen 1994, 3). Building on that perspective, Vetlesen tells us that he adopts an ethical outlook which is based on a "very wide sense of being affected" (Vetlesen 1994, 5). Subsequently, he argues that:

> [a]lthough an animal, for example, *cannot* be a moral agent… an animal can be, and often is, *directly affected* by – and on that account can be, and often is a [moral] *addressee* [i.e., a moral subject] of – an action of ours. Hence, beings that are *not* moral agents may *still* be moral addressees [i.e., moral subjects]; *the former is not required for the latter*. An animal can be *harmed*, can be *hurt*, can *suffer*, and it can for that very reason be an object of unjust and immoral conduct. I therefore grant *moral status* to animals, to *nonhuman beings*, on account of their capacity for suffering, which I see as a *sufficient condition* for moral status.
>
> (Vetlesen 1994, 169, emphasis added)

Here, Vetlesen's non-anthropocentric picture of the existential preconditions includes nonhuman nature—at least animals. In doing that, in virtue of being directly affected by and hence suffering from humans' actions, these nonhuman beings are by Vetlesen designated as moral addressee, or what I in the next subchapter term as moral subjects. Later, in the introduction to his book *The Denial of Nature*, Vetlesen voices his non-anthropocentric version of the idea of existential preconditions as follows:

> [A] cross-species empathy… needs… to be more precisely linked with the impact of what I call *the 'negatives'* of contemporary culture, namely *limits* of various sorts and dependency, vulnerability, and death in particular. In developing this perspective, I draw on my earlier book *A Philosophy of Pain*, where I explored the ways in which contemporary culture tends to present the givens of human existence as wholly unwelcome, as conditions to be fought against and actively resisted, in what amounts to a cultural revolt against their impact, collectively as well as individually. The acceptance of limits that is at the heart of emotional maturity is flatly contradicted, and clinically frustrated, by the pride of place given in an 'individualized society' (Zygmunt Bauman 2001) to autonomy over other-directed concern, control over exposure to suffering and death, independence over vulnerability and loss.
>
> (Vetlesen 2015, 11, emphasis added, see 46, 142, 152)

Building further on the moral vision of such a cross-species empathy related to the notion of preconditions, Vetlesen later continues articulating his idea of existential preconditions by appealing to Melanie Klein's object-relations theory. In so doing, he extends her theory to the dynamic between vulnerability and dependency, which Vetlesen views as existential preconditions. Subsequently, within this context of

the mother–child relationship, Klein's theory is extended to the human–nature relationship, as well:

> The 'mother' of all holding environments, providing a sense of safety, of being looked after, held and protected, of being loved and accepted even though one is capable of experiencing and even acting upon feelings of hatred and rage, envy and jealousy, is the Earth, containing all the particular and local mothers…. [T]he harm inflicted on the Earth exhibits the same structure and dynamics as that inflicted by the human infant at his or her mother. Being *dependent*, having to face the *vulnerability* at the hands of the one – *co-human or non-human (nature)* – upon whom one is dependent for one's wellbeing and survival, has never been easy, never easily accepted. Our existence is borne – held – not only by inter-human (social) relationships and bonds, not only by our internal but also by our … external environment. In this sense, 'an ecologically healthy relatedness to our nonhuman environment is essential to the development and maintenance of our sense of being human. [However,] such a relatedness has become so undermined, disrupted and distorted, concomitant with the ecological deterioration, that it is inordinately difficult for us to integrate the feeling experienced, including the losses, inescapable to any full-fledged human living.
>
> (Vetlesen 2015, 13, emphasis added)

Here, when describing an ecologically healthy relatedness, a point which is repeated in a later book, *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene: Panpsychism, Animism, and the Limits of Posthumanism* (Vetlesen 2019, 244–245), too, he connects the preconditions of vulnerability and dependency to the mutual relationship between human and nonhuman nature. Within the framework of what can be described as Kleinian ecopsychology, then, Vetlesen accounts the human–nature relationship as being based on the Earth as the mother of all holding environments. The term ecopsychology here denotes studies of the emotional connection between human and nonhuman nature based on psychological and ecological methods. Fascinating, in *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, Vetlesen's non-anthropocentric account of the existential preconditions employs a richer description of the moral status or value of nonhuman nature:

> All living beings have an indisputable and objective interest in going on doing so, and thus, in each individual case, they embody a stance of non-indifference, non-neutrality, with respect to the difference between life and death, being and not-being: the former is better than, is superior to, the latter. It is so as a matter of fact, and this fact is the objective fact of value: that life, that being, is the valued state. The fact of this value is not imposed from without, is not the product of projection or attribution from some external source or point of view. Instead, it resides in the dimension of being – *in re* – as one of its essential properties.
>
> (Vetlesen 2019, 51–52, original emphasis)

Here, ostensibly by echoing his own connection between the existential preconditions and the ethics of proximity or closeness, Vetlesen continues as follows:

> *Qua existing in itself, value calls for response*. Protection-intending respect is the appropriate response to the value of the various entities the unfolding world consists of. Value as met upon in outer reality issues a demand on us as human agents to act so as to observe what the protection of that value requires, value being often a precarious quality, a quality whose safeguarding the entity in question *may not itself be capable of securing*. This demand is normative, it has the form of an ought, only this ought does not originate in me (in consciousness, intellect, volition) but *stems from the world my care responds to* – the world to which *care is the appropriate response*, factually and morally appropriate, there being no meaningful distinction between the two. *In thus responding, I act as addressee* [i.e., as a moral subject], not initiator [i.e., an agent]; being able to respond in this sense is what response-ability is all about: it takes the form of responsibility.
>
> (Vetlesen 2019, 52, emphasis added)

Regarding the moral responsibility included by this non-anthropocentric understanding of the existential preconditions, Vetlesen states as follows:

> [V]alue concerns that which resides in specific entities in the world … Anthropocentrists … get it exactly wrong when they posit humans as the sole source as well as the locus of value. Value exists perfectly in nonhuman entities, not only in animals but in trees and plants, entities each of which pursues, in their species-specific manner, a good of their own. To speak of value as existing factually and objectively in various entities is not to deny that the *actions* of humans [i.e., agency], more than the activities of any other species, may negatively affect the fate of all such real-life instantiations of value, as the entry into the Anthropocene demonstrates with such alarm. But then again, humans' sheer power in being able to undercut, endanger, and perhaps eventually all-out destroy value in the world that we are part of does not mean that we are the creators – origin, source – of the value destroyed. We destroy what is given independently of us, what has historically evolved prior to us, a quality whose true character is that of a gift we should treat with gratitude and awe, since as a species we owe our existence to the flourishing of a host of other species and life forms.
>
> (Vetlesen 2019, 52, original emphasis)

In the above passage, Vetlesen connects the nonhuman existential preconditions to a moral-realist outlook. Then, what is at stake is what he views as the human-independent value of a wide range of forms of flourishing within the context of nonhuman nature.

Above, I tried to demonstrate some of the non-anthropocentric aspects of Vetlesen's concept of existential preconditions. To better understand the

non-anthropocentric articulation of his idea, on my reading, it is useful to interpret the Vetlesenian framework in light of some standard philosophical variables. I here have in mind the three different but nonetheless non-exhaustive and exchangeable dimensions of ontology, phenomenology, and normativity. In the next sections, I investigate these dimensions.

First, ontologically, the non-anthropocentric concept of existential preconditions encompasses what Vetlesen refers to as nonhuman beings. As shown above, he does not simply have animals, trees, and plants in mind. The later Vetlesen explains that his story goes beyond that point. The preconditions include, rather, the full range of living beings, including a host of other species and life forms in addition to Mother Earth and the human species. One ontological reason for this move is what Vetlesen sees as a shared structure and interconnection of vulnerability and dependency for both human nature and nonhuman nature. As I return to in the next subchapter, Vetlesen nonetheless seems to normatively limit himself to biocentrism. In Chapter 2, I explained that this view on nature may ontologically include all existence, yet it rejects that non-living parts of nature have an intrinsic moral value.

Second, phenomenologically, the non-anthropocentric concept of existential preconditions is concerned with how both human nature and nonhuman nature flourish in unique and diverse manners. Given that, members of both these categories can suffer from being harmed, for instance, by having their flourishing hindered or even destroyed. Both human nature and nonhuman nature may, then, experience the lack of what Vetlesen calls an ecologically healthy relatedness. Regarding humans, he argues, such a relatedness requires an emotional maturity to accept the preconditions' ontological and limiting nature. However, due to the system-immanent twin-imperatives of ever-increasing profit and never-ending growth of today's global capitalism (Vetlesen 2015, 44), the various environments within which flourishing, relatedness, and maturity normally take place are rapidly exploited and increasingly damaged, similar to what Rosa's acceleration theory argues (Chapter 3). Phenomenologically, to flourish, relate, and mature, one can, however, appeal to the other-directed limits built into Vetlesen's ethics of proximity, even in its non-anthropocentric extension. His ethics of proximity underscores the significant role of experiencing closeness through, for example, love, care, and empathy. In turn, such subjective and bodily experienced emotional maturity can lead to the practice of what Vetlesen defines as cross-species empathy.

Finally, normatively, the non-anthropocentric concept of existential preconditions connects to a wide perception of affectability. In turn, this suggests an extensive understanding of who and/or what can potentially be affected parties among all the ontologically affectable beings in the world. According to Vetlesen, categories of nonhuman nature should be morally protected and cared for because of its capacity for suffering. Therefore, to see other parts of the world suffering means to take these experiences into account and identify the suffering these beings might experience in their own unique ways. Furthermore, this is a way in which to recognize these beings' intrinsic moral value. Vetlesen is undoubtedly on the right track, I think, when he even within this non-anthropocentric approach to existential

preconditions and critical theory claims that addressees need not be agents. Echoing his own distinction between the being for others as addressees and being with others as agents, then, Vetlesen identifies significant similarities between human nature and nonhuman nature. In my opinion, perhaps the most valuable insight gleaned from this distinction is that a large part of nonhuman nature flourishes in diverse ways. Thus, the ecopsychological holding environment of Gaia, within which such flourishing takes place, should be morally protected. So, in the sense of being an addressee, all forms of existence are included in the moral circle of concern. They are so through their violability, affectability, and injurability to humans' moral action or inaction (due to, e.g., global capitalism's exploitation of given, limited, constantly reduced and extinct natural resources). Accordingly, to the extent to which humans have the potential to develop our capacities of perception and judgment, to act morally requires that we responsibly recognize nonhuman nature's need for unique flourishing and their intrinsic moral value.

In this last part of this subchapter, I discuss whether Vetlesen's non-anthropocentric account of the existential preconditions points in either a bicentric or an ecocentric direction. In short, recalling Chapters 1 and 2, biocentrism is a non-anthropocentric standing that is preoccupied with individual living organism. Biologists often distinguish between five categories of organic elements in the world, namely, animals (including pets, domestic animals, and wild animals), plants (hereunder trees), fungi, bacteria, and protists (i.e., all the single-celled forms which are not bacteria). Further, biocentrism discloses or ascribes moral value only to individually living organisms, either one, some, or all the above listed parts of the world. In contrast, ecocentrism approaches nature by disclosing or ascribing intrinsic moral value to both living and non-living parts of nature. The latter parties are non-living in terms of involving chemical and physical factors in the environment that affect ecosystems. To illustrate, non-living parts of nature include water and wind, which often are taken for granted. Yet, as we learn from David Abram (Chapter 3), this part of nature can be polluted. Some, but not all, scholars dealing with the Anthropocene and the Earth system are ecocentrists. As I see it, it makes sense to articulate such a connection. As I interpret him, however, Vetlesen's philosophy of nature and environmental ethics appears to be biocentric. Put formula-like, his biocentrism demands from human action what Vetlesen refers to as a cross-species empathy. Since I, in the age of ecological crisis, find ecocentrism more convincing than biocentrism, I wish to challenge the Vetlesenian outlook. In 2022, Vetlesen published the book *Animal Lives and Why They Matter*. Here, in light of the book's title, one could expect that Vetlesen subscribes to biocentrism. This interpretation is confirmed by the following statement in the book's introductory chapter:

> I do not deny the ecological argument thus conceived. In fact, it is part of my own argument, as brought out in my agreement with the *holistic biocentrism* worked out by environmental philosopher Holmes Rolston, demonstrating the continuity between my two previous books – *Denial* and *Cosmologies* – and

> this one. To get this, it is important not to conflate different perspectives and levels of analysis. In this book, I endorse the ecological argument about the essential inter-dependency and connectedness between different species, including different sorts of animals. No animal is an island. Hence I follow Rolston's holistic biocentrism in holding that, put formula-like, the morally right and the ecologically required are but two sides of the same coin, meaning mutually supportive – in the big picture and in the long run, that is. This does not preclude conflict between the two in the concrete case, that is to say, a particular place involving particular animals ….
>
> (Vetlesen 2022, 11, emphasis added)

As Vetlesen himself explains in the above passage, he supports a philosophy of nature and an environmental ethics which is based on biocentrism. Also, he defends a particular account of biocentrism, namely, Holmes Rolston's holistic version of this standpoint (Vetlesen 2015, 119–129, 2019, 56–59, 2022, 206–233). Further, he reads Rolston's stance as a moral realist one (ibid., 217). This metaethical outlook indicates that ethical judgments express claims referring to objective qualities of the world, which are independent of subjective or intersubjective opinion. Noteworthy, Vetlesen additionally holds that his biocentrism demonstrates a continuity on his behalf close to a decade. To Vetlesen, based on empirical studies undertaken by ecologists (sic), this philosophical outlook is the most promising path to avoid what he labels as "biological annihilation" (ibid., 6). This implies, in the worst-case scenario, extinction of, for instance, animals.

Although I believe that Vetlesen must have good reasons to defend what he characterizes as holistic biocentrism based on Rolston, I now move to Rolston himself to explore if this is a reasonable reading. The main aim of doing so is to learn more about Rolston's position as such and to raise the issue whether his environmental ethics can be labeled as holistic biocentrism or not. In my reading, Rolston only mentions the term biocentric a few times in his classic book *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World*. In these cases, he refers to other positions, especially Paul Taylor, instead of characterizing his own stance as biocentric (Rolston 1988, 361, 372; see 63, 73, 77, 116). In contrast, in *Environmental Ethics*, Rolston introduces the concept of systemic value. This kind of moral value, I believe, comes close to or is similar to what I, throughout this book, discuss and defend as ecocentrism. According to Rolston, systemic value can be defined as follows:

> Valuing is … a part in the whole. Value is not isolable …, even though some valued events may be happenstance. It is systemically grounded in major constructive thrusts in nature. The most satisfactory account is an *ecocentric* model, one that recognizes the emergence of consciousness as a novel value but also finds this consciousness entering a realm of objective natural value.
>
> (Rolston 1988, 212, emphasis added; see Hverven 2023, 349–400)

Below, I return to a more detailed presentation and discussion of Rolston's concept of systemic value. For now, I wish to underscore Rolston himself explicitly defends an ecocentric model, instead of a biocentric one.

In *Environmental Ethics*, Rolston wishes to provide the readers with a "wilderness guide" (Rolston 1988, xiii). In this book, the key question is the following, he explains: "Do not humans value Earth because it is valuable and not the other way around?" (ibid., 4). Rolston replies to his own question by introducing three forms of moral value—instrumental value, intrinsic value, and systemic value. These types of value are different, yet interconnected. Rolston defines instrumental value thus: "Objective things, living or not, may have instrumental value, contributing to subjective interest satisfactions" (ibid., 110). In contrast to instrumental value, Rolston understands intrinsic values as "psychological interest satisfactions desired without further contributory reference, pleasures good in themselves" (ibid.). Notwithstanding that instrumental value by definition has no intrinsic value, instrumental values "contribute to further interest satisfactions" associated with intrinsic value (ibid.). According to Rolston, intrinsic value "requires a beholder, an experiencer" in the sense of organisms as evaluative and axiological systems (ibid.). On his account, then, living organisms (e.g., humans, animals, and trees) have intrinsic value. In *Environmental Ethics*, Rolston explains why he argue so, and how he understands the difference between organic and inanimate matter of the world:

> *Organisms* are *self-maintaining systems*; they grow and are irritable in response to stimuli. They reproduce, and the developing embryo is especially impressive. They resist dying. They post a careful if also semipermeable boundary between themselves and the rest of nature; they assimilate environmental materials to their own needs. They gain and maintain internal order against the disordering tendencies of external nature. They keep winding up, recomposing themselves, while *inanimate* things run down, erode, and decompose. Life is a local countercurrent to entropy. Organisms suck order out of their environment, stage an energetic fight uphill on a world that overall moves thermodynamically downhill. They pump out disorder. They can be healthy and diseased.
>
> (Rolston 1988, 97, emphasis added)

According to Rolston, then, an organism is not a moral agent or a moral system having capabilities to evaluate what is morally right and wrong. Still, due to their capacity to grow, to reproduce, to repair, and avoiding to die, a living part of nature is "an axiological system" or "an evaluative system" (Rolston 1988, 99–100). Thus, "the physical state the organism seeks, idealized in its programmatic form, is a valued state" (ibid., 100). In Rolston' view, then, the intrinsic value of an organism is "present in this achievement" as something "vital" rather than biological in a narrow sense (ibid.). Consequently, Rolston continues, a "life is defended for what it is in itself" (ibid.). Although not being a moral agent, based on one's capacities and achievements, an organism's attitudes toward the surroundings may voice if

its coping with the world is good or bad according to the organism's aims and to what extent these aims are achieved. In this sense, Rolston holds, an organism is a valuer, yet different from a human valuer. Noteworthy, according to Rolston, there is a difference between various forms of organisms regarding intrinsic value and well-being based on their capacities and achievements. He here holds that intrinsic value is "highest in humans, descending across animal life in rough proportion to phylogenetic or neural complexity, lower in plant life, and least in microbes" (ibid., 120). In all these instances, however, it is significant that Rolston's biocentrism is holistic by understanding the vitality of organisms as a "property of the population as readily as of the individuals within it" (ibid., 149). So, to grow, to reproduce, to repair, and avoiding to die, organisms achieve this aim to a larger degree as a group in an environment rather than as an individual.

Rolston now introduces the third and final form of value—systemic value, which I briefly introduced above. This understanding of moral value in nature is holistic in terms of linking value to wholes or supra-individual entities consisting of individuals and relationships of organisms and species as well as their environment. One main aim of the notion of systemic value is to overcome what he views as the limitations of the divide between intrinsic value and instrumental value. In Rolston's view, a systemic value can be linked to what he describes as projective nature, both playing a crucial role in nature:

> *[S]ystemic value* … is not all encapsulated in individuals; it too is smeared out in into the system. The value in this system is not just the sum of part-values. No part values increase of kinds, but the system promotes such increase. Systemic value is the productive process; its products are intrinsic values woven into instrumental relationships. Systemic value is … *projective nature*.
>
> (Rolston 1988, 188, original emphasis)

Rolston further claims that there is a difference between organisms, species, and ecosystems: "Organisms defend their continuing survival; ecosystems promote new arrivals" (Rolston 1988, 187). He continues: "Species increase their kind; but ecosystems increase kinds" (ibid.). If that observation is correct, the wholeness consists of more than the sum of individual organisms and species. According to Rolston, such supra-individual wholes produce a manifold of values (Rolston 1988, 131). This plurality of values is produced on the bases of the manifold of organisms and species, and their diversity of capacities and achievements. Despite the seminal role played by wholes, Rolston suggests that only individualized organisms and species, instead of supra-individual entities, such as ecosystems and landscapes, not to mention inanimate stuff, have the aim which is required to have intrinsic value.

Although this may seem to be a fair reading of Rolston, isolated, I believe, it gives on the whole a wrong impression of his environmental ethics. In fact, he does not assume that wholes have intrinsic value but holds that the systemic whole has systemic value and systemic value is the overall value for environmental ethics

(Rolston 1988, 191; Hverven 2023, 382). In this sense, the system has value by producing the intrinsic value of organisms and species. Interestingly—perhaps exactly since Rolston subscribes to ecocentrism—his concept of projective nature includes even inorganic elements—both on the Earth (i.e., minerals, rivers, seas, rocks, and canyons) and in the universe (i.e., stars, moons, comets, and planets) (ibid., 197). Consequently, "[n]ature is a fountain of life, and the whole fountain – not just the [organic] life that issues from it – is of value" (ibid.).

As mentioned, I find the above ecocentrism formulated by Rolston more promising than Vetlesen's biocentric holism. To recall, one of the main themes of this book—and, I would add, of our time—is ecological democracy in the Anthropocene. As I explained in Chapter 1, the Anthropocene empirically involves both animate and inanimate elements of nature. Against that backdrop, I want to compare Rolston and Vetlesen regarding how they address the Anthropocene. In doing that, I hope to shed light on whether biocentrism or ecocentrism is the most convincing outlook to address issues around democracy and the ecological crisis in the present geological epoch.

Relevantly, Vetlesen's natural philosophical trilogy (Vetlesen 2015, 2019, 2022) is published more than a decade after the first research on the Anthropocene made by Paul J. Crutzen and others (e.g., Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). It should be no surprise, then, that Vetlesen is preoccupied with the present geological epoch. For example, the idea of the Anthropocene is mentioned as early as in the introduction to his book *Denial of Nature*. Here, Vetlesen mentions Crutzen as well describes the Anthropocene by referring to both organic (e.g., plants) and inorganic parts of nature (e.g., water in rivers) (Vetlesen 2015, 18). The same goes for the title of the second volume of his trilogy, in which we find this geological epoch in the very title of the book, *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene* (Vetlesen 2019). In contrast to Vetlesen, Rolston's book *Environmental Ethics* is published in 1988. This is more than a decade before the coining of the term the Anthropocene. In effect, one could expect that there is no match between Rolston and the study of this geological epoch. That is correct as far as it goes. However, this does not mean that Rolston has done any research on the idea of the Anthropocene. In 2017, for example, he published the chapter "The Anthropocene!: Beyond The Natural?". Here, he states that "humans are the dominant species and will become more so" due to the accelerating impacts of the Anthropocene (Rolston 2017, 70). Alas, Rolston appears to support or at least draw on the natural sciences that study the Anthropocene. Nonetheless, Rolston continues, "[n]ature has not ended and never will" (ibid., 71). In the end of the day, the environment "will flush out human effects" (ibid.). This implies that regardless of how much natural resources humans use or overconsume, "the natural forces can and will return" (ibid.). Further, he appears to defend environmental-ethical approach by suggesting that "we have moral responsibilities for each other. And we ought, as well, to respect the larger communities of life on Earth" (ibid.). To do so, "one needs to think big", since the present geological epoch might last as long as 12,000 years (ibid., 71). If my interpretation is correct, Rolston does not mention or relate his ecocentrism to his exploration of the Anthropocene. However, as explained, the Anthropocene involves both organic

and inorganic parts of nature (Chapter 1). Surely, ontologically, anthropocentrism would include all these elements of the part. Yet, I suggest, we need to move beyond anthropocentrism. If not, we would never appreciate the wonder and magic of all existence, as Abram reminds us to do. Thus, the Anthropocene is more adequately framed by an ecocentric view on nature. Rolston's own defense of ecocentrism occurs to connect his philosophy of nature and environmental ethics, at least indirectly, to the Anthropocene. This indirect link is to some extent confirmed by Vetlesen, as well, despite that the latter misreads the former regarding his approach to nature for being biocentric instead of ecocentric (Vetlesen 2022, 219–221). On the contrary, Vetlesen holds, Rolston's ontological distinction between nature and culture "will seem untenable to many today, given … the Anthropocene"—an epoch where human footprints are found on every point on Earth (ibid., 219). On Vetlesen's account, due to the Anthropocene, humans are the "single most powerful agent on Earth"—in both natural and cultural terms (ibid.). Vetlesen continues by arguing that Rolston's nature/culture distinction "becomes problematic" (ibid.). He here resonates thus: "granted that there once was a clear separation/boundary/difference, there is today no [such] demarcation" (ibid.). However, Vetlesen continues, since Rolston "provides a particularly strong case for fighting extinction of animals", his "distinction [between culture and nature] is *required* to make the case for why existent is morally wrong"—even, or perhaps we should say especially in the Anthropocene (ibid., 219–220, original emphasis).

As I have tried to demonstrate in this subchapter, Vetlesen misinterprets Rolston. According to Vetlesen, Rolston defends biocentric holism. In contrast, however, Rolston appears to support ecocentrism. Surely, ontologically, such a model can make a particularly strong case for animals, yet it would most certainly make an even stronger case for the Earth—or even the universe. Further, Rolston assumingly makes a strong case for an environmental ethics which consider the Anthropocene. From an ecocentric model, this is more adequate to, I believe, since this standpoint can include all aspects of the present geological epoch, both ontologically and normatively. Surely, if Vetlesen defends biocentrism (though based on a misinterpretation of Rolston), this stance, too, can ontologically include the Anthropocene in one's study, hereunder inorganic stuff. Yet, I think, in the Anthropocene, the Earth system is affected in many and complex ways (Chapter 1). Given that, philosophy of nature and environmental ethics should make a particularly strong case for Mother Earth and the cosmos, instead of a narrower focus on animals, as seems to be Vetlesen's main aim. In contrast to Vetlesen, therefore, I suggest that Rolston's ecocentrism and its link to the Anthropocene is a more promising pathway forward.

4.2 Morally Affectable Subject Without Agency

To further advance my overall argument of this book—which is that ecocentrism and ecophenomenology and its affinity to deep ecology and animism at the hand of ecological love serve as an appropriate basis for ecological democracy—I now move to my main claim of this subchapter. I here argue that to morally count as

an affected party facing the ecological crisis, one simply need to be an affectable moral subject and not a full-blown moral agent. I have briefly addressed this theme earlier in this chapter while presenting and discussing Arne Johan Vetlesen's concept of existential preconditions. Now, however, I draw on Paul W. Taylor and Arne Naess to make this argument even more solid. I also build further on several of the arguments put forward thus far in this book, especially the idea of panpsychic love and encountering (Chapter 2), the idea of ecological sensibility, the magic of ontopoetics, and cosmic resonance (Chapter 3), together with the all ecologically affected parties principle (Chapter 1 and which I address further in Chapter 5). In doing so, I criticize Taylor's standpoint from the outlook of Naess' deep ecology for being too biocentric and individualistic rather than ecocentric and holist. Yet, I believe, the Taylorian insight that being moral subjects do not necessarily require being moral agents involves even inorganic parts of nonhuman nature as descriptively affected and thus normatively potentially affectable parties in the age of the ecological crisis, is worth listening to and learning from.

In his classical book, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, Taylor wishes to offer "a general 'map' of the natural world, enabling us to see where we are and how we fit into the total scheme of things" by portraying "the realm of nature and life as a setting for human existence" (Taylor 1986, 156). Further, he makes a distinction between two types of environmental ethics, human-centered (or anthropocentric) and life-centered (or biocentric) (ibid., 11).

Among the two options that his map offers, Taylor himself defends biocentrism. Life-centered theories of environmental ethics hold that humans' have duties toward nature independently of the duties humans owe to each other (Taylor 1986, 10). At least in Taylor's version of biocentrism, only all "the *wild animals* and *plants* of the Earth" are included (Taylor 1986, 12, emphasis added). Noteworthy, quite often throughout *Respect for Nature*, Taylor skips the prefix of wild and instead refer to a seemingly larger part of the organic elements of nonhuman by including all animals and plants, and not only the wild ones. I am not sure if my reading is correct, but I nonetheless find it confusing when Taylor apparently discusses both domesticated animals and non-domesticated, wild animals, respectively, without making it zoologically clear what he means. The same goes for Taylor's use of the term plants, which often is only referred to as plants, yet a couple times he labels this part of nature as "wild plants" (ibid., 71, 254). Again, like my first etymological point, there is here a botanical difference between domestic plants and their wild ancestors.

To recollect Chapter 2, environmental ethics is often ontologically based on either individualism or holism. Among these two options, Taylor's life-centered ethics can be characterized as individualistic. Here, he explains that his normative reasoning focuses on "individual organisms as teleological centers of life" (Taylor 1986, 119). Taylor also explains that his outlook is based on "individual organisms (not supraorganisms or quasi-organisms)" (ibid.). Further, he wants to "emphasize" that biocentrism "does *not* entail a holistic or organicist view of environmental ethics" or the idea of "the Earth's biosphere as a kind of supraorganisms" (ibid., 118, original emphasis).

To claim the above, Taylor bases his argumentation even on what he takes to be the rapidly expanded and advanced knowledge in biological and physical sciences in the past century (Taylor 1986, 119–120). Taylor underlines that he supports a division between is and ought. Yet, biology can give relevant factual knowledge, and humans' normative judgments can be based on such facts (ibid., 51). While Taylor proposes that the biological science can play such a significant moral role, he simultaneously advices against ecology as a science. This is due to what he takes to be the fact that being a "a popular source of persuasive appeals" regarding the assertion that "ecology shows us how to live in relation to the natural environment" (ibid.). According to Taylor, however, it is wrong to logically infer from the descriptive side of ecological knowledge regarding what makes the Earths' ecosystems stable to the normative side of environmental ethics. Here, one could expect Taylor to criticize deep ecologists, since they often integrate the science of ecology within their frameworks. Surprisingly, therefore, Taylor never refers to Naess or other thinkers belonging to the deep-ecological tradition. (Naess is mentioned in the bibliography, without being referred to in the index.)

Time and again, Taylor underscores that he comprehends individual organisms as goal oriented. This implies that he understands individual organisms as "teleological centers of life" (Taylor 1986, 99). This indicates that "each is a unique individual perusing its own good in its own way" (ibid.). To understand individual organic life in this manner denotes that these parts of nature can be described concerning the "constant tendency of their behavior and internal processes is patterned around the realization of their good" (ibid., 157). Through such flourishing, living elements of nature can achieve the good adjusted to one's own life conditions.

Based on the organic nature's teleology, morality enter the scene. Accordingly, "it is only by reference to the particular lives of such beings [i.e., individually living organisms] as made better or worse by our actions that consideration for the natural world becomes morally relevant" (Taylor 1986, 119). Along these lines, biotic communities are "deserving of our moral concern and consideration because they have a kind of value that belongs to them inherently" (ibid., 13). The moral value of these beings cannot be instrumental in terms of their possible or actual mean to human ends. Rather, Taylor claims, organically and individually living beings have moral value in themselves (ibid., 13). Like humans should morally be respectfully treated, it is "for their [i.e., individually living organisms'] sake that their good should be promoted or protected" (ibid.). By attributing moral value to these creatures, Taylorian life-centrism implies that humans are "not inherently superior to other species" (ibid., 99). Instead, biocentrism includes human beings as parts of a wider understanding of the "community of life" (ibid.).

Related to both human-centered and life-centered environmental ethics is Taylor's concern with the earlier-mentioned distinction between a moral agent and a moral subject. According to Taylor, a moral agent is "any being that possesses those capacities by virtue of which it can act morally or immorally, can have duties and responsibilities, and can be held accountable for what he does" (Taylor 1986, 14). A moral subject, Taylor continues, includes "any being that can

be treated rightly or wrongly and toward whom moral agents can have duties and responsibilities" (ibid., 17). He adds that "not all humans are moral agents" (e.g., infants) and there can exist "moral agents who are not humans" (e.g., animals) (ibid., 14). Taylor also relates the distinction between moral agents and moral subjects to his overall biocentric argument:

> if inherent worth is attributed to any wild creature just in virtue of being a member of the biotic community of a natural ecosystem, then each wild animal or plant is understood to have the same status as a moral subject to which duties are owed by moral agents.
>
> (ibid., 78 f.)

Important for my discussion, Taylor claims that "inanimate objects" (e.g., air, water, and stones) are neither moral agents nor moral subjects (ibid., 18). The reason is that these phenomena have no good on their own. Still, though Taylor understands them as "purely physical conditions" for individually living organisms, it could be the case that they should be treated in certain ways to instrumentally fulfill the aim of individually living organisms (ibid.).

In contrast to Taylor, I believe, Naess is an interesting voice. Let us, therefore, revisit his deep ecology. As explored in Chapter 2, in his renowned article "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement", Naess coined the idea of deep ecology. During this first step of the development, as I read him, Naess defined deep ecology in a three-partite manner. This multidimensional framework consists of, first, a scientific element of ecology; second, a normative element of the principles belonging to the platform of deep ecology; and, third, and finally, an element which Naess labels ecosophy (i.e., a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium) (Naess 1973, 98–99). Naess contrasted deep ecology by what he termed as shallow ecology. The latter refers to people, institutions, and ideas promoting business as usual concerning the tackling of the ecocrisis (e.g., technological fix and optimism, scientific management, industrialism, population and capitalist growth, and anthropocentrism).

One key element of deep ecology as articulated by Naess is the concept of self-realization (or what he refers to self-realization with capital S). In his seminal book *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, Naess explains what self-realization means in the deep-ecological context:

> So the norm 'Self-realisation!' is a condensed expression of the unity of certain social, psychological, and ontological hypotheses: the most comprehensive and deep maturity of the human personality guarantees *beautiful action*. This is based on traits of human nature. We need not repress ourselves; we need to develop our Self. The beautiful acts are natural and by definition not squeezed forth through respect for a moral law foreign to mature human development. Increasing maturity activates more of the personality in relation to more of the milieu. It results in acting more consistently from oneself

> *as a whole*. This is experienced as most meaningful and desirable, even if sometimes rather painful.
>
> (Naess 1989, 86, original emphasis)

To me, this passage is fascinating in several ways. First, it grasps the core of deep ecology in the sense of the interconnectedness, unity, and wholeness of the self and the rest of the world, and it does so in a wide manner by involving ontological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual aspects. Second, Naess highlights the deep-ecological intuition that humans' experience and self-realization wish to support and achieve action and impacts in the world. Finally, Naess underscores that to reach action-oriented self-realization, humans go through a developmental process aiming at a particular kind of maturity of deep experience, deep questioning, and deep commitment (Harding 2006, 57). In the next step, we can recognize and experience the world in its wholeness.

Building further on the idea of deep self-realization of oneself belonging to and engaging in an ecological whole, Naess introduces the next key concept of deep ecology. In my interpretation, this points to the idea identification:

> Through identification, higher level unity is experienced: from identifying with 'one's nearest', higher unities are created through circles of friends, local communities, tribes, compatriots, races, humanity, life, and, ultimately, as articulated by religious and philosophic leaders, unity with the supreme whole, the 'world' in a *broader* and *deeper* sense than the usual.
>
> (Naess 1985, 173, emphasis added)

Naess here wishes, I think, to show several key aspects of deep ecology by introducing the idea of identification. First, like self-realization, experience is crucial to identification. Second, here, too, Naess seems to be preoccupied with identification on various ontological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual levels. Last, by deepening and widening oneself through such identification process, a unity of the diversity of the interconnectedness of everything existing may occur. By identifying, then, "with greater wholes, we partake in the creation and maintenance of this whole" in its uniqueness and diversity (Naess 1989, 173). In doing that, Naess continues, humans share the greatness, equanimity, aloofness, and majesty of all existence (ibid.). In turn, the "greater our comprehension of our togetherness with other beings, the greater the identification, and the *greater care* we will take" (ibid., 175, emphasis added). Fascinatingly, to Naess, there is a moral link between experiencing the wholeness of the world and to morally care for it. Further, to Naess, self-realization through identification incorporates "ever wider wholes, up to the level of the *cosmos as a whole*" (Vetlesen 2015, 118, emphasis added; see Mathews 1991; Fox 1995; Harding 2006). From my angle, the deep-ecological cosmologies which I explored in Chapter 2 echoes, then, this aspect of self-realization through identification. Given that today's ecological crisis involves the universe in terms of the geological epoch of the Anthropocene and the impacts

on the Earth system (Chapter 1), Naessian deep ecology can open a pathway to connect the deepening of ourselves and the widening of our concern even to the cosmos.

While dealing with the core elements of Naessian deep ecology, we should also add to the palette what he refers to as the idea of nature's intrinsic value. In 1973, Naess coined the idea of deep ecology. Yet, to my knowledge, the first articulation of his intrinsic value thesis was not published until 1984. In the paper "Basic Principles of Deep Ecology", co-written with George Sessions, this thesis was formulated as follows: "The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value)" (Naess and Sessions 1984, 5). He explanatory added to this formulation that "[t]hese values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes" (ibid.). This statement arose disagreements, especially around the concepts of intrinsic value and inherent value—how these terms should be understood as well as if they are synonyms or not, to mention only some of the issues that have been discussed since the 1980s (e.g., Wetlesen 1999; Witoszek and Brennan 1999). As explained in Chapter 2, in his 1989 book *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, Naess seemingly rearticulates his nature's value thesis. Now, Naess simply refers to nature's intrinsic value and does no longer mention the term inherent value. Noteworthy, Naess still claims that "[t]he value of non-human life forms is independent of the usefulness these may have for narrow human purposes" (Naess 1989, 29). Also, let me recall that Naess uses the notion of life in a wide manner in the sense of all existence, instead of a narrower, biocentric understanding of life as organic (Chapter 1).

Before discussing Naess versus Taylor, let us take a look at one last core element of Naessian environmental ethics. According to Naess, "[a]ll-encompassing philosophical viewpoints [e.g., deep ecology] have always been more or less inspired by the sciences" (Naess 1973, 39). Although not explicitly explained, I take Naess to mean the natural sciences in this quote. If so, he, too, uses the inter-facultary methodology that I introduced in Chapter 1 and which I build on in this book. He does so by drawing on the natural science of ecology. With ecology, Naess means "the interdisciplinary scientific study of the living conditions of organisms in interaction with each other and with the surroundings, *organic as well as inorganic*" (ibid., 36, emphasis added). In my reading, Naess here articulates a core—and let me add: ecocentric—insight of deep ecology. Naess remains that the scientific methodology of ecology suggests the "maxim 'all things hang together'" (ibid.). The primary insight of such a holist ecology is that the "relationships between entities … [are] an essential component of what these entities are in themselves" (ibid.). Notwithstanding the central role the ecological science to deep ecology, Naess warns against what he views as the dangers of "ecologism" (i.e., an "excessive universalisation or generalisation of ecological concepts and theories") or other ways deep ecology may be suggested to be derived directly from ecology or other sciences (ibid., 39).

Now, after having presented what I take to be the core of Taylor's and Naess' thoughts, respectively, I will compare some central dimensions of their philosophy

of nature and environmental ethics. I here find at least three aspects relevant, namely, their ontological, epistemological, and normative assumptions.

First, while circling in Taylor's and Naess' ontology, one could expect that their biocentrism and ecocentrism depart from each other to a great extent. However, both of them appear to include human nature and the living and non-living parts of nonhuman nature within their ontological framings. Yet, since Naess' ontology not only involves the Earth system, but even the cosmos, they depart from each other, at least regarding that aspect. One more ontological disagreement regards the matter of individualism versus holism. Here, Taylor limits his ontology by being individualistic and rejects supra-individual wholes. To recollect, Chapter 2, supra-individual wholes can include supraorganisms, quasi-organisms, species populations, habitats, landscapes, ecosystems, the ecosphere, as well as inanimate natural phenomena such as air, light, water, stones, soil, and temperature. The latter phenomena are interrelated regarding the ecological crisis. To illustrate, the air and water might become polluted and the temperature can exceed the global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels set by the Paris Agreement of 2015. As I showed in Chapter 1, in the Anthropocene, it is scientifically necessary, even for philosophy of nature and environmental ethics to consider natural sciences studying the entire Earth system. In contrast to Taylor's biological outlook, Naess' ecological ontology is holistic in terms of involving all existence, hereunder supra-individual wholes.

Second, with respect to epistemology, Taylor acknowledges inanimate phenomena, yet only instrumentally. Taylor's biocentrism is explicitly based on the science of biology. In doing so, he draws on empirical findings in biology to portray the world. In turn, to Taylor, the individually living organisms of animals and plants counts as part of his environmental-ethical and natural-philosophical framework. It should also be recalled that Taylor even warns against the science of ecology, which is Naess' choice. In contrast to Taylor, Naess partly builds on ecology. In my reading, Naess understands the natural science of ecology as involving the science of biology, yet he epistemologically argues that ecology is a more relevant natural science to develop a philosophy of nature and an environmental ethics. Perhaps the main reason for this approach is the ontological and normative premises of Naess' outlook. By basing deep ecology on ecocentrism, Naess must move beyond biology narrowly perceived into the terrain of ecology, which to him covers a larger part of the world that deep ecology demands. Related to the above epistemological points is whether Taylor and/or Naess can shed light on some today's crucial issues I raise in this book concerning the Anthropocene and the Earth system. Surely, both Taylor and Naess wrote their seminal works long before the research on the Anthropocene and the Earth system science of the 2000s. Still, I find it relevant to epistemologically read their viewpoints in this context, as well. At some places in Taylor's works, he seems to be open to other natural sciences than biology. If that is correct, he may be open to be informed by or even draw on the research on the Anthropocene and the Earth system science. However, at the end of the day, he appears primarily preoccupied with biology. Here, Taylor mainly focuses on animals and plants, and there is little or no room for natural sciences studying the inanimate parts of nature which are crucial to understand the Anthropocene and

the Earth system. In contrast, in Naess, the story appears opposite to Taylor. Since Naess draws on ecology and its study of, for instance, inorganic parts of the world, he seems to be preoccupied with a wider range of natural sciences and natural phenomenon than does Taylor. In turn, since the research on the Anthropocene and the Earth system science partly involve inanimate parts of the world, Naess' angle seems more relevant than Taylor's is.

Third, and finally, I turn the normative aspects of Taylor's and Naess' approaches. To recall, in Taylor, the concept of an intrinsic moral value is central (Taylor 1986, 73). Further, to him, only individually living organisms have such value. This moral universe includes humans, plants, and animals. What, then, might Naess respond to this outlook? In Naess' case, too, to respect for nature is crucial. However, due to his ecocentrism, both living and non-living parts of nature should be respected. Additionally, Naess' ecocentrism presumes the same intrinsic moral value, yet for all existence. Further, though not seemingly explicitly formulated by Taylor, his biocentrism seems to be based on a normative ranking. I here have in mind how he appeals to the protection of individually living organisms, while at the same time gives humans, animals, and plants a normative preference vis-à-vis other individually living organisms. In Naess' ecocentrism, that issue is quite another story. He does not rank any parts of nature and rather seems to treat them morally on par with each other. Last, I want to shed light on the before-defined concept of being an affected party may look like from Taylor's and Naess' angle. To recall, to morally count as an affected party facing the ecological crisis, one simply need to be an affectable moral subject and thus potentially affected by this disaster, and not a full-blown moral agent. In this book, I link this idea of an affected party to what I coined as the all ecologically affected parties principle (Chapter 1, and will elaborate further in Chapter 5). Thus, to be affected in an ecological sense means to be affected by today's environmental tragedy. As explained in Chapter 1, in the Anthropocene, the ecological crisis can affect all existence on Earth and is even interconnected to the universe. This means that one cannot isolate, say, humans, or, for that matter, animals, and plants, neither water nor air while attempting to identify affected parties due to the consequences of the Anthropocene for the Earth system and its planetary boundaries. Rather, one must consider the entire Earth system, including both its animate and inanimate elements. Surely, as mentioned earlier, the ongoing sixth mass extinction is part of the ecological crisis. Given that, Taylor's biocentrism is relevant to address this crisis since, for example, animals are highly affected parties in the Anthropocene. However, to focus on this important, though minor part of the picture, I believe, make Taylor's outlook less relevant than Naess' more holist approach. In turn, Naess defends an outlook that adopts the entire Earth system and assumingly the cosmos as a normative point of departure. Also, to deep ecology, the term affected party appears to consider all the phenomena being potentially and actually affected by the ecocrisis, including the so-called inanimate natural phenomenon—and explaining why all these existing beings have an intrinsic moral value and should be care for.

4.3 From Ecological Grief to Ecological Love

It is possible to think like a mountain, Aldo Leopold famously suggests in his seminal book *A Sand County Almanac* (Leopold 1949). In light of what I thus far have inquired in this book, I ask: is it possible to love like a mountain or at least love the mountain—an inanimate (e.g., stones) part of the world? I propose that such love can be practiced. To explain how that can be done, I coin the concept of ecological love (Lysaker 2020b). In this subchapter, I outline that term and relate it to the experience of ecological grief.

To many people, today's ecological crisis creates a wide range of emotional experiences and reactions. In addition to ecological love, I have in mind the so-called ecological anxiety (or, ecoanxiety), ecological grief (or, ecogrief), and ecological rage (or, ecorage). Some scholars also appeal to the idea solastalgia (Albrecht 2005). This is a form of homesickness one gets when one is still at home in a sustainable world, yet the environment has been changed to the extent in which one feels unfamiliar to respond emotionally to the ecocrisis. Solastalgia can echo, then, the homesickness in terms of alienation portrayed by Hartmut Rosa (Chapter 2). Recently, in opposition to ecogrief, some scientists defend the notion of Anthropocene horror, which refers to "a sense of horror about the changing environment globally … giving a sense of threats that need not be anchored to any particular place, but which are both everywhere and anywhere" (Clarke 2020, 61). Further, some suggest using the notions flight shame (i.e., the discomfort because one's energy-intense and climatically problematic consumption of flights) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) while being exposed to, say, sea-levels rise at small, low-lying islands have been proposed as other adequate responses. It is disputed among researchers and others if these emotional states and reactions should be understood as well as officially acknowledged by health professions or not. This dispute is partly due to the diagnosis manuals that psychologists, psychiatrists, and other health professionals use. These manuals are collections of diagnoses of diseases and disabilities, and a guide for how health professionals should understand and treat these diagnoses.

In the above discourse, it seems to be at least two schools of thought. The first school of thought can be labeled the critical one (e.g., Madsen 2020). The term critical here refers to psychologist and other scholars arguing that concepts such as ecoanxiety, ecogrief, ecorage, and ecological love are invalid to address today's ecocrisis in an efficient way (ibid.). Here, the psychological science is criticized for being too focused on individuals within a therapeutic-oriented culture. Further, the critical school of thought argues, the research field of ecopsychology and its assumed large-scale ambition to close the emotional gap between humans and nature cannot be fulfilled (ibid.). From this angle, it is also raised the issue if emotional responses to today's environmental disaster are as motivating and mobilizing as the proponents of ecoanxiety, ecogrief, ecorage, and ecological love seem to suggest (ibid.). Rather, the ecological tragedy should be addressed in other and assumingly more constructive ways. One way to do so is to look other places than

human emotions. In this context, it should be noted that eco-anxiety is not (yet) a formal diagnosis according to the diagnosis manuals.

The other school of thought can be labeled the responsive one. One reason for doing so is that this outlook argues the opposite of the critical school of thought. Here, to be responsive welcome emotional experiences and responses as an adequate way to address the ecocrisis. Further, this school suggests that emotional reactions toward the ecocrisis can, and should, motivate to approach this problem in responsible ways. These emotional experiences include the above introduced ecoanxiety, ecogrief, ecorage, and ecological love, to only mention a few (e.g., Albrecht 2012; Cunsolo 2017; Cunsolo and Ellis 2018; Cunsolo et al. 2020). Here, it is often argued that because the ecological crisis can be scientifically studied, these emotional responses grow out of objective facts. Evolutionary psychology can explain these responses, then, by showing that when humans are in danger, the alarm system turns on to find ways to survive through our fight, flight, or freeze functions. In turn, the environmental tragedy can by some be experienced as a lack of control over one's life conditions and prospects to live a good life. Also, since the danger of the ecological crisis is acute, and some people feel that politicians and governments do not respond to the ecocrisis fast enough and to the necessary degree, to act motivated by such emotional experiences can create meaning and orientation in times of loss of meaning or even apathy. Additionally, some scholars understand these emotional experiences and responses as a way to advance mental health, physical health, and community health while experiencing the negative impacts of the ecological crisis (e.g., Cunsolo 2017; Cunsolo and Ellis 2018; Cunsolo et al. 2020). This school also suggests that environmental-driven events (e.g., climate change, rising sea levels, heat waves, wildfire, extreme storms, and flooding) can significantly threaten mental health, physical health, and community health (Clayton, Manning, and Hodge 2014). In the latter case, it is assumed that emotional reactions toward the environmental crisis are reactions and ways to tackle this crisis in more adequate ways, which even can be empirically studied. Even if these emotional states and reactions never will become part of the diagnosis manuals, they nonetheless can contribute to the achievement of the goal of bodily and public health, which partially can take place by expressing these emotions and act on the basis of them.

Although I find the above psychological research and discourse interesting and relevant, my focus in this subchapter is somewhat different. I here define and justify my concept of ecological love—which serves as the core of this book. In doing that, I suggest a middle ground between the critical school of thought and the response school of thought. In line with the critical school of thought, I am critical toward the response school of thought due to its often too strong focus on negative emotions (e.g., ecoanxiety, ecogrief, and ecorage). Inspired by the response school of thought, however, I focus more on emotional experiences and responses than what is the typical approach of the critical school of thought. Yet, in contrast to the response school of thought, I do so in the sense of positive emotions, especially ecological love. I therefore agree to the thesis that various emotional responses to the ecocrisis are adequate since they are healthy. I also argue that ecological love

and other positive emotions, experiences, and responses can motivate humans to become more morally responsible while attempting to tackle today's environmental crisis. I suggest, therefore, that negative emotions, experiences, and responses can be transformed and transitioned into positively articulated as ecological love. In the next step, such action and interaction can motivate us to be more engaged within the framework of ecological democracy.

Let me admit there are some attempts at conceptualizing ideas which are similar to my own notion of ecological love. Edward O. Wilson, for instance, has formulated the biophilia hypothesis. According to him, biophilia can be defined as "our innate tendency to focus upon life and life-like forms and, in some instances, to affiliate with them emotionally" (Wilson 1984, 134). Glenn Albrecht, seemingly somewhat different from Wilson's evolutionary and phylogenetic understanding of love, defines love in this context as follows: "the love of the totality of our place relationships and a willingness to accept, in solidarity and affiliation with others, the political responsibility for the health of the earth, our home" (Albrecht 2012, 72). In contrast to these voices, I explore the idea of ecological love in Arne Johan Vetlesen and Andreas Weber. Although these approaches are somewhat different, I wish to show how Vetlesen and Weber can mutually supplement each other. I am particularly interested in what I interpret as their ecophenomenological approach to ecological love, which seems to echo my own account ecological democracy.

Before I move on to the presentation and discussion of Vetlesen's and Weber's standpoints, however, let me define my own concept of ecological love. In more detailed, to love ecologically indicates to potentially being emotionally attached to and encountering everything which exists (Lysaker 2020b). In light of how ecocrisis in the Anthropocene impacts the Earth system and is connected to the universe (Chapter 1), I suggest that ecological love even should involve emotional attachments and encountering related to the cosmos. In that case I suggest that we can speak of cosmological love, as well. To better understand what ecological love is, it is worthwhile addressing this concept ontologically, phenomenologically, and normatively.

First, ontologically, as stated above, ecological love involves, affects, and engages with all of existence. I here draw on the ecocentric view on nature (Chapter 2). Subsequently, ecological love both includes and moves beyond living organisms (e.g., humans, animals, and plants). To literally love in an ecological sense, we must open our arms and hearts even to inanimate co-habitants on Mother Earth and in the cosmos. Let me recall what I laid out in Chapter 1, which is fundamental to ecological love, too: due to how all existing beings are interconnecting within the Earth system, not to forget how both biotic and biotic elements of the Earth system are, more or less, affected by the ecocrisis of the Anthropocene. Then, to practice ecological love cannot ontologically be based on only half of the picture regarding what nature is. That is one of the main reasons why ecological love involves all existence. On top of that, I base this term on the morality of the existential preconditions of vulnerability and dependency. As showed earlier in this chapter, these preconditions are the most fundamental ones. Also, they are shared by both human nature and nonhuman nature. In turn, by existing, humans

and more-than-humans are vulnerable to a wide range of events in the world, such as the effects of the ecological crisis. Furthermore, due to this vulnerability, all existing beings depend on other beings' care and protection. Here, ecological love is key to look after the vulnerability and dependency of all existing beings.

Second, phenomenologically, ecological love emotionally expresses humans' care for the entire planet and the universe. In turn, this worldview is based on our ontologically conditioned embodiment, sensibility, and affectability (Chapter 3). Also, by building further on Vetlesen understanding of existential preconditions, I underscore that not only humans qua bodily beings are sensuous and affectable, but even nonhumans. On my reading, to the degree to which all existing beings are ontologically premised by these existential preconditions, they can experience vulnerability and dependency. To illustrate, water, a so-called inanimate (i.e., dead) part of nature, can be experienced animistic. This point is, I believe, beautifully grasped by David Abram. According to him, "the most primordial level of sensuous, bodily experience, we find ourselves in an expressive, gesturing landscape, in a world that *speaks*" (Abram 1996, 82, original emphasis). Given that, he continues, human languages are "continually nourished by these other voices", and it is "not by chance" that we use words like rush, splash, gush, or wash to describe water (ibid.). "Yet these are more than mere metaphors", Abram suggests (ibid.). By looking closer, "the sound that unites all these words is that which *the water itself chants* as it flows", say, between the banks of a river (ibid., emphasis added). In Abram's view, language and communication is more than a psychological phenomenon. Additionally, it is "a sensuous, bodily activity born of carnal reciprocity and participation, then our discourse has surely been influenced by many gestures, sounds, and rhythms besides those of our single species" (ibid.). The implication of this that "if human language arises from the perceptual interplay between the body and the world, then this language "belongs" to the animate landscape as much as it "belongs" to ourselves" (ibid.). In my interpretation, this view perceives the water as more than an instrumental matter in terms of humans' basic need to drink water to survive and thus to avoid polluting water. Rather, it is a way in which to safeguard the water's own inner way of being in the world and how this expression of intimate nature can be experienced by humans as well as reciprocally engaged with. Due to the exposed vulnerability of the water while being polluted, humans and other parts of nature can, and should, ecologically love the water and thereby champion that pollution. Here, ecological love is a sensuous encountering between all existence and not simply a human practice.

Finally, normatively, ecological love is a response to the ecological crisis. Because of the risks of severe, pervasive, irreversible, and long-lasting impacts of this crisis for both humans and more-than-humans, the entire Mother Earth must a greater degree than today be cared for and protected. Here, ecological love is key due to its ecocentric view on nature. In effect, ecolove reaches out to all existence. Further, ecological love is normatively significant since it is an ideal which can learn humans about what I in Chapter 2 spoke about as ecological sensibility and panpsychic encountering as well as the resonance and ontopoetics explained in Chapter 3. In short, ecological love is a mutual practice among earthly co-habitants

sharing the existential preconditions of vulnerability and dependency, and thereby an affectability. This affectability, I argue earlier, is the ground for the potential of being affected, for instance, by the ecocrisis. To recall, the abiotic water does not need to be an agent to count as an affected party. Rather, it simply demands to be a moral subject in terms of being affected by the world and thereby affectable in the first place. To be affectable, then, indicates the potential of being affected by others.

Let us now move to Vetlesen idea of ecological love. Within the framing of his non-anthropocentric critical theory, Vetlesen appears to come close to my concept of ecological love as a form of planetary co-habitation. He understands ecolove as:

> A love of *all living things on the Earth*, which we humans share with infinite many other species and forms of life. And thereafter, the rage that grows in us—whether we are children or adults—when we experience that much of this life is intentionally destroyed. A rage nourished by the love of all what needs protection [due to the existential preconditions of vulnerability and dependency]. A rage on behalf of the voiceless and unprotected, against the most powerful misusing their power and positions to destroy, not to create anything. A rage driven by love of life and all living.
>
> (Vetlesen and Willig 2017, 164–165, emphasis added, my translation)

Vetlesen's account of love appears to echo my concept of ecological love to some degree. From his angle, such love involves many beings on the Earth: all living things, species, forms of life, life as such as well as humans. Further, love Vetlesen style appears to involve a potential for humans to act. This action is based on a rage against the destruction and misuse of what he refers to as all living things, species, forms of life, and life as such. In turn, the rage is channeled through a particular kind of love by protecting all living things due to their vulnerability and dependency. Here, Vetlesen appears to assume that these beings are moral addressees (or moral subjects) who need protection from the destructions of the ecocrisis. Otherwise, these organic lives will stay voiceless and unprotected. Yet, in Vetlesen, love occurs to be linked to humans. In effect, only humans can love all living things, species, forms of life, and life as such. If that interpretation makes sense, Vetlesen does not presuppose mutuality in terms of a love going back and forth between human nature and nonhuman nature.

I find Vetlesen's concept of ecological love to a large extent inspiring and promising. Still, I wish to problematize the definition of nature upon which his account of love is based. To me, to literally qualify as a concept of ecological love, such love should be based on an ecocentric approach to nature. In contrast, however, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, Vetlesen defends a biocentric view on nature. In the case of ecological love, in the above passage, he seems to refer only to organic life, such as all living things, species, forms of life, and life.

In contrast, however, the term life in the case of ecological love can be interpreted in various ways. As I argued in Chapter 1, life can at least be defined in a narrow

and a wide way (Hverven 2022b, 298–299; see Weber 2016a). Then, narrowly, life refers to individually or collectively living organisms, whereas widely, life covers all existence, animate as well as inanimate. Given that, Vetlesen's account of ecological love can be grounded in ecocentrism. Then, it aims at protecting the intrinsic moral value of forms of life in all their uniqueness, richness, and diversity. We should also remember that Vetlesen refers to the Earth while speaking about ecological love. Here, at least if ecolove normatively aims at protecting all beings on the Earth, this standpoint echoes an ecocentric understanding of nature. Then, the voiceless and the unprotected might include both living and non-living elements, which are morally treated on par with each other. Many people would probably accept this reasoning ontologically. Yet, normatively, a counterargument can be that this view implies a genetic fallacy. This fallacy consists in assuming or presupposing that "present value depends upon origins" (Rolston 1988, 156–157). This indicates that something has a particular property because it has given rise to something that has that property. Then, the claim continues, origin and value are mixed. This counterargument continues: life understood as intrinsically valuable and dependent on the Earth does not necessarily mean that the Earth itself is intrinsically valuable. Rather, one could argue that it is only instrumentally valuable. However, over historical time, "the individual and the species have the value they have to some extent inevitably in the context of the forces that beget them" (ibid., 157). This reply to the genetic fallacy can be interpreted as suggesting that parts of nature (e.g., organisms, species, and ecosystems) cannot be separated from its historical origin and develop nor its relationships with other parts of nature (Hverven 2023, 398–399).

In Weber, too, ecological love plays a crucial role. In his book *Matter and Desire: An Erotic Ecology*, Weber introduces what he labels as the ecology of love. On Weber's account, love and eros creates the core of some particular forms of care. In our age of the ecological crisis, Weber suggests, love, eros, and care of this kind is exactly what the Earth needs. According to his standpoint, "it could be that the Earth is currently suffering from a *shortage* of our love" (Weber 2017, 3, emphasis added). Given that, the book *Matter and Desire* is a collection of "love stories" to Mother Earth written by the author (John Elder's foreword to Weber 2017, xv).

Now, what exactly does Weber mean when he speaks about the ecology of love or love of ecology? In the book *Matter and Desire*, we learn that "[t]he heart of [ecological] love" is to find "the principle of a fulfilling equilibrium between the individual and the whole" (Weber 2017, 7). In turn, ecological love involves "the practical principle of creative enlivenment" (ibid., 9). Here, the term enlivenment is not a synonym simply for being alive in the case of organic life. Rather, to Weber, "life and its non-living, *inorganic* environment are closely related" (Weber 2016a, 71, emphasis added). So, when Weber refers to enlivenment, he means an "aliveness and therefore on an existential ecology of being-in-the-world" (Weber 2016b, 8). Further, Weber suggests, "love as an ecological phenomenon" comprises "relationships between life-forms in the biosphere [i.e., the ecosphere]" (ibid.). Moreover, to Weber, ecological love is related to "every description of reality that

understands it as an interconnected system of reciprocal inspiration, dependency, penetration, and the persistent search for freedom" (ibid., 7). Regarding freedom, Weber suggests, the ecology of love is an "achievement in enlivened systems, where freedom of the individual must always be harmonized with the whole" (ibid., 9). Inspired by the ecophenomenological tradition along with its affinity to deep ecology and animism, Weber also observes that an ecology of love creates "the core of the experience of the world as productive relationships" (ibid., 8).

Yet a key concept in Weber is what he defines as erotic love. Here, he holds that "[b]eing in the world is primarily an erotic encounter, an encounter of meaning through contact, an encounter of being oneself through the significance of others" (John Elder's foreword to Weber 2017, xiii). From the Weberian ecophenomenological angle, it can be observed that "[f]rom birth, and probably even before, we experience the fundamental erotics of being touched by the world, and of touching it in return as a life-bestowing power" (ibid., xiv). The fundamental thesis of erotic ecology, Weber explicates, is the following:

> To be able to love, as subjects with feeling bodies, we must be able to be alive. To be allowed to be fully alive is to be loved. To allow oneself to be fully enlivened is to love oneself—and at the same time, to love the creative world [in its organic as well as inanimate aspects], which is principally and profoundly alive … .
>
> (Weber 2017, 5)

So, Weber suggests that there exists a web of relationship creating a link between love and life, between being alive and loving. Through love, one not simply live, but live in a fully enlivened manner. One does so by experience and encounters all existing components of the world. However, though the practice of and the erotic core of ecological love involves an aspect of "caring for oneself", one is "also remaining vulnerable, a balanced center always open to a new connections" of the entire world to become enlivened (John Elder's foreword to Weber 2017, xv).

Fascinatingly, in this context, Weber spots that "[a]nyone who dismisses love cannot understand reality" (Weber 2017, 5). Along these lines, he continues, our experiences of the reality through our "bodies and their senses"—especially with what he refers to as the neglected parts of the reality—are essential (John Elder's foreword to Weber 2017, xiii). Accordingly, knowledge about the reality can come from various sources, such the practice of ecological love. Based on this phenomenological and ecological approach to knowledge, then, Weber wants to study "the principles of reality that we can experience and of which we are part" (ibid., xiii). Weber further suggests that by experientially overcoming the neglection of reality, the reality can be portrayed as "the creative, poetic nexus of unfolding freedom toward both individuation and attachments" (ibid.). As part of Weber's outlook, it can be further elaborated that:

> Throughout natural history [i.e., the history of both animate and inanimate elements, and their interconnections], reality has unfolded in the form of

> living systems, in the form of self-organizing molecules, cells, bodies, biotopes, and landscapes; in each of these, the drive, desire, and longing for attachment *and* autonomy is foundational: essential in order to perceive, to continue, and to unfold.
>
> (John Elder's foreword to Weber 2017, xiii, original emphasis)

Ontologically, the above insight can be summarized thus: "[w]ithout attachments, no life" (John Elder's foreword to Weber 2017, xiii)—through which the "web of mutual transformation and deeply meaningful encounters that are always embodied" (ibid., ix). He then concludes, "the picture will only be completed when the biological description of reality is expanded to become an ecology of love", in the Weberian terms I explained above (Weber 2017, 8). In doing so, we can sense and experience "flourishing ecosystems" as part of the natural world (ibid., 10).

Now, after having presented my interpretation of Vetlesen's and Weber's approach to ecological love, I end Chapter 4 by discussing their outlooks in light of three issues. The first issue dwells with which understanding of nature we find in Vetlesen and Weber: whether it is based on biocentrism or ecocentrism. The next issue I raise circle in whether love in the case of Vetlesen and Weber can be linked to the significant role of a place. Finally, I address the issue whether their accounts can shed light on environmental activism or other democratic practices which are relevant in the age of environmental crisis.

First, regarding the link between love and the understanding nature, Vetlesen and Weber appear to disagree. Against the backdrop of the all ecologically affected principle (Chapters 1 and 5), I argue that in the Anthropocene, the entire Earth system—hereunder what some scientists assume to be inanimate natural objects (e.g., water in terms of melted glaciers and polluted grain)—is affected by the ecocrisis. To include this natural-scientific fact within the framework of ecological love requires, I believe, ecocentrism. So, as far as Vetlesen's definition of ecological love is normatively based on biocentrism instead of ecocentrism, this idea does not seem to cover the entire Earth which is potentially affected by the ecological catastrophe and therefore need care in virtue of ecological love. However, if Vetlesen defines ecological love considering the above wide understanding of life, his concept of ecological love might cover both animate and inanimate parts of nature, even in normative terms. The same could be said, I guess, if Vetlesen had accepted my ecocentric reading of Rolston. Then, since Vetlesen defends Rolston, he defends de facto ecocentrism. What about Weber's reference to the ecology of love, then? As mentioned, Weber draws to a large extent on the science of biology. Still, his methodology is interdisciplinary by involving, for instance, the science of ecology. Additionally, Weber's idea of love is not simply ontologically describing nature in a rich sense, but even holding that ecolove aims at morally protecting all that exist. On my interpretation, Weber is here normatively closer to ecocentrism than biocentrism.

Second, I wish to explore the possible relationship between ecological love and the significant role of a place. To recall, in Chapter 3, I dealt with the ontopoetics and the magic of places within the more-than-human world. By drawing on my

presentation and discussion there, I now wish to shed light on the roles a place can play within the context of Vetlesen's and Weber's notions of ecological love. Before doing so, let me say a few words about what I have in mind regarding the link between ecolove and places. In Laura Candiotto, we learn that such situated approach to the love of nature is formula-like described as loving the Earth by loving a place. This interrelationship between love, place, and the Earth is portrayed by Candiotto as follows:

> So, the situated account of love of nature … is the practice of loving the Earth by loving a place, by inhabiting a place with love. The loving *encounter* with a place makes a difference in building up the human–Earth connection and the relationships with the place's nonhuman inhabitants. It makes a difference because it enables the human inhabitant to become *native* to a place.
>
> (Candiotto 2022, 179, emphasis added)

In my interpretation, Candiotto here speaks about ecological love. She does so by defining love, partly, as a love of nonhuman nature in terms the entire Earth. Further, the place plays a crucial role to exercise such love. From a seemingly ontologically holist angle, the love of the Earth is interconnected to a place. In turn, ecological love can be situated and concrete, though it is the practice of love for the entire Earth. Here, through what Candiotto describes as becoming native to a place through a loving encounter can normatively (e.g., ethically or democratically) change the world (e.g., concerning today's environmental emergency) by ecologically loving that place. Now, what would be Vetlesen's and Weber's response to the idea of such a love-place-cum-Earth interchange? In the book *Det går til helvete. Eller? Kjærlighet, sorg og raseri i natur- og klimakrisens tid (It's Going to Hell. Or? Love, Grief, and Rage in the Age of the Nature and Climate Crisis*), co-edited with Knut Ivar Bjørlykhaug, Vetlesen ostensibly comments upon this interchange. The role of the place and ecological love, I believe, is portrayed thus:

> Our love to other humans, to the environment, and to other life forms always implies a risk: that everything to which we devote ourselves are in danger of being lost. In this inevitable risky process of loss, perhaps the environment is what offers some form of steady security; *the mountains, the sea*, the air, the birds, the insects, *the forest*, the winds – all these constitute something lasting …
>
> (Bjørlykhaug and Vetlesen 2020, 78, emphasis added, my translation)

The reason why I find the above passage relevant to our context is because Vetlesen refers to several concrete places in nature: the mountains, the sea, and the forests. He adds that these places can become lost due to the ecological disaster. Further, these places are the concrete homes of the birds and the insects, who also become extinct. Vetlesen also speaks about the environment in general, to which he connects the practice of ecological love. I suggest that the term environment in general

is synonymous with the Earth. If so, Vetlesen's view echoes Candiotto's idea of an interrelationship between love, place, and the Earth. Let us now move to Weber to see if he subscribes to Candiotto's perspective. To do so, let us once again read his book *Matter and Desire*. Here, Weber tells us that:

> [Ecological] love is the practice of aliveness through which I make myself and the other both more alive and more real, … [and] the erotic is the rupture of aliveness in which I grasp that its *space* is [both] … of material reality … [and] a *place* of transformation and imagination.
>
> (Weber 2017, 130, emphasis added)

I find the above quote fascinating for several reasons. First, Weber allegedly wishes to show that there is an interchange between ecological love and place. He does by arguing that aliveness is key. To remember, to practice aliveness makes the world more alive and real. The place of ecological love, then, is also the place of aliveness. Second, one could expect that Weber dealt with place in a concrete manner, similar to both Vetlesen and Candiotto. The opposite, however, seems to be closer to the truth. At least by judging the above quote, Weber does not give a list of various places in nature, as does Vetlesen. The reason why I expected that Weber did so is because he focuses on the place in terms of localities of situated and sensual experiences, for instance, of ecological love. Subsequently, in Weber, the relationship between love, place, and the Earth seems to be less concrete compared to Vetlesen.

The final issue I raise concerns Candiotto suggestion that loving the Earth by loving a place generates moral and political power, too. To have such a close relationship to a concrete place as ecological love implies can gain experiences, insights, and knowledge about how that place may have been affected by the ecocrisis. In turn, the normative ideal of ecological love can motivate us to act to protect these places from further devastation. Such action and interaction can take place, for example, within the framework of ecological democracy. In turn, Candiotto continues, place-situated ecolove can be a facilitator for environmental activism (Candiotto 2022, 179). To exemplify, during the summer and fall of 2021, several environmental organizations organized a camp by the Repparfjorden close to the city of Hammerfest in Norway. Their aim was to protest against, and in the end of the day to hinder the establishing of, a government-sanctioned copper mine. To do so, environmental organizations collaborated with local people, the indigenous people of the Sami, and others having been there for a long time and knowing the place of the Repparfjorden. Here, by ecologically loving this particular place, one can engage in this protest to protect the ontopoetic and magic of that fjord. Now, what about love in Vetlesen and Weber—do they come close to this ecolove-based environmental activism? Vetlesen relates ecological love to other emotional responses regarding environmental tragedy, as well. He here includes sorrow and rage (Vetlesen and Willig 2017; Bjørlykhaug and Vetlesen 2020, 75). As I read him, these emotions, too, motivate our actions and interactions in the case of environmental activism, to mention one way in which these emotions can motivate us.

Vetlesen argues that in this setting sorrow, rage, and love are interconnected. This means that when we learn about the impacts of the ecocrisis, we can react with sorrow due to a felt loss. Further, this sorrow can make us angry at those who are responsible for this situation. However, that is only half the story; we can choose to love nature yet again, and by doing that be even more strongly motivated to protect nature, for instance, through environmental activism. Here, Vetlesen mentions, for instance, Extinction Rebellion along with the school strikes and the Fridays for Future movement initiated by Greta Thunberg. This group uses the method of civil disobedience, to mention only one of the ways in which environmental activists can organize themselves (Chapter 5). Against this backdrop, Vetlesen holds, the love we may feel toward nature can be exchanged by experiences of loss and rage if, to illustrate, if a tawny owl has gone extinct at the concrete place where we live. Then, he continues, the love lost due to this incident and the feelings of loss, sorrow, and rage can be transformed into collective and political mobilization (ibid.). What about Weber, then? As I read him, he does not seem very preoccupied with environmental activism. Nonetheless, following Candiotto, Weberian ecological love is a "fundamental moral and political power" (Candiotto 2022, 179). What is more, she continues, Weber's account of love may in fact serve as a "catalyst for environmental activism" (ibid.). Although Weber is less concrete than Vetlesen concerning environmental activism, as far as they identify the same origin of ecological love, Weber, too, could be willing to defend the same kind environmental activism as Vetlesen does.

In this final subchapter of Chapter 4, I inquired what I coined as ecological love. From my outlook, this love is crucial to the framework of ecological democracy. To fully engage inside this political framing, ecolove motivates us to protect the intrinsic moral value of the Earth and the cosmos. From this ecocentric perspective, ecological love is a relevant way to emotionally encountering all existing beings.

5 Ecological Democracy

The Moral Trump of Earth Politics

What is ecological democracy? Certainly, in this book, this question is one of the most crucial to answer. Simultaneously, the question seems almost impossible to answer. Indeed, there are some scholars who could be characterized as pioneers in this field, such as John S. Dryzek, whom were introduced and discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. And yet, one can argue that while green political theory has existed for at least 40 years, the idea of ecological democracy has been developed in diverse ways during time period. As a result, this theoretical landscape may now consist of too many scholars to gather them under one definition of ecological democracy. Further, by being a relatively an unmature research field, as we speak, many green political theorists develop the idea of ecological democracy—partly in various directions and based on various understandings of nature, politics, and other central issues.

Still, in Chapter 5, I am primarily inspired by Robyn Eckersley. As I explained earlier, she is one of the most central contributors to the development of ecological democracy. According to Eckersley, the ecological democracy framework seeks to "re-examine the democratic ideals, foundations and institutions of liberal democracy from a critical ecological vantage point to show how they license unjust and irreversible environmental harm" (Eckersley 2020, 2). This means that the established and influencing model of liberal democracy and its representative system is perceived as outdated in our age of the ecological crisis. As I explained in Chapter 1, we currently move from one geological epoch to another, from the Holocene to the Anthropocene. In this context, the liberal democracy has been the dominating way understanding democracy, at least in the West. Due to this historically and presently domination, some green political theorists associate liberal democracy with the Holocene rather than the Anthropocene (Dryzek and Pickering 2019). Along these lines, it is assumed that liberal democracy was developed especially during the raise of the technological revolution and global capitalism. In that sense, liberal democracy goes hand in hand with ideologies and social systems which for several hundreds of years overexploiting given, limited, constantly reduced, and to some degree extinct natural resources. Thus, some argue, representative democracy is part of the problem, that is, the environmental disaster, and consequently cannot solve this tragedy. If so, Eckersley suggests, we need to re-imagine our

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principles and practices of democracy. Thus, ecological democracy is a political response to the serious, pervasive, long-term, and irreversible effects of today's nature and climate crisis. So, to protect the Earth system, ecological democracy is a vision to re-imagine democracy in that present crisis. To do that is by several influencing green political theorists considered as democracy's main task and first priority (e.g., Dryzek 1997; Eckersley 2004, 14). I believe that the above aims of the ecological democracy framework resonate with quite a few green political theorists and beyond.

Interestingly, in her 2019 paper "Ecological Democracy and the Rise and Decline of Liberal Democracy: Looking Back, Looking Forward", Eckersley maps what she takes to be the terrain of some of the most central developments of the principles and the practices of ecological democracy within the field of green political theory during the last three decades or so. Since Eckersley is among the most influencing voices in this research field during this entire time period, her observations are worthwhile listening to and learning from. Here, she portrays this development as consisting of two new "waves" (Eckersley 2020, 216, 218, 225–227) or, more strongly formulated, two "shifts" (ibid., 214, 223). Further, Eckersley labels these waves or shifts as ecological democracy "1.0" (ibid., 218, 225, 229, 230) and ecological democracy "2.0", respectively (ibid., 229). Noteworthy, Eckersley introduces the concept of ecological democracy "3.0" (ibid., 229), as well. She here has in mind such scholars as John M. Meyer and his 2015 book *Engaging the Everyday: Environmental Social Criticism and the Resonance Dilemma*. Unlike both ecological democracy 1.0 and ecological democracy 2.0, ecological democracy 3.0 asks for new ways in which "publics [are] the means for connecting local *grievances* with broader structures, which inevitably leads to questioning the local and/or national regulatory environment that inhibits more sustainable practices" (ibid., 229, emphasis added).

According to Eckersley, scholars who were part of the first stage of green political theory, namely, ecological democracy 1.0, studied "the systematic production of environmental injustices and ecological degradation" (Eckersley 2020, 218). From their viewpoint, this production is "not simply the result of distortions in liberal democracy arising from inequalities in bargaining power and political participation, or political corruption" (ibid.). In contrast, from Eckersley's angle, the production of environmental injustices and ecological degradation was also an "inevitable by-product of the limited temporal, spatial, epistemological, and community horizons of liberal democracies" (ibid.). By arguing so, she refers to limitations and by-products involving:

> short election cycles ranging from three to five years; territorial and electoral boundaries that bear little relationship to nested ecological boundaries; the fact that many transboundary ecological problems are not discernible by lay publics (which produces an unavoidable dependency upon specialist and complex scientific expertise); and a reification of the nation-state as the primary subject and locus of popular sovereignty.
>
> (ibid.)

From this standpoint, then:

> elected representatives are not institutionally obliged to answer to any community other than their electorates or their nation for the ecological consequences of their decisions, even when it can be clearly foreseen that other communities, now and in the future, will be seriously harmed
>
> (ibid.)

The new body of scholarship of ecological democracy 1.0 often argued that the above picture characterizes some of the core problems of representative democracy as such and while being faced by today's environmental tragedy.

Unlike ecological democracy 1.0, Eckersley portrays ecological democracy 2.0 thus:

> The central preoccupation of the new materialist iteration of ecological democracy is the redirection of the material practices of everyday life to create counter-flows of democratic power and more sustainable systems and flows of food, energy, water, and materials through local communities and environments.
>
> (ibid., 223)

Here, the principles of ecological democracy are often practiced in promising spaces on a local scale of everyday life. Proponents of ecological democracy 2.0 wish to create "new and more ecologically responsible material practices in collective, embodied, and prefigurative ways" (ibid.). Different from the first stage, then, the current shift toward ecological democracy 2.0 in the understanding of democracy is inspired by new materialism (ibid.). Although new materialism can be defined in different ways, Eckersley here has in mind "the redirection of the material practices of everyday life to create counter-flows of democratic power and more sustainable systems and flows of food, energy, water, and materials through local communities and environments" (ibid.). While ecological democracy 1.0 focuses on how the representative model of democracy can be transformed from above to become more representative, the new wave of ecological democracy 2.0 widens its attention by underscoring the need for "more radical and participatory forms of democracy 'from below' through the creation of 'publics' and self-organising movements" (ibid.).

As a central figure of the first wave of ecological democracy 1.0, Eckersley presumably articulates an ethical-political principle as the basis of her account of this model. This principle, I believe, has the same logical form as a first things first reasoning. In effect, important matters—especially today's environmental disaster—should be addressed before other things. Put formula-like, this principle declares that without an ecologically sustainable planet, there is no democracy. More detailedly, Eckersley formulates her ethical-political principle thus:

> [A]t the *very minimum* … there are certain *basic ecological conditions* essential to human survival that should *not* be bargained away by political

> majorities because such conditions provide the very *preconditions* (in the form of life support) for present and future generations of humans to practice [of ecological] democracy. … [T]hey might be seen as *even more fundamental* than the human political rights that form the ground rules of [representative] democracy.
>
> (Eckersley 1996, 218, emphasis added)

So, according to Eckersley, ecological democracy should be based on certain conditions or preconditions that are minimal or basic. Here, she apparently argues on an ontological level. If so, these basic preconditions are neither chosen nor can be chosen away. Rather, they must be somehow dealt with. Further, these basic preconditions are ecological. From my viewpoint, the term ecological can be understood in at least two interconnected ways. Ecological can here refer to nature. If so, in accordance with Eckersley's approach to nature (Chapter 2), ecological implies ecocentrism. To recall, both ontologically and normatively, the ecocentric approach recognizes human nature along with animate and inanimate parts of nonhuman nature. Thus, the whole nature must be given a principled priority, or, what I label as nature's moral trump (Christoff 1996, 161; Eckersley 1996, 212). In doing that, I argue that nature should be morally protected through humans' moral responsibility or moral stewardship (Christoff 1996, 156). On top of that, nature ecocentric defined in line with deep ecology draws on the natural science of ecology. So, the notion of nature's moral trump also refers to nature in terms of the entire Earth system. And normatively, nature's moral trump demands that the entire nature should be protected based on nature's intrinsic moral value (Chapters 2 and 4). Also, nature is given a first priority vis-à-vis other considerations. This trump is a basic moral value that should be safeguarded on behalf of everything existing. Consequently, the idea of nature's moral trump is conceived as the foundation of all other political issues, and not as one among many, different, and competing interests. Eckersleyian ecological democracy defines, therefore, nature and the ecocrisis as the most important political issue. Further, ecological democracy aims at protecting both present and future generations. This partly means that environmental policy by many green political theorists is considered as the most important policy area (Barry 1999, 2). By being ecological preconditions, these political responsibilities should not be bargained away. Another significant aspect of ecological democracy, at least in Eckersley's version, is the all ecologically affected principle (Chapter 1). To recall, in light of insights articulated by Eckersley, Dryzek, and Jonathan Pickering, in the Anthropocene and considering the ways in which this geological epoch impacts the Earth system by producing an ecological crisis, ecological-democratic transformations and transitions can be hindered. One manner that such a hindering may take place is in the case the all ecologically affected principle is not safeguarded. In turn, the democratic voice, participation, and representation on behalf of humans, as well as more-than-humans, are not safeguarded. The core of this argument, I think, is the following: to be affected by the ecological crisis and thus to be an affected party related to how this crisis will in the Anthropocene affect the entire Earth system. To more efficiently tackling this situation requires new moral, legal, and political frameworks. This especially

incorporates to actually having the opportunity to express one's voice, participate as an active citizen, and be systemically represented in formal fora on various scales. In contrast, however, being an affected party vis-à-vis the ecological crisis, yet without the capability of having a voice, implies a democratic deficit. Again, in our age of the environmental emergency, the governance form of the representative model developed during the previous geological epoch, the Holocene, is not representative enough while the new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, surfaces. The representative model of liberal democracy is based on the election (especially parliamentary ones) by citizens through the voting channel. The representative democracy also presupposes a party system and that the citizens being members of those parties. Additionally, the democratic channel of election is safeguarded by the civil and political rights of the constitutional state and distribution of power. Still, to fully grasp the idea of democracy, one should additionally realize that election is not the only way to build or practice democracy—both historically and today (e.g., Reybrouck 2016; Landemore 2020).

Thus, our ways of doing democracy need to be further democratized in line with our current need for Anthropocene governance (Dryzek and Pickering 2019). Such a democratic transformation and transition from a Holocene to an Anthropocene governance proposes a democratization process through which democracy becomes more representative and make more affected parties participate. In the discourse on democracy, perhaps especially in that on ecological democracy, various forms of democratic reforms are suggested. To exemplify, to find ways in which future generations and nonhuman nature can be represented or even themselves participate (e.g., Eckersley 1992, 2004; Dryzek and Pickering 2019). In this context, Eckersley's proposes the all ecologically affected principle. In my reading, this suggestion is a highly relevant path for the transformations and transitions from a Holocene governance to an Anthropocene governance. Eckersley articulates this principle thus:

> *[A]ll* those potentially *affected* by *ecological* risks (human or nonhuman, present or future generations) should have some meaningful opportunity to *participate* or otherwise be *represented* in the making of the policies or decisions that generate such risks.
>
> (Eckersley 2004, 171, emphasis added, see 16, 111, 112, 118–120, 137, 243)

From Eckersley's angle, the all ecologically affected principle is "[t]he regulative ideal" or an "ambit claim" of the ecological model of democracy (Eckersley 2004, 111, 242–243). This principle aims at tackling what she defines as the double challenge of the ecological-democratic approach, namely, risk aversiveness and escaping unfair displacement of risk (ibid., 111). Significantly, Eckersley laments on this regulative ideal thus:

> [I]t is neither possible nor practicable for all affected parties literally to deliberate together *en masse*. Indeed, ecological democracy must necessarily

> contain a representative element if it is to function as a democracy *for* the affected, including future generations and non-human species. Accordingly the question of political representation emerges as a crucial issue in both the theory and practice of ecological democracy.
>
> (Eckersley 2004, 132, original emphasis, see 112)

Later, in 2019, Eckersley revisits the all ecologically affected principle. Then, she elaborates on some seminal aspects of the principle as follows:

> [T]he formulation of … [a] … regulative ideal for ecological democracy … was not an argument to obliterate or replace existing democracies and political identities or jettison the 'all-subjected' principle …. Legal systems need jurisdictional boundaries. Rather, it was more modest: that the 'all-subjected principle' should be *supplemented* (not supplanted) with the 'all-affected principle', at the very least in cases of serious and irreversible ecological harm, to avoid major deficits in the representation of, and accountability to, neglected environmental communities.
>
> (Eckersley 2020, 219, original emphasis)

Before I interpret the above quotes—especially why Eckersley argues that the all ecologically affected principle should be supplemented by the all-subjected principle should—let me shortly explain the differences between these two principles. In its most generic form, the all-subjected principle simply says that "[e]very adult subject to a government and its laws must be presumed to be qualified as, and has an unqualified right to be, a member of the demos" (Dahl 1989, 127). On the other side, the classic formulation of the all-affected principle states that "[e]veryone who is affected by the decisions of a government should have the right to participate in that government" (Dahl 1970, 49). The distinction between the all-affected principle and the all-subjected principle has gained a significant status in current discourses on democracy theories. Yet, the distinction is disputed—even around the issue of whether such a divide exists at all, or if these principles are interconnected and enriching each other, as Eckersley indicates.

I claim that the all ecologically affected principle is the core of the ecological model of democracy—a core which should be based on ecocentrism. To recall, the all ecologically affected principle states that all those potentially—and let me add, actually—affected by the risks of the ecological crisis should have some meaningful opportunity to democratically participate or otherwise be represented when these policies or decisions are made. According to Eckersley, the basic outline of such an ecocentric perspective may be explained and defended based on four different, yet interrelated principles. These principles are ontological holism, the interests of human nature as part of the more-than-human world, present and future generations of human nature and nonhuman nature, as well as a value theory based on an intrinsic moral status of all existence. In what follows, I explain these principles in more detail and show how they can be linked to the all ecologically affected principle.

First, and most basic, ecocentrism "adopts [an ontologically] *holistic* rather than an atomistic perspective" (Eckersley 1992, 46, emphasis added). In turn, as mentioned, the ecocentric approach includes all existing, both animate and inanimate, parts of the world. In light of this ontological holism, Eckersley defines ecocentrism along these lines:

> Ecocentrism is based on an ecologically informed philosophy of *internal relatedness*, according to which all organisms are not simply interrelated with their environment but also *constituted* by those very environmental interrelationships.
>
> (Eckersley 1992, 49, original emphasis)

In the above quote, Eckersley appears to define the ecocentric standpoint by mentioning two aspects. One aspect describes what she assumes to be the ontologically constitutive role of the internal relatedness between all parts of nature. The other, however, is the epistemological aspect that ecocentrism is ecologically informed. The latter indicates that ecocentrism partly is based on natural-scientific knowledge, especially ecology (Eckersley 1992, 47). In my interpretation, today, this could, and should, involve Earth system science and research on the Anthropocene, to mention only some of the significant roles of natural sciences for ecological democracy (Chapter 1). Further, Eckersley criticizes what she labels as a liberal ontology. This term refers to the ontological assumptions of representative democracy, namely ontological dualism (Eckersley 2004, 104). As I explained in Chapter 2, this view separates humans and nature. Based on this premise, liberalism denies "any noninstrumental dependency on ecosystems and the biological world in general" on behalf of humans (ibid., 104–105). This happens, Eckersley argues, by ignoring its ecological costs. In contrast, defenders of ecological democracy would on this ontological level probably:

> add that ecosystem integrity is a *precondition* for individual and collective human well-being (in the longer run), and that it can only be properly maintained over time when the human understanding of community is *extended to include ecological communities and nonhuman others*. Looking after nature becomes not simply a prudent thing to do but also an expression of ecologically embedded selfhood.
>
> (Eckersley 2004, 105, emphasis added)

As far as Eckersley's ecological-democratic framework is grounded in the above ontological holism and ecocentrism, it seems adequate to link this viewpoint to the all ecologically affected principle to these dimensions, as well. Given that, the all ecologically affected principle explains why and how all those potentially affected by the risks of the ecological crisis should have some meaningful opportunity to democratically participate or otherwise be represented when policies or decisions are made. Here, the why refers to the denial of the ontological holism as denial of the reciprocity, interconnectedness,

and interdependence of all existence, whereas the how points to the assistance of the all ecologically affected principle. By this, I mean how this principle can apply the rather abstract ideas of ontological holism and ecocentrism in concrete contexts.

Second, ecocentrism "recognizes the full range of human interests in the nonhuman world" (Eckersley 1992, 46). From the ecocentric perspective, while it "incorporates [the idea of human interest in the nonhuman nature] yet [it] goes beyond the resource conservation and human welfare ecology perspectives" (ibid., 46). Resource conservation is a utilitarian and anthropocentric method "improving economic productivity by achieving the maximum sustainable yield of natural resources", whereas human welfare ecology is preoccupied by "the health, safety, and general amenity of the urban and agricultural environments" (ibid., 37). Since Eckersley's ecocentric approach both encompasses and transcends these outlooks, it would be relevant to know exactly how or to what degree. As far as I can see, Eckersley never explains what the ecocentric framework keeps and not of neither resource conservation nor human welfare ecology viewpoints. In my reading, ecocentrists would probably reject all utilitarian, economic, instrumental, or anthropocentric methods. So, to recognize the full range of human interests in the nonhuman world, ecocentrism demands another value theory. I return to the latter issue in the next paragraph. For now, let me suggest how this principle can be related to the all ecologically affected principle. Given that there is a link between the second principle of ecocentrism and the all ecologically affected principle, societies and the world at large should then be organized by safeguarding all those potentially affected by the risks of the ecological crisis. In turn, they would have some meaningful opportunity to democratically participate or otherwise be represented when these policies or decisions are made. Regarding the principle dealing with the recognition of the full range of human interests in the nonhuman world, this should never be compromised with respect to the above ontological holism. So, given that there is an interconnection between human nature and nonhuman nature, the interests of both these parties must be met. Also, to achieve this goal, principle two of the ecocentric framework, I suggest, demands that all humans and human interests potentially affected by the ecological crisis should have access to a wide range of both formal democratic fora (e.g., parliaments and courts) and informal democratic fora (e.g., public spheres and civil society). In the next step, these fora constitute places in which they can voice their interests or otherwise be represented (e.g., by politicians, spokespersons, and leaders of civil society organizations) when policies or decisions are made which impact human interests.

Third, ecocentrism "recognizes the interests of [present and] future generations of humans and nonhumans" (Eckersley 1992, 46). Later, in the book *The Green State*, Eckersley repeats this perspective like this: "the affected community would typically include both present and future human populations and the ecosystems in which they are embedded" (Eckersley 2004, 113). One main way to achieve this goal, Eckersley proposes, is to consider what Warwick Fox and other deep ecologists label as "transpersonal ecology" (Eckersley 1992, 61). As I explained in Chapter 2, Eckersley appears to a large degree to develop her ideal of ecological

democracy from Fox's version of deep ecology, who builds further on the original deep-ecological insights of Arne Naess. The main goal of transpersonal ecology is "the cultivation of a wider sense of self through the common or everyday psychological process of *identification* with others" (ibid., original emphasis). Moreover, this identification is both psychological and cosmological (ibid., 61–62). The latter dimension is due to ecocentrism presupposing a "particular picture of the world or cosmos" of which humans and everything else are parts (ibid., 62). Transpersonal ecology is also based on "experience [in] a *lived sense* of identification with other beings" (ibid., original emphasis). At the end of the day, by widening oneself in a transpersonal manner, one may identify with and recognize the interests of present and future generations of humans and nonhumans—including all existence and the entire Mother Earth. Noteworthy, Eckersley's ecocentric framework involves not only future generations of human nature but also future generations of nonhuman nature. On top of that, to recognize the interests of present and future generations of humans and nonhumans, the model of ecological democracy suggests that the "reconceptualization of the demos as no longer fixed in terms of people and territory provides a challenge to traditional conceptions of democracy that have presupposed some form of fixed enclosure, in terms of territory and/or people" (Eckersley 2004, 113). To illustrate, people in some regions of the world (e.g., the small island states of the Pacific Ocean of the Global South) may be forced to migrate to another region as transnational climate refugees (e.g., Lysaker 2023). In this context, but possibly others, too, some parties are affected more directly or more seriously and should therefore themselves be able to democratically voice their interests (ibid.). How, then, can the all ecologically affected principle be achieved in such contexts? Eckersley suggests that to preserve all those potentially affected by the risks of the ecological crisis should have some meaningful opportunity to democratically participate or otherwise be represented when these policies or decisions are made, supranational framework is one path ahead. Here, Eckersley refers to what she describes as a "transnational, green democratic state" (Eckersley 2004, 2). Such a regulative ideal of the state is further grounded in an "ecologically responsible statehood", involving ecological steward and the role of being a facilitator of transboundary democracy (ibid.). As a result, the principles and practices of ecological democracy seek to be achieved on both state level and transnational level. Here, the ideal of the all ecologically affected principle can be realized by virtue of democratic transformations and transitions on a transnational level. To illustrate, the ecological-democratic model extends the accountability to transnational civil society and intergovernmental organizations, which can be environmental ones, as well as the society of states in general (ibid., 15). Further, Eckersley refers to the rise of environmental multilateralism (e.g., environmental treaties, declarations, and international environmental standards), the emergence of sustainable development and the so-called ecological modernization as competitive strategies of corporations and state, as well as the "emergence of environmental advocacy within civil society and of new democratic discursive designs within the administrative state" (e.g., community environmental monitoring and reporting, third-party litigation rights, environmental and technology impact assessment, statutory policy

advisory committees, citizens' juries, consensus conferences, and public inquiries) (ibid.). Eckersley also underscores the role of "transnational counterhegemomic protests and discourses" (ibid., 24) as well as to some extent being positive vis-à-vis the development of transnational public spheres (ibid., 150) as arenas where the all ecologically affected principle be achieved in the case of the third principle of ecocentrism.

Fourth, and finally, ecocentrism "recognizes the interests of the nonhuman community" (Eckersley 1992, 46). Eckersley here refers to value theory in terms of axiologically defending "the intrinsic value" of all individually living organisms (i.e., animals, plants, and microorganisms) as well as "systemic entities" or "ecological entities at different levels of aggregation" (e.g., populations, species, ecosystems, the ecosphere, and gene pools) (ibid., 46–47, 60–61). In short, the ecocentric view of nature includes all existence in the sense of animate and inanimate parts of the world, both ontologically and normatively. In my account, this standpoint recognizes all existences and assumes that everything in the world has an intrinsic moral value (Chapter 2). Further, these parts of the world should be morally protected on par with humans. Eckersley elaborates that ecocentrism should be normatively justified by what she calls an autopoietic intrinsic value theory (ibid., 60). Here, as presented and discussed in Chapter 2, she partly builds further on Fox' account of deep ecology, namely transpersonal ecology. This standpoint assumes the existence of an "intrinsic value to all entities that display the property of *autopoiesis*, which means "self-production" or "self-renewal"" (ibid., original emphasis). The ecocentric value theory recognizes the interests of the nonhuman community, then, in the case of all existence as having an intrinsic moral value in themselves and thus demanding to be protected. By recognizing the interests of nonhuman nature in ecocentric terms, Eckersley further explains by quoting Fox that such an intrinsic moral value covers "*all* process-structures that 'continuously strive to produce and sustain their own organizational activity and structure'" (ibid., 61, original emphasis). What, then, about the all ecologically affected principle; can this principle be linked to ecocentrism, as well? As I read Eckersley, she would accept the claim that ecocentrism contributes to a greater extent than other views on nature (e.g., anthropocentrism and biocentrism) to attempt at achieving this principle. In fact, in her book *The Green State*, she explains that the "*ambit claim* for ecological democracy [is] based on" the all ecologically affected principle (Eckersley 2004, 111, emphasis added). In the next step, Eckersley links that principle to her view on nature in this way:

> when the circle of moral considerability is widened to the maximum to include all potentially affected others, *then the very possibility of arbitrarily displacing ecological costs onto innocent human and nonhuman others is foreclosed.*
>
> (Eckersley 2004, 120, original emphasis)

In my reading, while speaking of nonhuman nature in the context of morally widening the circle of concern to a maximum, Eckersley continues to adopt her

early articulation of ecocentrism. To morally protect all existence of their intrinsic moral value, then, Eckersley appears to suggest that we need to develop new and more democratic forms of democracy—ecological democracy (Eckersley 1992, 2004). Also, since the all ecologically affected principle is preoccupied with risk aversiveness and escaping unfair displacement of risk, it demands that concerning proposed risk-generating practices can be agreed to by all those actually affected parties, be they poor and rich, citizens and noncitizens, present and in the future, the living and the not-yet-born, human and nonhuman (ibid., 118, 165). This is one of the significant promises of the Eckersleyian model, I believe, that it attempts at showing the interconnections between ethics and politics, between ecocentrism and Anthropocene governance.

Against this introductory part of this chapter—especially the all ecologically affected principle and its normative justification based on the four principles of ecocentrism—Chapter 5 analyzes the imaginary of ecological democracy as such, partly by building further on Chapter 1. Particularly, this chapter focuses on the idea of the Earth's moral trump, which was introduced earlier. Nonetheless, let me say a few more words about this idea. From my angle, the idea of the Earth's moral trump is an adequate democratic and ethical response while the Earth system is becoming increasingly instable. Considering ecophenomenology, as elucidated in Chapters 1, 3, and 4, and the non-anthropocentric existential preconditions clarified in Chapter 4, a trump here means that the concern for the entire planet is the most fundamental political task instead of being understood as one among many and competing political interests. In this chapter, I apply the idea of a moral trump of ecological democracy related to three discourses. The first discourse concerns civil disobedience. I here argue that civil disobedience—though a disruptive action which in most cases takes place outside of established democratic channels and even being illegal—serves as a litmus test of ecological democracy as a struggle against further degradation of nonhuman nature. As indicated by both critical theorists Maeve Cooke, William E. Scheuermann, and Robin Celikates as well as green critical theorists Eckersley, in the age of the ecological crisis, civil disobedience might be legitimate in general and within the framework of ecological democracy in particular. Thus, the people behind environmental disobedience can be viewed as what Dryzek labels as discourse entrepreneurs or formative agents (Dryzek and Pickering 2019). Chapter 5 further applies the idea of a moral trump of ecological democracy by analyzing citizens' jury. This idea suggests that democracy in general and ecological democracy in particular can be further democratized by involving the citizens to a greater extent than the representative model does. Here, the green political theory of Dryzek addresses citizens' jury. I will, therefore, study his understanding of this framework. I discuss Dryzek's perspective from the viewpoint of Cristina Lafont, an influencing critical theorist and scholar in the field of citizens' jury. Last, the idea of a moral trump of ecological democracy is applied in the case of ecocide. Here, inspired by Eckersley, Dryzek, and other green political theorists, this subchapter seeks to further develop a transnational framework of ecological democracy. It does so in terms of Polly Higgins' concept of ecocide. Lately, the idea of ecocide has been rearticulated by critical theorist

Jay M. Bernstein. He studies ecocide in the context of what he portrays as the ethical tragedy of climate change. Ecocide refers to a legal protection against further degradation of the planet's ecosystems. Here, ecocide is suggested to be understood as a way to internationally recognizing such degradation as a legal crime that should be prosecuted within international legal tribunals. In continuation with this outlook, I suggest that ecocide tribunals can further enhance ecological democracy on a transnational scale. And on a national scale, ecocide tribunals may assist in democratically engaging and governing more effectively in the Anthropocene.

5.1 Environmental Disobedience: A Litmus Test for Ecological Democracy

In the last decade, several new organizations have become a seminal, yet a disputed part of the global environmental movements. To illustrate, the organizations Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion have been established and grown from national groups to transnational ones. Despite their differences, these organizations often use civil disobedience to achieve their aims. Members of these environmental movements often claim that civil disobedience is the last resort and a safety valve. This implies that they have tried out all means of the representative democracy to challenge what these organizations and their activists perceives as business as usual. Thus, to them, civil disobedience is an adequate way to struggle against the acclaimed lack of action or will to act by the government, parliament, or other people in charge or who should have taken the charge. Despite increasing and more certain scientific knowledge about the ecological crisis, then, Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, and others hold that civil disobedience is a necessary part of our democratic toolkit.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Fridays for Future's and Extinction Rebellion's protest has created both scholarly and public debate. In Norway, for instance, some representatives of the parliament and mainstream newspapers claim that civil disobedience is anti-democratic, extra-parliamentary, or even authoritarian. These reactions stand in stark contrast, therefore, to the support of civil disobedience by the many influential philosophers. Although the list is longer, let me mention some of these philosophers, who defend civil disobedience from a wide range of philosophical traditions: Étienne de La Boétie, Henry David Thoreau, Hannah Arendt, Herbert Marcuse, John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, Peter Singer, Noam Chomsky, Étienne Balibar, Michael Walzer, Martha C. Nussbaum, Jürgen Habermas, and Bill McKibben (Lysaker 2022). In addition to these academics supporting civil disobedience, there are historically many people who have used this means to achieve their aims of societal transformation and transition. Here, as a minimum, should Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King jr., Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, and, more recently, Greta Thunberg be mentioned.

In the spirit of such current environmental movements as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, and despite many unique scholarly accounts and justification of this activity, civil disobedience can be defined as the considered and intentional speech and/or action of individuals, minorities, or other groups motivated by their

moral conscience. Thus, civil disobedience has a moral authority. Also, despite that civil disobedience is peaceful and non-violent, this activity is legally prohibited. Those using civil disobedience must, therefore, expect and accept various sorts of punishment by the state. Such resistance also shows how much the protesters are willing to sacrifice for their cause (including imprisonment and fine) with the aim of changing what they claim is immoral, undemocratic, or unfair legislation, policymaking, or institutional practice. Additionally, the protest is communicated publicly to influence the authorities or the majority, as well as mobilize as many people as possible. Civil disobedience is directed in particular at what the protesters believe is immoral, undemocratic, or unfair. As mentioned, such peaceful protest is often viewed as the last resort. This means that formal channels, such as the right to vote and freedom of expression and demonstration, have already been used without the desired result. Part of the purpose of civil disobedience being non-violent is to protect innocent third parties from its side effects.

Civil disobedience has been scholarly studied for a long time. Even within critical theory have thinkers such as William E. Scheuerman, Maeve Cook, and Robin Celikates, and, before them, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas examined civil disobedience. In his 2021 paper "Political Disobedience and the Climate Emergency", Scheuerman suggests that there currently are four scholarly stories about civil disobedience. I label them as the standard story, the ecotage story, the ethical story, and the uncivil story. In addition to these stories portrayed by Scheuermann, Cook has formulated a fifth one, which I label the embodiment story. Although both Scheuerman and Cooke engage in the discourse on civil disobedience and the ecological crisis, they seem to depart from each other on one central issue: Cooke explicitly articulates a non-anthropocentric normative basis for civil disobedience in the Anthropocene, whereas Scheuerman does not appear to do so.

First, the standard story about civil disobedience is standard because this narrative is probably the most common in both academic and public debate. The standard narrative defines environment activists' civil disobedience as anti-democratic, anti-parliamentary, or authoritarian. Instead, a counter-narrative is advocated: the same systems (e.g., economic, political, or otherwise) that have created the problem (read: the ecocrisis) can also solve that problem. That is to say, liberal democracy's representative election to parliament, loyalty to the rule of law, and the constitution, as well as a boundless and globalized capitalist ideology of growth and profit are better suited, it is claimed, than other visions to deal with the environmental catastrophe. The standard story is by some criticized for advocating business as usual in terms of the liberal, representative democracy, constitutional states, parliamentary elections, and limitless capitalist growth. According to that critique, the rejection of civil disobedience as democratically illegitimate is a method to hide one's own power-based interests.

Second, the ecotage story comes from Sam Love and David Obst's *Ecotage!*, an environmental activist handbook (Love and Obst 1972). According to these authors, ecotage, or, what some refer to as environmental sabotage, is when sabotage is used as a political tool to fight against those people who by the activists are

claimed to be the driver behind the ecocrisis. Andreas Malm and his book *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* can be located in the ecotage tradition. Here, civil disobedience is not rejected, but it is argued that non-violent civil disobedience has been used for a long time by environmental movements, while the scientifically documented ecocrisis only has accelerated. Malm therefore asks if peaceful demonstrations, intergovernmental conferences, and petitions should be supplemented by forms of non-peaceful protest. According to Malm, civil disobedience alone is insufficient to struggle against the ecocrisis. Rather, environmental activism and protest should be based on a "diversity and plurality [of tactics]" (Malm 2021, 116). He suggests that a diversity of tactics "will open for internal tensions, which no movement that has altered the course of history has done without" (ibid.). Linked to the point about tactics is the idea of the positive radical flank effect. This perspective argues that if social movement, say, the environmental one, has a radical flank (e.g., Just Stop Oil) which makes more peaceful environmental organizations (e.g., Tree Sisters) look less evil to the state, reform proposals or important partial victories of the latter are more likely to be gained (ibid., 49, 50). On the other hand, Malm admits, negative effects of radical flanks exist (e.g., ecoauthoritarianism), too (ibid., 121, 124). Further, from Malm's viewpoint, to champion the main drivers of today's environmental disaster, the target of protest should be more structural than individual, especially fossil infrastructure delivering the fuels of oil and gas from under the ground (ibid., 23). This fossil infrastructure is part of a global energy system, which today is the biggest network of fossil infrastructure ever built (ibid., 69). Malm therefore advocates what he calls "intelligent sabotage" (ibid., 119). To meet the standard of intelligent sabotage, requires that environmental protest is "explainable and acceptable to enough numbers in some places, and if not today, then surely after a little more of [the] breakdown" of today's environmental tragedy (ibid.). He also suggests that "[t]ime and timing are of the essence" of such rally (ibid.). Consequently, ecotage as intelligent sabotage is based on violence in terms of property destruction. By the latter, Malm means "intentionally exerts physical force to inflict injury on a thing owned by someone who does not want it to happen" (ibid., 102). Intelligent sabotage is directed at structures in the sense of physical attacks, which injures, damages, violates, or destroys property with a social or political intention. To illustrate, intelligent sabotage accepts the destruction of private capitalist companies and their unrestrained growth and profit-seeking, especially by continuing to overconsume already limited and increasingly extinct natural resources (e.g., pipelines and diggers of the oil industry). In parallel, Malm holds, the violence of intelligent sabotage and property destruction is "*different in kind* from the violence that hits a human (or an animal) in the face" (ibid. original emphasis). So, on principle, Malm rejects violence against humans and at least some parts of the more-than-human nature, namely animals. In the same breath, Malm argues that "if we accept that property destruction is violence, and that it is less grave than violence against humans, this in itself neither condemns nor condones the practice" (ibid., 104). Instead, property destruction as violence "ought to be avoided for as long as possible" (ibid.). On my reading, Malm wishes to shift the moral gravity point concerning environmental activism, particularly

linked to the definition of violence. Although the state is often understood as safeguarding the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within its territory (e.g., the police), Malm challenges this perspective. He does so by not supporting, so at least not rejecting the idea of the legitimacy of self-defense of environmental activists (ibid., 47). Self-defense means citizens' right to use violence when subjected to illegitimate violence if their response is proportionate to the experienced violence. In turn, Malm apparently asks if the destruction of Mother Earth, which partly is done by fossil infrastructure, is a kind of violence that legitimates self-defense through intelligent sabotage, for example, by demolishing such infrastructure.

Third, the ethical story supports civil disobedience as such for being principled non-violent and moral or conscientious. Furthermore, the ethical story views civil disobedience as a democratic supplement to the parliament and other formal political channels. In the eyes of the ethical story, civil disobedience both breaks and respects the law. The logic here is that when laws are judged to be illegitimate, to break them in virtue of civil disobedience is a way in which to make them more legitimate by attempting to show their blindspot. Environmental activists' civil disobedience is here often supported since the protest is morally grounded in principles of peace and the rejection of violence. Likewise, the demonstrators themselves must experience the form of action as necessary after all formal channels have been tried, without success. Civil disobedience is, therefore, defined as the last resort. The disobedience is rather a resistance to make the legal system more legally secure in line with the state's constitutional basis and safeguarding role. According to the ethical story, civil disobedience is also political and must take place in full transparency and in public space. Also, the moral narrative requires that civil disobedience is motivated by one's conscience when one is subjected to injustice. Despite the fact that civil disobedience is illegal and thus an offence, the legislation and the rule of law are respected in themselves. Finally, civil disobedience is perceived as democracy's safety valve, and thus a democratic supplement to parliamentary elections and other formal channels of the representative model of democracy. Notably, in the context of the ethical narrative, there are some seminal gray areas between law and morality: between legally forbidden and morally acceptable civil disobedience; between legally forbidden civil disobedience and legally legal speech and actions. It is worthwhile mentioning that civil disobedience to some degree is protected by various human rights schemes on international, regional, or national level. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, we learn about the right to freedom of opinion and expression (Article 19) as well as the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association (Article 20). It is up to case law and precedent of states' courts to assess how the consideration of law and morality should be balanced in this borderland, and whether civil disobedience can be defined as the freedom of opinion and expression and/or the freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Fourth, the uncivil story is in favor of a vast range of activities that are covert, legally evasive, violent, offensive, and secret acts. Further, the supporters of this position believe that the word civil—at least as it appears in the moral story—does

not consider the fact that not all political struggles are or should be equally civilized based on the principle of peace and non-violence. At the same time, this fourth narrative considers that civil disobedience must be recognized even if it is uncivil. Examples of such uncivil disobedience are when indigenous peoples, minorities, or other groups experience living deeply immoral, undemocratic, or unjust lives, and use a wide range of resistance to change this situation. According to the uncivil story, then, the moral narrative defines the word civil too narrowly by overlooking a number of forms of protest that may be morally unacceptable but should equally be recognized. Strikingly, the uncivil story about civil disobedience is different from the story of environmental sabotage, and the word uncivil is synonymous with sabotage.

I have thus far described the main characteristics of the standard story, the ecotage story, the ethical story, and the uncivil story of civil disobedience. Now, let me say something about the similarities and the differences with respect to these narratives. The main difference between the standard story and the ecotage story, I believe, is this: both narratives reject civil disobedience, but they do so for diametrically opposed reasons; the standard story rejects civil disobedience because it is claimed to be anti-democratic, anti-parliamentarian, and/or even authoritarian, whereas the ecotage narrative scraps civil disobedience because the method is not violent enough. Here, as outlined, Malm proposes both infrastructure destruction and civil disobedience as part of the same framework of environmental protest. He appeals to a replacement of today's assumed Gandhian environmental movement with a Fanonian one, on the one hand (Malm 2021, 161), and, on the other, he participates in the offspring of the hot summer of 2018, namely the new, global environmental movements, Extinction Rebellion and Ende Gelände (ibid., 17, 159), who are anchored in the mainstream Gandhian ethical narrative of civil disobedience. Scheuerman claims, therefore, that Malm's standpoint is unclear since he uses both a "fierce" and "revolutionary" "rhetoric" and appeals to "political violence [which] consists overwhelmingly of defending selective property damage but not harm to or unwanted violations of human (or other forms of) life" (Scheuerman 2021, 803). Another concern, I believe, is the fear that though Malm in reality partly defends civil disobedience based on the ethical story, his rhetoric could nevertheless inspire authoritarian movements, ideologies, and regimes. Then, Malmian intelligent sabotage could be adopted by environmental authoritarians to legitimate their violent approaches to the ecocrisis. As explained in Chapter 1, such ecoauthoritarianism occurs when extremists ideologically get involved in the fight for nature. That is to say, they mix together today's ideas about nature conservation, sustainable development, or the idea of a green shift with old Nazi perceptions about race, gender, immigration, or diversity, to mention only some possible combinations concerning environmental politics in an authoritarian register. When comparing the standard story and the ecotage story, we also see how different the ethical story is from the two former ones. In contrast to both the standard story and the ecotage story, the Gandhian story supports civil disobedience on ethical terms. Moreover, like the ethical story, the uncivil story advocates civil disobedience. At the same time, these narratives disagree on a core issue: where the ethical

narrative defends civil disobedience by both breaking and respecting the law, the uncivil narrative has a more complex approach to the legislation. Perhaps the most important difference between them is that the latter perceives the former as morally correct when only peaceful and non-violent methods are accepted. When the uncivil story suggests a wider arsenal of methods, however, this includes covert, legally deviant, violent, abusive, or clandestine actions. According to Scheuerman, the uncivil narrative has become increasingly central in research on civil disobedience. Still, the standard story is still the most familiar in the scholarly and public discourse (Scheuerman 2021).

Thus far, I have presented and discussed the first four stories about civil disobedience. Now, I will portray a fifth one. On my reading, Cooke's portrays civil disobedience as what I label as the embodied story. In her 2020 paper "Ethics and Politics in the Anthropocene", Cooke argues that transformative politics in the present geological epoch should be based on what she describes as "the ethically non-anthropocentric ethics" (Cooke 2020, 1168, see 1171, 1176, 1177). By arguing so, critical theorist Cooke partly refers to *The Politics of the Anthropocene*, the seminal book written by the green political theorists John S. Dryzek and Jonathan Pickering and which I engaged with throughout the present monograph (Dryzek and Pickering 2019). By the term non-anthropocentric ethics, Cooke means "the idea and conduct of a good human life in association with other entities, human and non-human" (Cooke 2020, 1168). Thus, Cooke echoes the non-anthropocentric standpoints described in Chapter 2, or the non-anthropocentric critical theories of Hartmut Rosa (Chapter 3) and Arne Johan Vetlesen (Chapter 4). Noteworthy, she never explains if her non-anthropocentrism is based on biocentrism or ecocentrism (Chapter 2). However, since Cooke articulates an ethics as well as refers to the Anthropocene (which, at least ontologically, includes both animate and inanimate parts of nature), her non-anthropocentrism can normatively defend ecocentrism. If so, Cooke's standpoint, too, can be characterized as non-anthropocentric critical theory. Further, her ethical vision is based on a concept of the good life which is "centred on a conceptualization of ethical truth as radically transcending" (ibid., 1178). In doing that, this has "multiple implications for critical theorizing and for activism" (ibid.). To be civil disobedient based on such an ecocentric ethics, then, one should phenomenologically be bodily grounded: "to engage in bodily and mental practices, in order to be able to respond forcefully but lovingly to the challenges they [e.g., Fridays for Future] encounter in their efforts to bring about radical social transformation" (ibid.).

The embodied story, I suggest, leans toward ecophenomenology, involving subjects' deep-ecological experiences (Chapter 3). Cooke has in common with ecophenomenology, then, an appeal to the entire body, incorporating all its capacities and practices (e.g., the sense apparatus, nerve system, emotions, as well as self-consciousness, rationality, and autonomy) (Merleau-Ponty 1945; Harding 2006). Here, Cooke relates the body to a particular form of being and acting attentively:

> *attentiveness* to their [i.e., non-humans'] specific constitution and their particular qualities; importantly, such attentiveness entails relating to the

> specificities of others as putative embodiments of ethical good, the source of which is not human powers but transcendent of them.
>
> (Cooke 2020, 1172, original emphasis)

As bodily beings, in ecophenomenological terms, we can protest against the ecological crisis in a sensual and diverse way. That is to say, one acts with the help of the eyes, ears, head, stomach, legs, back—and, most importantly for Cooke, the heart in virtue of loving the world, similar to what I defend in the present book as ecological love (Chapter 4). We open ourselves, then, by approaching the ecocrisis and nature at large in ways in which Cooke describes as attentive. This echoes non-anthropocentric critical theorist Rosa and his resonance theory (Chapter 3). If so, Cooke is preoccupied with the deep experiencing the entire world—if not the cosmos, as Rosa does, so at least the Earth system of the Anthropocene—through human senses and emotions. These human capacities are crucial to relate to oneself, other beings, and the rest of one's surroundings, including animate and inanimate parts of nature. In the next step, we use the sensory apparatus to transmit the way we take in the world while being situated in and experiencing it through our body. Finally, based on our senses and emotions, the embodied story understands the body as significant to be civil disobedient or otherwise act ethically.

As noted, Cooke appeals to love as a way to address today's environmental disaster. To love, she suggests, is a way in which of being in the world. Cooke further links her ecocentric ethics and non-anthropocentric critical theory of the embodied story to love thus:

> [T]o bring about radical societal change through conversion: through *opening the eyes, ears and hearts* of those against whom it struggles. Such action is forceful but draws its strength from *love* rather than violence: it is a 'soul-force' that gives activists the power to convert rather than destroy their opponents. This requires activists to work on themselves, to engage in bodily and mental practices, in order to be able to respond forcefully but *lovingly* to the challenges they encounter in their efforts to bring about radical social transformation.
>
> (Cooke 2020, 1178, emphasis added)

In turn, radical transformations and transitions of the society can take place by struggling against damage to nature through civil disobedience:

> some ecological activists may be motivated not by a sense of obligation or the voice of conscience but by *feelings of connectedness with non-human natural entities*; or again, subjugated individuals and groups may be driven to engage in civil disobedience, not because they feel commanded to do so by conscience or bound by obligation but because they perceive their condition of subjugation as unbearably detrimental to their exercise of agency.
>
> (Cooke 2021, 232, emphasis added)

Against the background of my above interpretation, I suggest that Cooke's reference to nonhuman natural entities may imply an ethical ecocentrism. Further, Cooke links her ecocentrism to love in light feelings of connectedness. Such feelings appear to be the same or similar kinds of connectedness which I explored in several of the previous parts of the present book (Chapters 2 and 3). Here, too, there seems to be an affinity between Cook and love-based encountering (Chapter 3), Rosa's resonance theory (Chapter 3), and Marcuse's idea of ecological sensibility (Chapter 3), magical ontopoetics (Chapter 3), and ecological love (Chapter 4).

In line with the ethical story, Cooke's embodied story defends civil disobedience on the grounds of non-violence and peace. Still, her ecophenomenological approach to civil disobedience locates her story differently than both the ecotage story and the uncivil story. As far as I can see, Cooke never defends, for instance, Malm's idea of intelligent sabotage or any of the uncivil strategies mentioned above. It should also be added that by subscribing to the ethical story on civil disobedience, Cooke automatically rejects the standard story. As far as I can see, Cooke's justification of civil disobedience moves beyond many of the other stories by drawing on ecocentrism. Also, due to the former point, the embodied story of civil disobedience contributes substantially to the current development of non-anthropocentric critical theory in a more advanced than, say, Scheuermann.

Before I go on to discuss ideas and practices of civil disobedience within the framework of ecological democracy, let me introduce one more critical theorist, Robin Celikates. He appears to resound two of the above narratives, the ethical story and the uncivil story. By introducing Celikates, I also present what I label as John Rawls' justice argument and Jürgen Habermas' democracy argument of civil disobedience. I suggest that the latter two arguments should be located in the realm of the ethical story of civil disobedience. Yet, I further claim, all these three scholars base their account of civil disobedience on an anthropocentric understanding of nature, which I find problematic in the Anthropocene.

Critical theorists have for a long time been concerned with civil disobedience. Particularly, they have been curious about where the boundary lies between violence and non-violent civil disobedience, as well as the boundary between non-violent civil disobedience and other forms of protest, including revolt and revolution. Marcuse, for instance, understands civil disobedience as a liberating duty to resist (Marcuse 1970, 89), whereas Habermas believes that such an activity is a litmus test for democracy (Habermas 1985, 95). Celikates, on his side, appeals to what he himself labels as a radical approach to civil disobedience. Although there seems to be a line of thought from Marcuse via Habermas to Celikates, that is only half the picture. Like Habermas, Celikates focuses on the relationship between civil disobedience and democracy. However, as I see it, he overlooks Marcuse's natural philosophical link between civil disobedience and democracy. I partially support Celikates' objection to Rawls' justice argument for civil disobedience, but not his entire critique of Habermas' democracy argument. As noted, however, the main problem is that they defend an anthropocentric approach, which I find inadequate in the age of the ecocrisis.

Rawls' classic book *A Theory of Justice* is central to the debate on civil disobedience. I call his position the justice argument for civil disobedience. This is because Rawls builds on his theory of justice. Here, he especially draws on the freedom principle and the difference principle of the theory of justice (Rawls 1971, 320–328). Rawls defines civil disobedience as conscientious, non-violent, and public protest that is illegal but equally recognized as democratic (ibid., 319–321). According to Rawls, civil disobedience is acceptable to combat serious and prolonged violations of the principles of justice (ibid., 319, 328, 335). Rawls further believes that civil disobedience is justifiable when individuals or groups oppose the authorities' constitutionally legitimized laws and policies if this is perceived as unfair (ibid., 319). He also claims that civil disobedience is acceptable when all other formal channels and means (e.g., freedom of expression, political parties, and demonstrations) have been used without the desired achievement and that civil disobedience is the last resort to turn injustice into its opposite (ibid., 327). The justice argument for civil disobedience is also concerned with minorities' use of this democratic tool. Based on Rawls' thinking, minorities can force the majority to change their sense of justice by means of civil disobedience (ibid., 31, 328). If minorities have tried all formal channels to influence the majority without success, civil disobedience is legitimate to use (ibid., 327–328). The justice argument then requires one minority to coordinate its opposition to the majority with other minorities who have experienced similar injustice. For Rawls, such resistance raises questions about the foundations and limits of democratic majority rule (ibid., 319). Thus, civil disobedience is a decisive litmus test for the moral foundations of democracy (ibid.).

Despite Rawls' influence in the debate on civil disobedience, Celikates criticizes the justice argument for leading to a depoliticization of the democratic role of civil disobedience (Celikates 2016a, 982). That is, the justice argument is too narrow to capture the diversity of concrete experiences that motivate the democratic practice of civil disobedience. Instead, the approach is limited to individuals' moral conscience and loyalty to the rule of law, Celikates holds. Furthermore, Celikates explains, depoliticization results in the immunization against groups' use of civil disobedience when such protest should really be recognized as democratic (Celikates 2020a, 533–534). Celikates elaborates this point when he claims that the normative assessment of civil disobedience in Rawls is not rooted in the actual political struggles of marginalized groups. In turn, this means that the majority has a defining power to decide whether the resistance of minorities is to be recognized, co-opted, or suppressed. As I understand Celikates, he believes that the depoliticization is partly due to the fact that Rawls bases civil disobedience on an ideal theory (i.e., a theory that presupposes a fully just society) rather than a non-ideal theory (i.e., a theory that is elaborated after an ideal theory of justice has been chosen) (Rawls 1971, 8, 216, 354).

Celikates' first criticism is that Rawls' definition of civil disobedience is individualistic. In that case, a repoliticization is made impossible because, according to Celikates, such a process presupposes a collective understanding and practice

of civil disobedience. Individuals like Greta Thunberg are important when they protest, but their civil disobedience also takes place collectively through the mobilization of social groups and movements. The word collective refers to the democratic recognition struggles of minorities or other groups. Through such mobilization, something collective is created and developed, also in the form of social ties between the members of society. Here, a further democratization of civil disobedience takes place when members of society build on these bonds in the further development of democratic communities. According to Celikates, this happens preferably when citizens are formed into collectively oriented citizens rather than only as individual bearers of rights. The former presupposes active and voluntary participation and collective interaction through civil society's informal channels (e.g., the public, media, and non-profit organizations), while the latter only requires one to have civil and political freedoms without using them.

As I read Rawls, the collective blind spot is not as present in his thinking as Celikates claims. In Rawls' theory of justice, rather, one finds some collective aspects. Perhaps the most important of these collective aspects is when Rawls explains that justice is the first virtue of social institutions (Rawls 1971, 3). This virtue is further grounded in such collective elements as society's basic structure and the social cooperation between the citizens on which this structure is based. Additionally, the justice argument can be understood collectively when it defends civil disobedience as a mean that minority group can use to protest against the unfair treatment by the majority within the collective framework of democratic states of law.

The second objection Celikates makes to the justice argument is that Rawls underestimates how power affects the practice of civil disobedience. According to Celikates, it is problematic because the understanding of the word civil in the concept of civil disobedience has always been used as an ideological weapon used by the majority to make minorities conform and control their protest, he claims (Celikates 2020a, 533). Such power abuse takes place when the majority defines which protest is good and bad, and thereby threatens minorities into silence.

This objection may seem more convincing because Rawls precisely does not consider such power of definition. This is partly because, I believe, Rawls discusses civil disobedience within the framework of ideal theory. In turn, this framework does not take power into account. It is also unclear whether Celikates' objection to Rawls is valid when they are based on different methods, namely ideal theory and non-ideal theory.

The third criticism Celikates makes against Rawls is about minority groups. According to Celikates, Rawls is not sufficiently concerned with the experiences of minorities and concentrates too much on the majority's sense of justice (Celikates 2020a, 533, 537). One consequence of this mismatch is that the majority ignores the right of minorities to use civil disobedience against the majority. Rather, one should take more seriously why the minorities protest against the majority at all, explains Celikates. Such groups may be citizens, and yet they can be marginalized in the public due to such aspects as class, language, ethnicity, or gender (ibid., 226–227). Although Celikates claims that minorities' experiences of injustice should be

recognized to a greater extent, and that they are a positive contribution to a further democratization of civil disobedience, one should not unconditionally give them the last word (Celikates 2016a, 984).

Rawls' justice argument is, as shown, concerned with minorities' access to being able to protest democratically by means of civil disobedience. However, from Celikates' point of view, it can be argued that in actual situations where minorities want to use civil disobedience, Rawls has not sufficiently considered such a situation. This may be due, among other things, to the fact that it can be difficult for minorities to coordinate civil disobedience between minorities, as Rawls requires. Minorities' lack of coordination can be due to such things as time constraints and lack of resources, as well as the fact that cooperation is not desirable or possible. Again, Rawls can show that the justice argument is based on an ideal theory and that Celikates' objection here misses the mark by raising his issue from the perspective of non-ideal theory.

The fourth and final problem Celikates believes is found in Rawls concerns the fact that the justice argument is national and not transnational. Here, Celikates believes that civil disobedience must be able to be practiced at all social scales (Celikates 2019, 68–69, 74–76, 78). Celikates points out that in this context migrants, such as environmental refugees, mean that no state borders should be closed. Rather, it is important to recognize the diversity of spaces where different actors can protest (Celikates 2020b, 90). Civil disobedience exercised in various peripheral zones within a state, on the border of a state, or between states is then made visible. Such transnational places of resistance can contribute to the further democratization of civil disobedience through what Celikates describes as a transformative dynamic of unexpected forms of civil disobedience (Celikates 2020b, 74). Transnational civil disobedience is, then, a corrective to minorities' lack of opportunity to be civilly disobedient within states (ibid., 78).

As I see it, the point about transnational civil disobedience is the most apt criticism of Rawls. If we go to Rawls himself, he explains that the justice argument for civil disobedience is limited to state institutions and thus to injustice within a given society (Rawls 1971, 326). In my view, Celikates' test case—namely, transnational migrants, hereunder climate refugees—is a good illustration of Rawls' transnational deficit. Humans have always moved across the globe. When it comes to today's ecological crisis, for example, the ever-rising sea level means that the inhabitants of small island states will have to flee within a few decades, without any protection by the current version of the UN 1951 Refugee Convention or the UN 1967 Protocol (Lysaker 2023). Then, civil disobedience beyond states can be an existentially decisive safety valve.

Although I am not convinced by all of Celikates' objections to Rawls, I think that the overall point about depoliticization made by the former against the latter is important. It is therefore interesting to look at Celikates' proposal for how a repoliticization of civil disobedience can take place (Celikates 2020a, 535–536). It requires further democratization of the understanding and practice of civil disobedience. Then, what he perceives as the radical core and complex potential of the word civil in the definition of the concept of civil disobedience must be

recovered. Here, Celikates believes that the actual practice of civil disobedience documents that it is much more complex and radical than the word civil would possibly imply. Then the register of civil disobedience is expanded to include subaltern and counter-hegemonic forms of protest. These dimensions of his outlook occur to echo the above-outlined uncivil story about civil disobedience. Further, Celikates emphasizes that civil disobedience contains a normative surplus value. This indicates that the resistance is more than symbolic politics because it can result in political, legal, and social change in both formal and informal spheres of society. A further democratization of civil disobedience can take place if the protest is closely related to and inspired by historical and contemporary political struggles. Celikates describes this as the radical-democratic meaning of these struggles. Finally, he reminds us of the extensive and rich philosophical literature on civil disobedience and its democratic role, from Thoreau and Arendt via Rawls and Habermas to Balibar. These different, but important voices should be listened to and learned from to a greater extent than today. The upshot of this, Celikates suggests, may be that more people engage to further develop the practice of civil disobedience. Then, one can avoid that this peaceful protest becomes violent.

Thus far, I have dealt with Rawls and Celikates' critique of the justice argument for civil disobedience. It is time, therefore, to move on to Habermas, another seminal thinker in this context. I call this position the democracy argument of civil disobedience because Habermas builds further on his version of deliberative democracy (Habermas 1985, 1996, 382–384). Accordingly, civil disobedience is a morally justified protest that is motivated by personal conscience or self-interest, but at the same time is a public act that should be announced in advance, and where the police protect public peace, order, and security to practice such protest (Habermas 1985, 100). Further, this argument holds that even if civil disobedience involves a premeditated violation of the law for which the campaigners are willing to take the consequences, they still must respect the rule of law as such. Also, Habermas believes, civil disobedience is exclusively a communicative act. That is a symbolic speech act aiming to convey a specific message to a specific audience and must therefore be non-violent.

In my interpretation, Habermas' democratic argument for civil disobedience is multidimensional. The first dimension is moral. This aspect claims that civil disobedience is a litmus test for what is assumed to be the moral basis of democracy (Habermas 1985, 101). The second dimension is a political-cultural one. Here, Habermas observes, civil disobedience matures society's political culture by virtue of being part of a sometimes interrupted, but nonetheless ongoing collective and necessary democratic learning process (ibid., 99, 101, 104, 106). This view is based on Habermas' model of democracy, which is a deliberative or discursive one. Within this framework, citizens engage in collective opinion- and will-formation through recognition and deliberation (ibid., 101–102). Habermas adds that because this communicative learning process is ongoing, democracy and its constitutional aspects are also part of an unfinished, impressionable, and fragile process that contributes to establishing or safeguarding, as well as renewing or

expanding, democracy (ibid., 104). Third, and finally, the democracy argument of civil disobedience is based on a legal dimension. This aspect claims that civil disobedience is part of the basis for and protection of the legitimacy of the rule of law (ibid., 101, 103). Habermas is here concerned with how minorities with a strong ideological, religious, or other convictions can test the legitimacy of legislation by being civilly disobedient (Habermas 1996, 148). From my stance, Habermas' democratic principle is here relevant. Given that, that principle states that all those affected parties should have a democratic voice thus: "only those statutes may claim legitimacy that can meet with the assent … of all citizens in a discursive process of legislation that in turn has been legally constituted" (ibid., 110). If my interpretation of the link between being affected and having a voice is adequate, Habermas believes that voiceless groups, for instance, by means of civil disobedience, can appeal to the parliament and the bureaucracy to reopen formally closed political treatments of their situation. In turn, the decisions can be revised in the light of the minorities' public criticism and protest (ibid., 107, 383).

According to Celikates, Habermas' democracy argument and Rawls' justice argument are very similar (Celikates 2016b, 37). Celikates here problematizes this similarity and claims that Habermas then understands the word civil in the concept of civil disobedience in a limited way and on a state level (Celikates 2020a, 537). Further, Celikates believes that since Habermas' democracy argument is based on public deliberation, it obscures that many actors may have good reasons for being civilly disobedient even if they express themselves in other ways than what Habermas calls communicative action (ibid., 533). Celikates also thinks that the democracy argument contributes too little to giving marginalized, minorities, and other vulnerable groups a voice through exercising civil disobedience (ibid., 533, 537).

Celikates' reading of Habermas is, in my view, to some degree problematic. Admittedly, Habermas is concerned with the moral basis of civil disobedience, that protest legitimizes democracy and relates such resistance to the constitutional state. However, I suggest, Celikates overlooks what I describe as the anarchic core of Habermas' democratic thought and communication theory (Lysaker 2021). This core creates more disagreement and conflict than Celikates agrees to. According to Habermas, deliberation is a way of handling disagreement and conflict, rather than demanding that a consensus is achieved rationally through the deliberation process or beginning the deliberation process from some kind of preestablished agreement (ibid.). Also, this anarchic core is related to emotional reactions to violations and disrespect (ibid.). It is worth remembering that Habermas' view of democracy not only requires that all affected parties should be heard, but he also understands democracy as a cycle, as well (Habermas 1996, 327–328, 356). Then, protest or other forms of political activity are continuously channeled around in society's various spheres, including private life, informal spheres such as the public and civil society, as well as formal spheres such as the parliament and the courts. In light of the Habermasian anarchic core of communication, then, both agreement and conflict, both reason and emotion, can and should be channeled through society's democratic cycles. Let me also add that Celikates and Habermas occur to be more

in agreement than the former admits. Both Celikates and Habermas understand civil disobedience as citizens' interaction through protest. Further, both consider that such resistance can create conflict and such disagreement can be democratically tackled. Moreover, they are concerned with citizens' ability to direct criticism from the informal social spheres into the formal ones. Celikates and Habermas also share the view that politics takes place at different levels, both within states and transnationally. Additionally, they are concerned with the collective in the sense that minorities, marginalized, and other voiceless people can use civil disobedience as a protest against the majority. To summarize, Celikates' radical account of civil disobedience occurs as less radical than he himself assumes.

Noteworthy, Celikates appears to some extent to be preoccupied with the issue of the ecocrisis. To demonstrate, he mentions the relationship between democracy, civil disobedience, and climate activism à la Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future (Celikates 2020a, 535, 2020b, 88). Still, Celikates never explains whether he thinks that there is a connection between such environmental protest and his point about repoliticization of civil disobedience, to only mention one possible way forward from his outlook. Nor seems Celikates to be inspired by his fellow critical theorist, Marcuse, or, for that matter, Eckersley's Marcuse-inspired proposal for a philosophy of nature and environmental ethics as the basis of civil disobedience (which I return to below). Since Celikates holds that civil disobedience should be situated even on a transnational level, there seems to only a small step to reformulate a stance that embraces the Earth system. The problem remains, however, since Celikates never articulates a systemic critique of one of the main drivers of the ecocrisis, namely anthropocentrism. Surely, anthropocentrism comes in at least two versions, weak and strong (Chapter 2). Weak anthropocentrism is human-centered, whereas strong anthropocentrism is human-instrumental. Nonetheless, some argue that strong anthropocentrism has dominated societies and cultures at least during the last 400 years (Skrbina 2005; Vetlesen 2015). Despite that this worldview historically was developed in the West, some also argue that strong anthropocentrism soon reached the entire world due to globalization and the global reach of capitalism (Vetlesen 2015, 22–23). So, in the Anthropocene, Celikates acclaimed radical understanding of civil disobedience is in reality not radical enough. Although Celikates claims to break with both Rawls and Habermas (Celikates 2016b), all three occur to share one and the same grave problem. Green political theorist John S. Dryzek supports this claim. According to the latter, arguments stemming from the traditions of both Rawls and Habermas, hereunder my reading of Celikates as partly maintaining a Habermasian account of civil disobedience, defend anthropocentrism (Dryzek 2002, 147, note 1). Consequently, all the above diverse descriptions of civil disobedience seek human liberation through more effective control over nature. In turn, this can imply the use—not to forget the overuse—of given and already limited as well as constantly reduced and extinct natural resources. Anyhow, Rawls, Habermas, and Celikates ostensibly reject strong anthropocentrism. Rawls and Habermas can do so based on their normative defense of, for instance, human dignity. In the next step, such intrinsic moral value collides with any instrumental treatment, at least of humans. As a critical theorist, Celikates, too, most certainly reject instrumental treatments of humans. The reason

is the critical-theoretical concern instrumental approaches to humans and human societies.

Alternatively, one can choose a more robust avenue in the Anthropocene. By this, I mean what I label as the ecocentric argument for civil disobedience. This argument stands in opposition to the above-described anthropocentrism of the justice argument and the democracy argument of civil disobedience. Here, I follow the path of Marcuse's and Eckersley's Marcuse-inspired ecocentric approach to the concept of civil disobedience, to mention only one, yet seminal concern which this perspective can address. Then, I suggest, philosophy of nature and environmental ethics go hand in hand with democratic thought. By learning from Eckersley's interpretation, Marcuse's thinking "speaks directly to *ecocentric* concerns" (Eckersley 1992, 100, emphasis added). To recall, ecocentrism rejects anthropocentrism and Cartesian dualism. This framework does so, ontologically, by including all existence on the Earth and in the universe. Also, normatively, ecocentrism assumes that all existing beings have an intrinsic moral value and should protected thereof. Further, since Eckersley grounds her own version of ecological democracy in ecocentrism (Eckersley 1992), she occurs to locate the Marcusian ecocentrism within this ecological-democratic framework, as well. As a result, Marcuse's description of civil disobedience as a liberating duty to resist can be extended in virtue of being a liberating duty to resist on behalf of the human and the more-than-human world.

Further, the ecocentric argument for civil disobedience involves one more core dimension of the ecological-democratic framework. I here have in mind the democratic ideals and practices of participation and representation as well as how they are connected to the all ecologically affected parties principle, which I introduced earlier (Chapters 1 and 5). To recollect, this principle states that all parties who are potentially or actually affected by short- or long-term consequences or side effects of the ecological crisis, should have some meaningful opportunity of democratic participation or otherwise being represented while decisions or policies that generate the environmental disaster are made (Eckersley 2004, 171, see 10, 26, 111–113, 118–120, 137, 171, 243; see also Christoff 1996, 156; Eckersley 2020, 6). As underscored by Eckersley herself, this basic ecological principle is linked to participation and representation. However, in the context of ecological democracy, participation and representation, and their role for civil disobedience, should be carefully examined. Since Eckersley subscribes to ecocentrism, the all ecologically affected parties principle demands that participation and representation take place on behalf of all existing beings, including both present and future generations, as well as organic and inorganic beings. In the next step, all these parties should either participate themselves or somehow be represented by others.

In her essay "Greening Liberal Democracy: The Rights Discourse Revisited", Eckersley addresses the theme of civil disobedience and relates it to the above-outlined issue of participation and representation. Here, she portrays the potential role of civil disobedience thus:

> Many green activists have responded to the *shortcomings* of liberal democracy by disparaging and rejecting *conventional* liberal democratic *channels*

> of political *participation* and, in some cases, the rule of law. The growth of mass environmental protests, *non-violent civil disobedience* and direct action, which began in the 1960s and has continued through succeeding decades, is symptomatic of a deep and widespread *frustration* and dissatisfaction with the reactive and piecemeal environmental measures emanating from the liberal democratic parliamentary process. In some cases, most notably in the United States, this frustration has prompted the practice of 'monkeywrenching' or ecological sabotage.
>
> (Eckersley 1996, 211, emphasis added; see Eckersley 2020, 215)

So, from the angle of ecological democracy, the shortcomings of representative democracy are identified in light of its conventional channels of participation and representation. Which conventional democratic channels does Eckersley here have in mind? Within the framework of liberal democracy, the most conventional channel, as indicated by herself, is universal suffrage, especially in the event of parliamentary elections. Here, participation and representation are safeguarded by the right to vote. This right is based on the principle of equal representation ("one person, one vote"), often with the expectation of youth (i.e., citizens under 18 years of age). One aim of a state's legal system is to protect the right to vote for all adult citizens. As a core element of representative democracy, the right to vote gives the citizens the freedom to vote for their preferred political party based on the citizens' individual interests. In turn, the representative politicians of representative democracy are given the power to influence policymaking on behalf of their voters, the people.

Further, Eckersley links civil disobedience to the idea of greening. Consequently, as I understand her, civil disobedience is a way to green democracy to the degree to which it matures into ecological democracy. By connecting these dots, Eckersley criticizes representative democracy for not being enough representative: this model "systematically *under-represents* ecological concerns" (Eckersley 1996, 209). She here argues that the systematically underrepresentation of representative democracy has taken place because of two factors. First, representative democracy "represents only the existing citizens of territorially bounded political communities" (ibid.). In effect, this model has no methods through which non-citizen can be democratically represented in an "environmental constituency" (ibid.). The idea of an environmental constituency, Eckersley explains, aims at tackling the mismatch between "all those who may be seriously affected by environmental decisions made within the polity but who cannot vote or otherwise participate in the political deliberations and decisions of the polity" (ibid.). In this setting, Eckersley is preoccupied with such underrepresented parties as non-compatriots, future generations, and nonhuman nature. Second, the systematically underrepresentation of representative democracy is created by this model's "very limited opportunities for … vicarious representation" (ibid.). She here refers to how "the ecological interests of non-citizens may be vicariously represented by citizens within the polity" (ibid.). Yet, since Eckersley does not believe that such vicarious representation can be transcended by the representative democracy due to its

systematically under-representation of ecological concerns, she claims that this situation generates a systematically under-representation concerning "the ecological welfare of its own citizens", as well (ibid.). Strikingly, she confesses that in representative democracies, citizens who are concerned with the environmental disaster can legitimately contribute to struggling against this crisis by exercising the basic political rights through the conventional participatory channels (e.g., voting for ecologically concerned political parties). Yet, Eckersley claims, "if a 'green majority' cannot be mustered at the crucial time of political voting (whether at general elections or in the representative assembly), or if democratically elected governments otherwise remain unpersuaded, then so be it—whatever the ecological consequences" (ibid., 207). Rather, the representative democracy requires that people "must be 'free' to make ecologically bad decisions; the alternative is ecological paternalism" (ibid.).

Then, to avoid both these pitfalls—the pitfall of the business-as-usual of the representative model of democracy and the pitfall of ecological paternalism, or, even worse, ecoauthoritarianism (Chapter 1)—Eckersley suggests the already-noted method aiming at a "greening" of democracy (Eckersley 1996, 208). To Eckersley, the idea of greening implies a "practical attempt to move towards a *stronger[, greener,]* and *more ecologically informed* democratic alternative to liberal democracy" (ibid., 208, 209, 211, emphasis added). As I read her, what is described as a stronger and greener democracy is the ideal and practice of ecological democracy along with its all ecologically affected parties principle. Given that, the greening of democracy implies making that system less under-representative. Eckersley appears to argue that this goal can partly be obtained through active citizenship (e.g., Eckersley 1992, 28, 2004, 95; see Christoff 1996; Dryzek and Pickering 2019; Lysaker 2019, 2022). In contrast to the ecological-democratic ideal of active citizenship, the representative model of democracy does not demand active citizenship. Rather, the representative democracy presupposes that political participation only is based on citizenship. The latter denotes that the rule of law of the constitutional state shall guarantee the people basic civil and political rights (e.g., the right to vote and the right to assemble). Yet, according to the representative model, the protection of these rights does not depend on whether they are practiced or not. In contrast, though ecological democracy, too, aims at safeguarding these rights within the realm of the constitutional state, the latter model demands that the people actively exercise them to qualify to be labeled as democratic participation at all. Here, the ecological model criticizes the former for not demanding that the citizens must be active to be ascribed rights, but rather that it may qualify to keep one's civil and political rights to remain a passive inhabitant. To illustrate, within the representative model, the basic right to vote in elections is crucial. Yet, the representative idea of the right to vote does not demand that you actually vote in any election. So, within the model of representative democracy, one can persist a citizen and not losing one's basic civil and political rights, though one refrain from actively exercising them.

On their side, most defenders of the ecological democracy framework invite the citizens to take part in a much wider range of ways in which to become active

citizens than does the representative model. Here, Eckersley appears to recommend that civil disobedience should be one among many different and supplementing activities being part of our democratic toolbox, in addition to the parliamentary or other traditional channels. Eckersley here supports this kind environmental protest as a suitable method to achieve the overall goal of transforming and transitioning society into ecological democracy in the sense of greener and stronger forms of participation and representation. To mature into active citizenship, then, what is at stake is not only the wide range of individual and collective action—such as civil disobedience as well as mass environmental protests and direct action (Eckersley 1996, 211). Additionally, active citizenship is linked to a wide range of formal and informal fora within which people can exercise their active citizenship. The term informal fora should be differentiated from the concept of formal fora. The latter notion refers to the core part of the framework of the representative democracy and which Eckersley describes as the conventional channels of participation and representation. The idea of informal fora, in contrast, refers to spaces and activities that are situated outside the formal places and channels of democratic influence. To illustrate, formal fora include the parliament, the government, and the courts, whereas the informal fora involve the public sphere, civil society, and the media. Additionally, the informal fora contain public meetings (for instance before a referendum), election campaign debates, popular deliberations, consultation rounds, round-table conferences, and seminars (Dryzek 1997, 104–106; Barry 1999, 228–229; Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 128–129). Engaging as active citizens in the informal fora, or for that matter, the formal ones, would help to become more responsive to nature's ways of expression (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 17, 35, 136, 127, 152). Such ecological sensitivity can also be created by virtue of ecological role models, spokespersons, lawyers, whistleblowers, or other formative actors with a moral stewardship responsibility in informal fora (Christoff 1996; Barry 1999, 255, 2002; Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 105). Participating as an active ecological citizen, therefore, has a self-reinforcing effect regarding the population's democratic opinion- and will-formation as well as their sensitivity to nature and moral responsibility for solving environmental problems (Dryzek 1997, 113). So, rather than passively having the package of civil and political rights safeguarded by the constitutional state, these rights must be actively, creatively, and critically practiced.

The citizens can become active in these informal realms by using civil disobedience, as well. So, though the inhabitants can suffer from the above-portrayed democratic deficit created by the under-representation of the representative model of democracy, by protesting outside the parliament or in the streets, to mention two places where civil disobedience can come about, an ecological-democratic transformation and transition might begin. Within the framing of ecological democracy, I suggest, active citizenship can be associated with discourse entrepreneurship. By the latter concept, Dryzek and John Pickering mean an actor who can "advance the standing of particular discourses such as that of the Anthropocene itself, or shift the balance within or across discourses" (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 18). Let me add that Dryzek and Pickering speak in favor of what they label as formative agents.

This concept refers to a wide range of individual and collective action within the framework of ecological democracy by "question[ing] and disrupt[ing] problematic path dependencies in institutions, practices, and their supporting ideas" (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 109). On top of that, the exercise of formative agency involves wide range activities such as rational argumentation (i.e., action, principles, concepts, positions, and interpretations), rhetoric (i.e., the symbolic value of, for example, the 1987 delivery of the Brundtland report), and deliberation (i.e., recognition of the importance of discourses in underpinning institutions) along with protests (i.e., aiming to reconfigure the established order), leading by example (i.e., aiming to make a difference by living something differently), violence (i.e., aiming to impose one's will on reluctant others through ecotage or ecoterrorism), coercion (i.e., aiming to threat through forced rule by an ecologically enlightened elite or authoritarian leaders), and visual representation (i.e., aiming to disrupt by imagining different ways of life through such iconic 1972 "blue marble" photo of the Earth taken from space) (ibid., 114–115). Based on the above outlining, I suggest that active citizenship in terms of, for instance, discourse entrepreneurship and formative agency can motivate people to civil disobedience. If so, civil disobedience serves as a democratic legitimate avenue to address the ecocrisis and can be accepted by other people as playing a significant democratic role. For instance, when Sami youth in 2023 protested against the Norwegian state's illegal treatment of their indigenous rights, the government changed its opinion and admitted their wrongdoings after one week of civil disobedience organized by Sami youth organizations and the Norwegian youth environmental movement in collaboration. Further, by being an active citizen in virtue of discourse entrepreneurship and formative agency through civil disobedience, one can also respect the earlier-outlined all ecologically affected principle.

By being an active citizen, democratic participation is extended to include nonhuman nature, too. Based on Eckersley's ecocentric approach to nature, this extension of representation involves both animate and inanimate parts of nature, and it does so both ontologically and normatively. Shall we follow Eckersley, then, such an extension of participation and representation should serve as "the ground rules of democracy", even this approach might be at odds with the interests of human nature (Eckersley 1996, 169, 175). Thus, since all beings are, at least potentially, affected by the ecocrisis, these parties should have the opportunity to democratically participate or otherwise meaningfully being represented in ecological-democratic terms. Surely, many affected parties of nonhuman nature cannot have a voice similar to human nature (Eckersley 2004, 171; Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 136), which may imply a democratic deficit. Yet, as I outlined in Chapters 2–4, nonhuman nature can exist and express themselves in a wide range of ways which create shared spaces based on the web life interconnecting human nature and nonhuman nature. From Freya Mathews, David Abram, Stephan Harding, Andreas Weber, and Hartmut Rosa, for instance, we learn that nonhuman nature, even its inorganic elements, can engage through various forms of encountering (e.g., panpsychic love, animistic magic, and cosmic resonance). In this regard, we should recall the notion ecological reflexivity and biosemiotics articulated by Dryzek, or

what I prefer to articulate as ecosemiotics. From all these insights, I believe, we can ourselves experience and/or learn more nuanced ways regarding how nonhuman beings can, and should, be democratically represented. This demands, I think, that we gather these and other new and important ways in which to recognize, understand, and engage with all beings of the world. To do so, civil disobedience can play a seminal role as a legitimate part of the ecological-democratic toolbox.

As I read Eckersley, she suggests that non-violent civil disobedience as well as mass environmental protests and direct action are some crucial ways one can execute active citizenship (Eckersley 1996, 211). Given that, civil disobedience is a potentially legitimate manifestation of the ideal of active citizenship, which is at the heart of ecological democracy and its all ecological affected parties principle. Noteworthy, Eckersley underscores that civil disobedience must be "non-violent" (ibid.). If not, this way to achieve the goal of active citizenship is not legitimate. She also explains that active citizenship as, for instance, civil disobedience is a needed as a manner in which to democratically and collectively "educate [the people] through dialogue and transform political opinion through reasoned debate" (ibid., 212). In contrast, the representative account of being active citizens only speaks in favor of aggregating the sum of unchallenged desires of each individual citizen and their individual political interests. Civil disobedience as active citizenship is, then, a potent way to turn the ideals of ecological democracy and the all ecologically affected parties principle into reality. As far as Eckersley's observation is correct concerning the democratic deficit of the liberal model, this under-representation can be counter-balanced by actively protesting against that asymmetry. Such counterbalancing can take place on behalf of both human nature and nonhuman nature by virtue of such methods as civil disobedience. Here, within the ecological-democratic framework, civil disobedience can contribute to obtaining the Eckersleyian goal of democratic transformation and transition in the sense greening our ideals of participation and representation. To illustrate, in Norway, in the Alta conflict of the 1970s and the 1980s, the indigenous group of the Sami used civil disobedience to struggle against what they experienced as an unjust treatment by the Norwegian state. In doing that, the Sami protesters was civil disobedient partly on behalf of the Alta-Kautokeino river. From my angle, this activism is ecocentric in term of being a struggle on behalf of the abiotic water in that river as well as other affected parties. To the Sami people, this protest was partly inspired by their animist worldview (Chapter 2).

Finally, the ecological democracy framing tries to attain more and better participation and representation by fostering active citizenship on a transnational scale. At least Eckersley's version of ecological democracy is related to the transnational matters—for instance, what she portrays as "the transnational, green democratic state" as well as transnational public spheres, transnational issue networks, transnational civil society, intergovernmental organization, and the society of states in general (Eckersley 2004, 3, 15, 31, 42). According to her, the democratic deficit created by the potential mismatch between parties being affected by the ecocrisis, on the one hand, and, on the other, the lack of a democratic say can take place not simply on a state-level, but even on a transnational scale. As far as civil disobedience is

part of the ecological-democratic toolbox, such political activism and protest take place within, across, and beyond state borders. To illustrate, when Greta Thunberg created Fridays for Future, this environmental movement only counted one person, namely Thunberg herself. Yet, in a short while this movement had grown much larger—even outside Sweden. Thus, Fridays for Future has during only a few years developed into an environmental movement with a strong global impact. Not surprisingly, then, civil disobedience was used by Thunberg herself or people following her example to protest around the world against the acclaimed business as usual, or what Thunbergians call "no more blah, blah, blah". By doing that, these people appear to have partly turned this protest into active citizenship or discourse entrepreneurship on a transnational level.

To summarize this subchapter thus far, let me share three observations, which to a large extent are based on my presentation and discussion of Eckersley's account of civil disobedience. First, in the Anthropocene, civil disobedience can serve as a democratic litmus test. To serve as such a litmus test, I suggested, civil disobedience should be framed by the ecological model of democracy. Then, civil disobedience is one among a wide range of tools in the democratic toolbox which can be legitimated within a wide specter of formal and informal fora. Second, at least within the framework of ecological democracy, civil disobedience as a democratic litmus test is grounded in the ecocentric approach to nature. Then, both ontologically and normatively, civil disobedience can be part of the arsenal of protection against the many manners in which the environmental disaster impacts all parts of nature. Here, in the Anthropocene, the all ecologically affected parties principle gives good guidance to recognize and protect the entire Earth system and beyond. Third, and finally, civil disobedience can serve as a democratic litmus test also by making our democracy greener. To attain that ambition, Eckersleyian style ecological democracy assists in making politics a more participatory and representative system. In turn, civil disobedience plays a crucial role in achieving the basic ideal of the all ecologically affected parties principle.

Against the backdrop of these observations, I will now briefly compare Eckersley's understanding of civil disobedience against the five previously outlined stories of civil disobedience. To call to mind, these narratives include what I labeled as the standard story, the ecotage story, the ethical story, the uncivil story, and the embodiment story. Here, I am curious about which of these five stories that resonate the most with Eckersley's own perspectives on civil disobedience.

The standard story about civil disobedience in fact rejects such protest. According to this narrative, to be civil disobedient equals being anti-democratic or even authoritarian. So, since Eckersley quite strongly defends civil disobedience as an ecological litmus test that can be passed democratically and therefore holding that civil disobedience can be used ecological-democratically to tackle today's ecocrisis more adequately than representative democracy, the standard story does not resonate at all with her perspective. In turn, defenders of the standard story would probably not see her point about civil disobedience as a potentially legitimate expression of the kind of active citizenship which she holds can mature democracy into a more participatory and representative one. Rather, champions of

the standard story would most certainly appeal to the business as usual of liberal democracy.

In some cases, scholars subscribing to the ecotage story appeal to what Malm defines as intelligent sabotage, whereas others can accept even the use of violence. As explained, in line with the ethical story, Eckersley rejects all forms of protest which use violence or are authoritarian. As a result, the ecotage story does not resonate with her account of civil disobedience. In the case of Malm's own rejection of violence which causes suffering to humans or animals, in natural-philosophical and environmental-ethical terms, he appears to appeal to biocentrism. However, as should be evident throughout the present book, to adequately tackle today's ecocrisis, I argue that we need to build further on Eckersleyian ecocentrism.

The ethical story is the narrative that appears to resonate the strongest with the Eckersley's idea of civil disobedience. The reason is that she normatively bases her perception of such activism and protest on both ethics and politics. Regarding ethics, she draws on ecocentrism, notably Warwick Fox' version of deep ecology. Consequently, she defends civil disobedience as a protest on behalf of the intrinsic moral value of all existing beings. Politically, Eckersley's ecological ideal of democracy appears to come close to the ethical story. I here have in mind, for instance, how her support of civil disobedience can serve as a litmus test concerning how we democratically can maneuver in the Anthropocene in the most robust manner. Surely, if an account of the ethical story is based on an anthropocentric or a biocentric ethics, this would break with Eckersley's own ecocentric ethics.

As far as I can see, the uncivil story does not resonate with Eckersley to any large degree. The main reason why I believe so is because of her absolute rejection of violence in line with the ethical story. Then, even being uncivil occurs to collide with her ecocentric ethical standard. Simultaneously, Eckersley's justification of civil disobedience suggests that such protest should take place in a wide specter of formal and informal fora. So, yet this does not seem to be a view that Eckersley herself defends, she admits that some cases to open the door for civil disobedience, this can be a slippery-slope to more uncivil political activities, such as monkeywrenching or ecological sabotage (Eckersley 1996, 211). Or, active citizens performing peaceful civil disobedience can meet stark reactions by, for instance, defenders of the standard story. In turn, this situation can create uncivil circumstances.

Finally, the embodiment story might come closer to Eckersley's perspective on civil disobedience than one may first think. Despite that I have not addressed this aspect of her own thought in this chapter, Eckersley occurs to some extent to be preoccupied with embodiment in the sense of a particular understanding of the self. One such aspect is Eckersley's perspective on embodiment, I believe, is what she labels as the relational ontology of the self (Eckersley 2004, 98). Here, the self is portrayed as individuals' creative agency (e.g., civil disobedient protest against the government's environmental policies). Linked to this outlook, is what she defines as social structures. These structures are contexts (e.g., environmental policymaking) which are constitutive for the self and its creative process of individuation and socialization toward becoming an acting agent. As I read her, Eckersley adds

another fascinating aspect to this picture of the ontology of the self. I here mean the inspiration which she draws from transpersonal ecology to develop the moral basis for her own version of ecological democracy (Eckersley 1992, 62). By linking together these aspects, she appeals to a psychological (in addition to a cosmological) identification which understands all parts of the world, for instance, the human self, as interconnected with all other parts of the tree of life. By doing that, Eckersley continues, the self can "cultivate a sense or experience of self that extends beyond one's egoistic, biographical, or personal sense of self to include all beings" (ibid.). However, from the outlook of Cooke's embodiment story, it can be claimed that though Eckersley's framework includes an understanding of the self, we seem to learn little or nothing about the body or bodily situatedness of that self as well as Cooke's underscoring the role of love and awareness. At closer examination, however, in Eckersley, at least we ostensibly find some traces of the idea of an embodied self. According to her, there is a close connection between ecofeminism and the kind of transpersonal ecology upon which ecocentrism is founded. Ecofeminism and transpersonal or deep ecology share, among other things, an engagement in the self and how the self experiences the world (ibid., 63). Thus, as I understand it, the ecocentric transpersonal ecology we find in Eckersley is concerned with phenomenological issues, such as subjective and bodily experiences of the self.

To recap, based on my brief comparison, Eckersley's ecological-democratic defense of civil disobedience is primarily based on the ethical story (e.g., civil disobedience as a democratic legitimating litmus test), the ecocentric approach to nature, and the all ecologically affected parties principle), and to some extent the embodied story. In contrast, she departs from the standard story, the ecotage story, and, for the most part, the uncivil story.

5.2 Mini-Publics as Anthropocene Governance

The theme of the previous subchapter—civil disobedience as a litmus test of ecological democracy—and the issue that I deal with in this subchapter—mini-publics as Anthropocene governance—are closely linked, I believe. Both activities can be understood as democratic. Also, the principles and practices of civil disobedience and mini-publics are often outlined as different, yet significant supplement to representative democracy and its formal channels (e.g., the parliament and the right to vote). Finally, in our age of the ecological crisis, both civil disobedience and mini-publics are quite often addressed within ecological democracy or similar framings as more efficient ways to tackle this crisis compared to representative democracy.

In the following, I address mini-publics as one form of Anthropocene governance. I am inspired by John S. Dryzek's and Jonathan Pickering's book *The Politics of the Anthropocene*. On my reading, the authors refer to Anthropocene governance by means of how the Anthropocene has created some profound challenges to Holocene governance, the institutions or other structures which were developed on other premises and with other objectives during the previous

geological epoch. Now, to more robustly being capable of addressing the serious, pervasive, long-lasting, and in some cases irreversible consequences of the ecological crisis for the Earth system, we need to develop new governance frameworks (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 34). In the following, I recommend that mini-publics can play a crucial role in this context. From my standpoint, mini-publics is one among several governance frameworks within which one can act individually and collectively to impact how the ecocrisis is tackled. Thus, mini-publics are seminal to achieve the transformation and transition into Anthropocene governance, the institutions or other structures which are developed on the premises of the present geological epoch and with the objective of championing the environmental disaster.

Recently, environmental activists of Extinction Rebellion are well-known for their demand of establishing mini-publics to develop to Anthropocene governance. However, the idea of mini-publics has been researched, both theoretically and empirically, at least since the 1970s. A dear child has many names, it is often said. This is certainly true in the case mini-publics. Although I in the following use the term mini-public, among scholars studying this kind of democratic innovation, it has been given a wide range of labels and institutional designs: in addition to mini-publics, scholars refer to citizens' assembly, designed deliberative forum, sortition (i.e., selection by lottery or democratic lottery), citizens' forum, citizens' jury, citizens' review panel, people's jury, planning cells, citizens' convention, citizens' initiative review, minipopulus, deliberative opinion poll, popular branch of government, policy jury, consensus conference, and people's house, to mention only a few (Dryzek 2015b, 750).

Five decades ago, at least in a Western context, Robert Dahl addressed the idea of mini-publics. This concept draws on various traditions, largely the thoughts of participatory democracy, deliberative democracy, and popular sovereignty, originated in Athenian democracy of the Mediterranean Sea and developed around 2,800 years ago. Although the Athenian democracy consisted of three formal, political bodies where citizens met (i.e., the assembly, the council, and the courts), the agora was an important part of democracy in Athens. At that time, the Greek word agora referred to an assembly of people, similar to today's notion of mini-publics. There seems to exist a red thread from the agora of Athenian democracy to present scholars researching the above bouquet of concepts. For instance, in Dahl's book *After the Revolution*, he argues the following concerning the notion of mini-publics:

> Selecting representatives by election has *completely displaced* selection by lot in modern democracies, so much so that a proposal to introduce selection by lot will almost certainly strike most readers as bizarre, anachronistic and—well, *antidemocratic*. Nonetheless, I propose that we seriously consider restoring that ancient democratic device and use it for selecting advisory councils to every elected official [at all levels of society]….
>
> (Dahl 1970, 122, emphasis added)

Based on the above observations, Dahl holds that a paradigm shift has taken place regarding democracy. Given that, due to this paradigm shift, the previous paradigm

of participatory democracy (e.g., selection by lot and mini-publics) was exchanged by the present paradigm of representative democracy (i.e., democracy based on election and representation). From Dahl's outlook, however, these paradigms are not mutually exclusive. Rather, as I read him, they should supplement each other. In turn, society would become more democratic.

Later, in his book *Democracy and Its Critics*, Dahl reformulates his understanding of mini-publics, or, what he labels as minipopulus. He now portrays the democratic role of mini-publics thus:

> An attentive public that represents the informed judgment of the demos itself? The idea seems self-contradictory. Yet it need not be. Suppose an advanced democratic country were to create a "minipopulus" consisting of perhaps a thousand citizens randomly selected out of the entire demos. Its task would be to deliberate, for a year perhaps, on an issue and then to announce its choices. … A minipopulous could exist at any level of government—national, state, or local. It could be attended … by an advisory committee of scholars and specialists and by an administrative staff. It could hold hearings, commission research, and engage in debate and discussion.
>
> (Dahl 1989, 340)

Importantly, Dahl underscores that the democratic design which mini-publics are part of should be understood "not as a substitute for legislative bodies but as a *complement*" (Dahl 1989, 342, emphasis added; see Dahl 1970, 149–153). So, despite that some people might define mini-publics as undemocratic and/or anti-parliamentarian, the opposite is closer to the truth. Again, it seems to hold that by adopting mini-publics, society may become more democratic.

Interestingly, in the deliberative-democratic tradition—which several seminal green political theorists, such as Dryzek and Robyn Eckersley belong to or are inspired by—the idea of mini-publics is not a stranger. In this tradition, from John Dewey to Jürgen Habermas, James S. Fishkin has further advanced the concept of mini-publics. In several of his major works, especially *Democracy and Deliberation: New Directions for Democratic Reform* (Fishkin 1991), *The Voice of the People: Public Opinion and Democracy* (Fishkin 1995), and *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation* (Fishkin 2009), he defends what he defines as deliberative opinion polls. This kind of political space and activity "provides a statistical model of what the electorate would think if, hypothetically, all voters had the same opportunities that are offered to the sample in the deliberative opinion poll" (Fishkin 1991, 4). This version of mini-publics gather a sample of at least several hundred persons randomly selected among the citizens. In turn, these people are invited to express their opinions by gathering for several days in the presence of moderators, experts, and political leaders. While participating in mini-publics, one has the time to carefully listen to and learn from each other, instead of being bound by identity markers or special interests (Niemeyer and Jennstål 2018). Rather, all being present can mutually learn from each other about their unique viewpoints. In the next round, such a deliberative learning process

can make it possible to change once own opinions based on meeting others and learning from their outlooks. However, this is not necessarily required to qualify as mini-publics. Thus, some of the core of mini-publics is the actual meaning-exchange and will-formation that take place among the participants. After that, the same group is surveyed once more and they can reach a concluding judgment. The aim of such assembly is to deliberate together concerning a particular matter to experience what can happen if citizens have more time and space to engage in the chosen matter more deeply. Also, by being randomly selected, the body of people reach a more representative insights and opinions than would traditional representative democracy about a matter of public concern. In short, mini-publics makes democracy more legitimized and open than, for example, the before-decided alternatives of polls or elections. Despite that, they never can represent all citizens and do that directly, yet have mini-publics a representative function in terms of representing as if the entire population had the capacities and time to participate. It should be added that though some may think that ordinary people are not qualified to participate in mini-publics since they lack the expertise, of say, researchers and policymakers, the opposite is closer to the truth. The participants of mini-publics are often able to understand expert knowledge and to use the deliberations and opinion-making as well as raising critical questions about partisan political claims (Niemeyer 2013). Lately, with respect to environmental issues and policymaking, various forms of mini-publics have been used in Denmark, England, Scotland, France, Norway, and the United States.

In light of the above description, the aims of mini-publics are to further democratize democracy (e.g., environmental policymaking) due to democratic under-representation or other democratic deficits. Following this line of thought, in this subchapter, I ask which role mini-publics can have to ecological democracy as a good candidate to develop Anthropocene governance. Here, I believe, mini-publics can contribute to this transformation and transition by means of its extra-parliamentary, yet democratic activities. Also, since one of the main targets of my book is to engage in a dialog between green political theory and critical theory, I bring together Dryzek and Christina Lafont—two seminal scholars in the field of mini-publics as well as two acknowledged representatives of these traditions. On my reading, they agree to a large extent on some central aspects, yet they seem to disagree on some smaller, yet very important dimensions concerning the ecocrisis.

In their book *The Politics of the Anthropocene*, Dryzek and Pickering address the issue of mini-publics. According to them, mini-publics is one of the main ecological-democratic pathways from the local scale of citizens via experts and policymakers to Anthropocene governance of the Earth system. Still, Dryzek and Pickering explain, "[p]eople will not necessarily believe science just because it is true—or, rather, represents the best understanding available", not even when scientific knowledge is disseminated in a simple communication language (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 132). Nonetheless, they argue that "[i]t is possible to think further about the role of deliberation in productively joining experts and citizens if we look at attempts to communicate climate change to the public" (ibid., 133). In this

context, they further argue, scientists and other experts play a key role as formative agents. This means that "they give form to what justice, sustainability, and related concepts should mean in practice" (ibid., 105). In turn, since experts have insights on "more general ideas", as formative agents they simultaneously "shape the principles that ought to be adopted in particular contexts", for instance, the governance of tipping points and planetary boundaries. As a result, in the age of the ecological crisis, among the main role of experts is "to be able to reach political leaders and ordinary citizens, whose response is crucial in determining whether or not principles that seem obvious to experts get any traction in collective decision processes and policymaking" (ibid., 131). However, expert/lay cleavages may exist, and must therefore be bridged if experts are to practice the role of formative agents. Dryzek and Pickering suggest that expert/lay cleavages may be bridged either by communicating scientific findings in an easily accessible language which lay people may easer understand rather than sticking to an expert language. With reference to Jane Mansbridge, they describe an alternative route in-between expert knowledge and democratic representation: "to see each as different parts of a deliberative system" (ibid., 133). So, to be able to move along the "interdependence" of both individual sites (e.g., face-to-face deliberation in small groups) and the sites within a larger system (e.g., parliamentary deliberation), a so-called systemic approach to deliberative democracy should be adopted (Mansbridge et al. 2012, 1–2). The role of interdependency is crucial while defining the idea of a system: "A system here means a set of distinguishable, differentiated, but to some degree interdependent parts, often with distributed functions and a division of labour, connected in such a way as to form a complex whole" (ibid., 4). Still, this understanding of interdependency does not imply that all the parts of the system are interrelated. Rather, a systemic approach "does not require that every component have a function or that every component be interdependent with every other such that a change in one will automatically bring about a change in all others" (ibid., 5). For ecological democracy, a central insight of the systemic approach is that "the qualities of the system as a whole need not depend on every component of the system exhibiting all deliberative virtues at all times" (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 133). Sequentially, within deliberative systems,

> some components of the system may place a greater emphasis on scientific rigor, some on reflection and judgment across competing arguments, others on including the most vulnerable, and so on, but they would still contribute in varying ways to the system's overall performance.
>
> (ibid.)

Further, inside deliberative systems and related to the environmental emergency, experts and citizens do not need to constantly meet. Rather, to deliberative systems it may be enough with "an expert assessment body", something which Dryzek and Pickering illustrates with reference to such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) or the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (ibid., 134).

The above kinds of expert assessment bodies should also be related to "familiar sorts of citizen forums" (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 134). The authors underscore that to make this interchange between expert assessment bodies and mini-publics well-functioning as part of a wider deliberative system, "[w]hat then becomes crucial is the nature of the connections between the two sorts of forums (and with intergovernmental negotiations, which should ideally be influenced)" (ibid.). Today, we already have such interconnected communicative forums, at least from the side of researchers to lay citizens. For instance, when climate researchers, often individually, testify to the environmental committee in the national parliament. Regrettably, Dryzek and Pickering explain, there appears to exist very few similar interconnected communicative forums from the other way around, from lay citizens to scientists, especially on a global level. To overcome this deficit, they propose to use the IPCC and the IPBES as role models concerning the institutional design implication when developing interconnected communicative forums from lay people to researchers. Then, these forums might be involved with citizens' opinions in at least four manners. First, by

> assessing the current state of scholarly knowledge about public perceptions relevant to specific assessments (e.g. perceptions of risk, values that people assign to goods such as nature and a safe climate, and the sorts of problems that matter most to them).
>
> (ibid.)

Second, "seeking reflective citizen assessment of risks" (ibid.). Third, "pinpointing similarities and differences between expert and lay knowledge" (ibid.). Fourth, and finally, "providing insights into what kinds of language are likely to resonate with publics" (ibid.). To Dryzek and Pickering, lay citizens include indigenous peoples, "who may be particularly vulnerable to—and aware of—the impacts of" the ecological crisis (ibid.).

Yet another institutional design implication for environmental mini-publics is to find ways in which "citizens' perspectives [could] be represented in international policy processes that seek to manage Earth system risks" (Dryzek and Pickering 2019, 134). With reference to the planetary boundaries concept that I introduced in Chapter 1, Dryzek and Pickering suggest that "citizens' and policymakers' perceptions about risks to the Earth system are a crucial ingredient in efforts to define planetary boundaries and to shape institutions that could help humanity to stay within the boundaries" (ibid.). Here, one democratizing role of mini-publics would be to establish bodies and forums were lay citizens inform researchers in a productive way about issues such as how to understand (ibid., 135). In the end of the day, then, by understanding one's own profession as researcher as a formative agent, the above interconnected communicative forums are ways in which to participate "more effectively in a democratic system" as an expert (ibid.).

In his paper "Deliberative Engagement: The Forum in the System", Dryzek addresses some other aspects of the above system view concerning the notion of mini-publics and its democratic role. He here explores "the deliberative qualities

of larger-scale systems of governance" (Dryzek 2015b, 750). On this page, Dryzek wishes to shed light on the role of what he refers to as forums within larger deliberative systems. As earlier explained, there seems to be reasonable to understand the concept of forum here as synonymous with the term mini-publics, which I use throughout this subchapter. Dryzek claims that in large-scale democratic systems in which mini-publics are key, "representation of some sort is inevitable", as well (ibid., 752). Partly, this is due to the fact that mini-publics are too small to include all the members of a society. According to Dryzek, particular mini-publics might indeed contribute to increase the quality of these larger-scale systems of deliberative governance. From his standpoint, the essential element of deliberative democracy is "a collective decision [which] is legitimate to the extent those affected by it have the right, capacity, and opportunity to participate in consequential deliberation about the content of that decision" (ibid.). On top of that, mini-publics have become gradually important and take many forms (ibid.). Dryzek elaborates on the latter point thus:

> Some involve partisans with a history of interest and activism on an issue; various sorts of mediation, dispute resolution, and consensus-building … are examples. Others recruit non-partisans, ordinary citizens who (except for a small random chance) have no history of interest and activism on the issue at hand. Various designs have proliferated in recent years: consensus conferences, citizens' juries, citizens' assemblies, planning cells, deliberative polls, citizens' review panels, and so forth. Often, these are referred to as mini-publics … Across all issue areas, the most popular topics to deliberate have involved *environmental conflicts* and risks accompanying new technologies.
>
> (Dryzek 2015b, 750, emphasis added)

Interestingly, Dryzek explains, one of the two most popular issues to deliberate in mini-publics are conflicts over the ecological crisis. Perhaps surprisingly, however, Dryzek is reluctant regarding what he claims to be a typical assumption about a direct connection between mini-publics and deliberative democracy. In contrast, rather, he criticizes this standpoint for not overcoming the gap between mini-publics and what he assumes to be a larger-scale governmental system of which the deliberative model of democracy is a part (Dryzek 2015b, 750). Thus, to be qualified as part of deliberative democracy, mini-publics must somehow have a systemic impact. All too often, this is not the case. Dryzek suggests that there are at least four reasons why this is so. First, mini-publics might be "set up within civil society with no real strategy for linkage to other centers of power" (ibid., 751). Second, "when governments commission such exercises [of mini-publics], it can be for reasons having more to do with supporting predetermined policy positions, buying time, or showing symbolic concern" (ibid.). Third, "a change in government can lead to sudden destruction of deliberative capacity" (ibid.). Fourth, and finally, "actors who do not like the outcome of a deliberative process can then attempt to de-legitimate the process" (ibid.). In Dryzek's view, the general implication of such

problems concerning deliberative mini-publics is that they lack effect to both the larger public sphere and the governmental system. To overcome these challenges, Dryzek suggests evaluating the success or failure in regard to the impact of mini-publics for deliberative systems. To recall, a system is in general terms any form of fixed, differentiated, yet related elements which might be understood in view of some shared aim. Then, a deliberative system is defined in this manner:

> [T]he components [of the deliberative system] might include *formal* debate in a legislature (or international negotiations), committee hearings, public hearings, [as well as *informal* components of] media activity, and political talk among activists, friends, and neighbors. The common purpose in question is deliberation that is *authentic* (i.e., high quality), *inclusive* (of all effected interests), and *consequential* (in terms of influencing or determining collective decisions). It is important that these qualities be achieved at the level of the system *as a whole*—but not necessarily that they be achieved by particular components of the system.
>
> (Dryzek 2015b, 751, emphasis added)

The above passage portrays the Dryzekian version of what has during the last decade or so been labeled as the systemic turn in theories on deliberative democracy and that I mentioned above (e.g., Mansbridge et al. 2012). From his angle, mini-publics involves both formal and informal deliberations and does so on all societal scales. As touched upon, the core of the systemic turn is that "intrinsically non-deliberative actions and practices can have positive deliberative consequences for the system as a whole" (Dryzek 2015b, 751).

Yet, Dryzek proposes that mini-publics should strive to fulfill three qualities. First, mini-publics should be based on authentic deliberation (Dryzek 2015b, 752). From his stance, this deliberative quality involves, for instance, the capability to reach and be reached by people with dissimilar viewpoints, as well as listen to and learn from such people. Second, mini-publics should be based on the quality of inclusion (ibid., 752–753). Here, he suggests that since the representation of mini-publics may vary from case to case, such an arena should be supplemented by electoral representation. Lay people or other citizens can then engage together across various societal interests and actors. Third, and finally, mini-publics should be based on consequentiality (ibid., 753). This term refers to, inter alia, the extent to which mini-publics impact the collective decision-making of the larger system of deliberative politics as well as when the government makes publicly disputed issues more legitimate through mini-publics.

In "Macro-Political Uptake of Mini-Publics", a paper co-authored with Robert E. Goodin, it sheds light on the link, transition, and impact between the micro to the macro. Put more detailed, they wish to describe the uptake of micro-politics (i.e., the democratic innovations of mini-publics) by macro-politics (i.e., the larger democratic system and its requirement for collective decision-making). The authors address the manners in which mini-publics can influence not simply in terms of deliberative effects on the larger scales within a state, but even at a global

level (Goodin and Dryzek 2006, 219). Yet, they do not appear to mean a global form of mini-publics. Rather, they wish to portray what in some cases appears to be democratic innovations which have been applied and evaluated across the world. Here, the same micro-democratic design is tested and evaluated in several countries (ibid., 223). Similar to Dahl, Dryzek and Goodin underscore that their understanding of mini-publics aims to be a complement to legislative bodies, not a substitute (ibid., 220). According to this democratic design, then, "[t]he ordinary institutions of representative democracy generally remain sovereign, such that micro-deliberative mechanisms merely provide inputs into them" (ibid.). So, rather than itself being a decision-making mechanism, according to Dryzek and Goodin, a mini-public should rather supplement a governmental structure by means of both formal and informal inputs to the representative bodies of democracy and policymaking. Then, mini-publics may have "real political impact only by working *on, and through*, the broader public sphere, ordinary institutions of representative democracy, and administrative policy making" (ibid., 221, emphasis added). Further, the democratic innovations of mini-publics should be understood as part of the wide range of activities exercised by deliberating citizens, partly including lay citizens and non-partisans. In turn, it is easier to map the ways in which citizens' deliberation is part of a consequential democratic design and practice.

According to Dryzek and Goodin, there are two reasons why it is required to map the different manners the democratic deliberations and innovations of the micro-politics of mini-publics can perhaps impact the macro-political system of democratic governance. First, "to counter those skeptical of the impact of such innovations" (ibid., 225). Second, "to illuminate the subtle as well as the obvious ways they can make a difference" (ibid.). In light of their mapping of the various ways mini-publics could influence macro-democratic systems, Dryzek and Goodin suggest eight such cases. The first, yet limited, case is while mini-publics can "actually 'making policy' occurs when a forum is formally empowered as part of a decision-making process" (ibid.). The second, and much more common, case, is when a mini-public "provide recommendations to ordinary macro-political processes" (ibid., 225). Still, in these events, there are "no formal guarantee that the recommendations will be taken any further at all (much less adopted and implemented) in the macro-political process" (ibid., 225–226). Occasionally, therefore, the organizers of mini-publics "will seek a "guarantee" (hard or soft) in advance from government officials that the forum will be an integral part of a decision-making process" (ibid., 226). The next and third case which Dryzek and Goodin mention, is when mini-publics are "informing public debates" (ibid., 228). Then, "[i]nformation would flow both to those involved directly in policy debates and (ideally) to larger publics" (ibid.). Fourth, mini-publics can impact larger political structures through "shaping policy by market testing" (ibid., 229). A fifth case is "legitimating policy" (ibid., 232). Then, the macro-uptake of mini-publics may assist "legitimate public policies in whose process of production they play a part, however symbolic that part may be" (ibid.). Sixth, they refer to "confidence building" and "constituency building" (ibid., 234). Here, mini-publics deliberative processes can "promote "empowerment" in the psychological or sociological rather

than the strictly legal-political sense" (ibid.). From their angle, the latter influence might have two further indirect democratic impacts; one is to give the participants of the mini-public a psychological boost in confidence, whereas the other is the sociological consequence of participating in mini-publics later increasing the chance that the same group later will participate to bring change in the large-scale democratic structures. Seventh, uptake can happen through popular oversight, that is, public oversight forcing official accountability (ibid., 235). Eight, and finally, Dryzek and Goodin add to their catalog over how mini-publics can influence formal democratic institutions the political activity of "resisting co-option" (ibid., 236). The case in point here is the co-option of the adversaries' projected policies by depriving the opponents of any legitimacy for remaining critical toward them. In these instances, however, the deliberative process of mini-publics can create spaces where others' attempt at appropriating or taking over something for a new and dissimilar aim (read: their own purpose) can be criticized or opposed.

After having explored Dryzek's sense of the democratic role of mini-publics—especially its potential role for ecological democracy and Anthropocene governance—let us move to Lafont. She belongs to the same fourth generation of critical theory as do Hartmut Rosa, Maeve Cooke, and Arne Johan Vetlesen. Lafont locates her idea of mini-publics within a democratic framework. Similar to Dryzek, Lafont subscribes to the deliberative model of democracy. Inspired by Habermas, she puts forward a participatory interpretation of deliberative democracy (Lafont 2020, 24). This account of Habermasian democracy is participatory as far as it gives "*pride of place* to the democratic ideal of self-government" (ibid., original emphasis). This ideal requires that "the processes of political opinion- and will-formation in which citizens (actively and/or passively) participate should effectively influence and shape the laws and policies to which they are subject" (ibid.). According to Lafont, this ideal of self-government which deliberative democracy offers, is an attractive one. The reason why she argues thus, is because "citizens must justify to one another – based on reasons that everyone can reasonably accept – the coercive policies with which they must comply" (Lafont 2017, 85). In turn, the citizens recognize each other as political equals or co-legislators. In Lafont's account of deliberative democracy, the core contribution of public deliberation to the democratic legitimation is the creation of a political space where the citizens can "endorse the laws and policies to which they are subject as their own" (ibid., 85–86). From Lafont's angle, public justification is key to the deliberative framing, which can assist in avoiding other citizens' coercion or consolidated majorities' domination. Instead, by participating in public deliberation, the citizens' can "show that their proposals are supported by better reasons and hold out hope that the force of the better argument may move other citizens to change their political preferences" (ibid., 86). Further, Lafont explains, the mutual justification of deliberative democracy is based on certain political values. One such value relates to the epistemic quality of public deliberation. This perspective directly influences the legitimacy of the outcomes of these deliberations, and the "more informed, impartial, mutually respectful, and open to counterarguments participants are in deliberation, the more likely it is that they will reach substantively better political

decisions" (ibid.). The other value relates to how deliberations directly influence the very process of democratic legitimacy. This value requires more than convincing reason-giving. Rather, democratic decision-making "must be endorsed by those who will be bound by them: that is, the citizenry in question" (ibid.).

In this context, since improving the quality of deliberation is central to the democratic tradition Lafont supports, mini-publics occurs as an adequate suggestion to improve the possibility of achieving the core goal and values of deliberation. According to Lafont, there are two groups of scholars endorsing the political use of mini-publics as a new democratic design and innovation which assist to achieve the ideal of deliberative democracy. First, we find scholars supporting "conferring decisional status on mini-publics directly, so that their recommendations would be taken up by the relevant political authorities without any need to ask for ratification by the citizenry (such as through elections or a referendum)" (Lafont 2017, 86). Second, scholars who "hesitate to go as far as to hand over actual political power (like of legislation or constitutional interpretation) to mini-publics" (ibid.). Lafont explains that the first and more daring proposal of the institutionalization of deliberative mini-publics receives support since mini-publics are understood as ways in which to achieve "better deliberative quality and thus would lead to better outcomes" of the deliberations (ibid.). The second proposal, however, is supported by scholars who find it problematic if the very reasons behind a mini-public's recommendation are not accessible or transparent. Then, political authorities' uptake of this outcome in terms of decision-making "will in fact be based on their raw, uniformed opinions, canceling out the potential gains of using mini-publics" (ibid., 87).

Fascinatingly, Lafont partly supports, partly rejects, mini-publics. She rejects the proposition of inserting deliberative mini-publics into large-scale, democratic, and governmental decision-making structures—such as Anthropocene governance. Still, Lafont welcomes mini-publics on certain premises: by drawing on deliberative democracy, she suggests several political uses of mini-publics—among which may improve the democratic legitimacy of political decision-making institutions. From this participatory stance, Lafont claims that "whatever the benefits of conferring decisional status on mini-publics may be, they are unrelated to democratization" (Lafont 2017, 86). In effect, "[w]hether or not [mini-publics] would increase the deliberative quality of the political system as a whole, they would diminish their democratic legitimacy" (ibid.). Here, in contrast to Dryzek and his subscription to the system approach to deliberative democracy which I outlined earlier, Lafont supports what she describes as a citizen approach to deliberative democracy (Lafont 2020, 138). The Lafontian citizen approach stresses "the potential effects within the *ongoing* public debate among the citizenry", which are of "special normative significance" to study the democratic role of mini-publics (Lafont 2020, 138, original emphasis).

If the above argument is convincing, let us move to Lafont's own proposition of democratizing mini-publics. According to Lafont, there are two reasons why deliberative mini-publics are attractive to scholars, such as herself, who study the democratic innovation of deliberation. The first reason concerns mini-publics and

the before-mentioned high epistemic quality of face-to-face deliberation (Lafont 2017, 87). Thus, the "participants receive balanced information on some important political issue, are exposed to a variety of relevant social perspectives, and have the opportunity to weigh the pro and con arguments in order to reach a considered judgment" (ibid.). The second reason is related to the democratic representativeness of mini-publics. Since the participants are randomly selected among lay citizens "and, as a consequence, their initial raw opinions on the issues in question can be quite uninformed, perhaps even biased or manipulated" (ibid.). Through the deliberation process, however, ordinary people can achieve judged and even new standpoints. "Still", Lafont continues, "quality deliberation has nothing to do with democracy per se" (ibid.). Rather, it is "the representativeness of mini-publics that makes them democratically significant" (ibid.). Here, mini-publics generate a representative sample of the populace as a whole since the participants in mini-publics are randomly chosen among all inhabitants. Taking this argument seriously would suggest what Lafont conceptualizes as "empowered" or "empowering" mini-publics (ibid., 99–100). Lafont defines such fora as "mini-publics with the power to make binding political decisions" (ibid., 101, note 9). These empowered mini-publics are exercised "in connection with or in the form of an institution" (ibid., 100). Further, empowered mini-publics take account of "the possibility of legitimate uses … that may not be directly tied to referenda or some other form of citizen ratification" (ibid.). Despite her doubts, Lafont mentions some examples of empowered and empowering mini-publics, such as constitutional review (ibid., 105, note 48) as well as organizing Deliberation Days for ratification or rejection by the citizens to certify popular amendment proposals (ibid., 104, note 47).

In the book *Democracy without Shortcuts: A Participatory Conception of Deliberative Democracy*, we learn that Lafont continues her study of the link between mini-publics and deliberative democracy. To begin with, she here refers to the concept of "lottocracy" (Lafont 2020, 258). This term occurs to incorporate a wide range of "[l]ottocratic conceptions of democracy" in general and deliberative democracy in particular (ibid., 101). The concept of lottocracy seems to be used on the most general explanatory level. If so, it includes diverse subcategories of lottocratic ideals and practices. In addition to mini-publics, Lafont mentions citizens' assemblies, citizens' juries, consensus conferences, and deliberative polls as examples of how lottocratic institutions can be inserted into democratic processes (ibid.).

Within the context of lottocracy, environmental issues do not seem to be high on the agenda to Lafont. Yet, in my reading, she sheds some light on the relationship between mini-publics and environmental issues. According to Lafont:

> This example [of a deliberative poll that was organized in 1996 in Texas on issues related to electric utility choices and discussed by Fishkin] is *particularly helpful* for imagining how civil society groups, grassroots organizations, social movements, or political parties could use minipublics for *contestatory political purposes*. *Environmental concerns* offer a *good example* of political issues that often *fall under the radar* of the citizenry. This is particularly the

> case when public debate is dominated by discourses that pit environmental concerns against other important interests such as job security or economic development.
>
> (Lafont 2020, 149, emphasis added)

In the above passage, Lafont suggests that mini-publics can play a democratic role regarding environmental matters. This appears to be due to at least two reasons. First, she views environmental issues as a policy area which can create contestatory political debates. Then, mini-publics can become "a quite unique resource" which assists in reconciling civil society groups, grassroots organizations, social movements, and/or political parties while dealing with competing views and interests regarding environmental issues—which in the first place make many and strong disputes in society (Lafont 2020, 149). Second, Lafont indicates that the democratic role of mini-publics may occur when the citizenry is not aware of environmental issues. This can be due to how some participants in public debate define environmental concerns as competing interests with other policy areas. Still, Lafont holds, participants of mini-publics might "contest and transform actual public opinion", even in the case of environmental disputes (ibid.). To achieve these goals, Lafont proposes:

> [M]inipublics have the unique characteristic of enabling political actors to *fight a consolidated majority opinion* on its own terrain, so to speak. Instead of simply insisting upon the correctness of their own views, they can show that, once they become *properly informed*, the majority of a representative sample of the citizenry came to endorse their views. This should give the citizenry good reasons to take a closer look at the minipublics' arguments and considerations, which could lead them to *change their minds* on the issues at hand.
>
> (Lafont 2020, 149–150, emphasis added)

Again, mini-publics can create spaces where the citizens can meet on other premises than, for example, the formal channels of the parliament in accordance with representative democracy. In doing that, the citizens can listen to and learn from each other, and they can meet for a longer time period and/or on several occasions. Moreover, this mutual and ongoing learning process ideally can criticize a consolidated majority opinion. While listening to and learning from proper information, one may change one's heart and mind on a particular policy area, such as the environmental one. At the end of the day, mini-publics can be a seminal part of the processes of democratic political opinion- and will-formation, Lafont seems to hold.

After having presented Dryzek's and Lafont's understanding of the idea of mini-publics, I will now discuss their approaches. Dryzek and Lafont appear to agree on several aspects. First, both argue that mini-publics can play a democratic role. Second, Dryzek and Lafont approach mini-publics within a deliberative framing. Yet, they occur to depart from each other when it comes at least two significant

dimensions. I here have in mind how they define the concept of nature, which is a central matter of my book. The next issue concerns how their accounts of mini-publics relate to the Earth system as a large-scale system.

First, I look at how the notion of nature is explored within the framework of Dryzek and Lafont, respectively. Dryzek bases his account of ecological democracy—within which his understanding of mini-publics is located—on a non-anthropocentric definition of nature. As explained in Chapter 2, Dryzek appears to advocate biocentrism. Ontologically, biocentrism acknowledges everything existing, whereas normatively this view ascribes an intrinsic moral value to individually or collectively organic living beings. So, one way to read Dryzek is to say that since his account of mini-publics on a larger level is based on his notion of biocentrism, then, all the issues that he studies within the ecological-democratic framework—such as the principles and practices of mini-publics—are preconditioned by this biocentrism. As I illuminated in this subchapter, mini-publics is one part of the larger framework of Dryzekian Anthropocene governance. Here, mini-publics can play a crucial role to initiate the democratic transformations and transitions from Holocene governance to the politics of the Anthropocene. If so, mini-publics create a particular political space in-between which people can meet, listen, and learn from each other, say, when ordinary citizens through dialog can meet and learn from climate researchers, environmental organizations, along with activists from Friday for Future and Extinction Rebellion, to mention only some relevant dialog partners. Further, in light of the above-introduced map or catalog of the many forms of mini-publics, the Dryzekian account of ecological democracy appears again to give a rich picture of the wide range of instances among which mini-publics can play a decisive part.

Lafont, on her side, never engages directly with today's most existential, planetary, and acute crisis, the environmental disaster—at least not in the kind of fundamental and comprehensive manner as does Dryzek. Thus, it is difficult or impossible to say anything nuanced about how she understands the concept of nature. One manner in which to interpret Lafont regarding this matter, then, is to say—at least implicitly—that she subscribes to anthropocentrism. This assumption is based on my portrayal in Chapters 1 and 2 of anthropocentrism as an influencing—perhaps the most influencing—understanding of nature in critical theory, the tradition to which Lafont belongs. Given that, and despite that there are some non-anthropocentric critical theorists, such as Herbert Marcuse (Chapters 3 and 5) and Hartmut Rosa (Chapter 3), Lafont seems to run into to some of the same problems as does Axel Honneth (Chapter 2). Nonetheless, as a critical theorist, Lafont is most certainly critical toward instrumental approaches to the world (e.g., capitalism and strategic communication), which is a central intuition of many scholars of that tradition. To recall, anthropocentrism comes in two main versions (Chapter 2). Weak anthropocentrism is human-centered, whereas strong anthropocentrism is instrumental. Similar to Dryzek, which I explained in Chapter 2, Lafont would reject the strong, instrumental anthropocentrism and support the weak one. Yet, another way to read Lafont concerning the definition of nature is to adopt the strategy of extension. Here, extension means to outspread something from

one context to another without changing the basic premises of that theory (e.g., environmental philosopher Tom Regan's extends Immanuel Kant's philosophy by formulating an animal rights theory, although Kant himself never did do so and perhaps would not subscribe to one either). Let me exemplify: though Lafont does not explore, say, the theme of mini-publics inside an ecological-democratic framing, her account of mini-publics may nonetheless be extended from her own weak-anthropocentric approach to a non-anthropocentric perspective (Servan 2021). Along these lines, according to Johannes Servan, Lafont argues that mini-publics are not a substitute for referendums, but rather recommendations made by the mini-publics as means of political pressure, for instance, regarding our ecological crisis and how this should be democratically approached. So, though she never mentions this herself, the Lafontian outlook can nonetheless shed light on matters that are relevant for both the ecocrisis and how the ecological democracy framework addresses this disaster (ibid.). In Servan's own words:

> If, for example, the green political minority can use the result from the mini-public to show that a majority of the population would agree with them, if they had the opportunity to think about it, this could give the demand presented by the [green] minority a greater political weight.
>
> (ibid., 141, my translation)

Given that, Servan continues, "[t]he result from the mini-publics will be even more significant to Lafont if the recommendations can support a green majority in the population that is contrary to the politicians' gray line" (ibid., my translation). Finally, Servan asks, "[p]erhaps it is this last optimistic scenario that is about to emerge as public opinion joins the climate activists?" (ibid., my translation). Although I find both the argument in Servan's reading of Lafont and the extension strategy promising, I am not fully convinced. Since we live in in the age of the environmental emergency, I believe that this crisis should be addressed from a more adequate starting point, namely the ecological-democratic framework. Despite the different pathways in this line of thought, among which I am more convinced by Robyn Eckersley's ecocentrism than Dryzek's biocentrism, even in the latter case can the issue of mini-publics be addressed more convincingly than in Lafont, especially if she endorses a weak anthropocentrism. This is because Dryzek adopts the Anthropocene and the Earth system as the very foundation and starting-block for his inquiry. Then, Dryzekian mini-publics can revitalize ecological democracy from the viewpoint of the Earth system and as Anthropocene governance, rather than the Lafontian weak anthropocentrism and a citizens' approach. What, then, about Lafont's book *Democracy without Shortcuts*? In view the above outlining, Lafont is apparently preoccupied with today's ecological crisis and how it impacts and requires democracy, hereunder mini-publics. Another evidence that could support that interpretation, is Lafont's own reference in *Democracy without Shortcuts* to Simon Niemeyer, a renowned scholar in fields such as ecological democracy. Interestingly, according to Lafont, Niemeyer contributes with "very interesting analyses of the potential benefits of minipublics in the context of environmental

policies" (Lafont 2020, 149, note 22). She even refers to a paper by Niemeyer titled "Deliberation and Ecological Democracy: From Citizen to Global System" (Niemeyer 2020). In contrast, however, to Dryzek, Niemeyer does not seem to explore the kind of Earth system governance for the Anthropocene (Dryzek and Pickering 2019). In short, Dryzek seeks to articulate a much richer framework including everything from the ontology of nature to the practice of democracy. So, I believe, Lafont does no more than touching one minor, yet important aspect of environmental issues instead of considering this theme in its fullest sense. So, despite their shared interest in the connection between mini-public and democracy, Dryzek and Lafont seem to depart from each other the issue of their understanding of crisis as being acute, existential, and planetary (Chapter 1). On my reading, Dryzek engages primarily in the environmental crisis and secondary in democratic crisis, whereas Lafont does the opposite. So, from a Dryzekian viewpoint and in contrast to Lafont's citizens approach, the system approach includes the entire planet and aims at developing Anthropocene governance.

Second, I explore the role of scaling—both upward scaling and downward scaling, and what I claim is their interconnection—vis-à-vis mini-publics. Let me first explain what such scaling indicates. Niemeyer raises the issue of scaling thus: "how [might the] … benefits of small-scale, minipublic deliberation … be 'scaled up' to impact wider political discourse" (Niemeyer 2020, 16). The background for asking this, Niemeyer continues, is that the "challenge increases in complexity for global environmental governance, requiring coordination at large scale and among dispersed publics" (Niemeyer 2020, 16). From my angle, the link between mini-publics and scaling should be framed by the deliberative systems approach which some defenders of ecological democracy draw on (Dryzek and Pickering 2019). Along the lines of the systemic approach to deliberative democracy, all the parts are considered to be interconnected with the system as such. On top of that, despite that not all the parts of the system necessarily always contribute positively to the system as a whole, these parts are nevertheless part of the system as a whole. In turn, mini-publics can play a democratic role "at any level and form of governance" (Owen and Smith 2015, 216). In the Anthropocene, the ecological crisis can potentially affect all levels of the entire Earth system. Thus, I claim that we need to democratically address this crisis on all levels of its complexity. Given that, the mechanisms of upscaling mini-public deliberation should be supplemented by the mechanisms of downscaling mini-public deliberation. Also, these mechanisms should be able to create an ongoing circular process of upscaling and downscaling concerning the democratic role of mini-publics within the entire structure which can initiate transformations and transitions to Anthropocene governance.

How do, then, Dryzek and Lafont deal with the issue of the relationship between mini-publics and scaling? In my interpretation, Dryzek subscribes to the idea of combined mechanisms of upscaling and downscaling of mini-publics. As I tried to show above, Dryzek does so since his version of ecological democracy is based on the deliberative systems approach. As part of this framework, we find his approach to mini-publics, as well. Consequently, mini-publics can play a democratic role at

all levels and to all forms of Anthropocene governance. Also, at least in Dryzek's case, as I outlined in Chapter 2, the ontology of his account of ecological democracy is partly based on biosemiotics, or, perhaps more accurate ecosemiotics. In any case, Anthropocene governance includes according to Dryzek communication even with inanimate parts of nature. So, the ongoing and interconnected processes of upscaling and downscaling of mini-public deliberation seem to involve communication between all potentially affected parties of the Earth system. In the age of the ecocrisis, this appears to be a robust framework regarding the issue of mini-public scaling.

In Lafont, the story about scaling seems to be quite the opposite of Dryzek. As mentioned, Lafont defends what she portrays as a citizen approach to deliberative democracy. In effect, she occurs to reject the deliberative systems approach, which Dryzek defends. In Lafont, then, mini-publics play a democratic role as publics where citizens can deliberate. Also, though seemingly not her main focus, she addresses to some respect today's environmental disaster and how mini-publics can play a democratic role in this context. Still, in contrast to Dryzek, Lafont does not appear to consider how the ecocrisis impacts the entire the Earth system, what kind of governance structure this requires, and have our understanding of nature here is seminal. As a result, Lafont cannot connect the dots of mini-publics and scaling akin to Dryzek.

After my comparison and discussion of Dryzek's and Lafont's understanding of mini-publics and its democratic role, it appears that the Dryzekian framework is the most promising. I argue so due to its link between the systemic approach to democracy and Anthropocene governance, along with the interconnection between upscaling and downscaling. To further develop ecological democracy partly through mini-publics on all scales is, then, occurs to be an adequate avenue in the age of environmental disaster.

5.3 Ecocide Tribunal: Toward a Transnational Ecological Democracy

In this last subchapter of my book *Ecological Democracy: Caring for the Earth in the Anthropocene*, I explore the idea of ecocide. To do so, I compare Polly Higgins and Jay M. Bernstein. I begin by presenting Higgins' understanding of the concept if ecocide, especially as it is pictured in her book *Eradicating Ecocide: Laws and Governance to Prevent the Destruction of Our Planet*. The late Higgins is internationally among the most well-known and influencing scholars who have developed the notion of ecocide during the last decades—which in her case include being an environmental activist and a publicly struggling for implementing ecocide law transnationally. Thereafter, I introduce Bernstein's account of ecocide based on his book *Of Ecocide and Human Rights: On the Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*. I also wish to shed light on whether Bernstein can be read as developing a version of non-anthropocentric critical theory. If he defends such an ideal, this Bernsteinian outlook can resonate with the other critical theorists who develop other accounts of non-anthropocentric critical theory and whom I partly have addressed in my book.

I here have in mind such scholars as Herbert Marcuse (Chapters 2 and 5), Joel Whitebook (Chapter 2), Hartmut Rosa (Chapter 3), Arne Johan Vetlesen (Chapter 4) and Maeve Cook (Chapter 5). Since Bernstein is inspired by Higgins, I am also curious about to what extent they degree with regard to their accounts of ecocide. To explore the latter, I focus on the above ontological and normative issues. While in the present book studying ecological democracy, I find it worthwhile considering which role such criminalization of large-scale environmental destruction may have while looking for possible pathways to exercise the ecological-democratic ideals on a transnational scale, too.

Before I move on to my presentation and discussion, let me say a few words about how I understand the concept of ecocide, which will serve as the framework for the discussion. In her influential account, Higgins defines ecocide as a human crime against ecosystems (Higgins 2015/2010, 62). Ontologically, in natural-philosophical terms, the phenomenon ecosystems can be defined in various ways. In line with the view I have defended throughout this book, I suggest that ecocide is defined in light of ecocentrism. I argue so because ecocide is directly connected to ecosystems, which involve webs of life constituted by organisms (e.g., animals and plants), weather, and landscapes in a geographic area. It should be underscored that in addition to living organisms, an ecosystem incorporates inanimate elements (e.g., rocks, temperature, and humidity). So, due to the ontological role of ecosystems as well as their both organic and inorganic surroundings, and the fact that the inorganic parts are the most fundamental level of ecosystems, I suggest that an adequate approach to ecocide includes these aspects and begins with inorganic ones. Surely, as I have explained many times, even anthropocentrists would probably acknowledge all the above elements. Yet, normatively, they would probably reject that these phenomena have an intrinsic moral value. In contrast, however, at least Higgins appeals to Arne Naess' deep ecology. Subsequently, she occurs to assume that ecosystems and other parts of nature upon which ecosystems depend should be protected based on the ideal of an intrinsic moral value.

Before I present, compare, and discuss Higgins and Bernstein on ecocide, I will briefly contextualize, historically and legally, the concept of ecocide (see Higgins et al. 2013). Since the 1970s, the idea of ecocide has increasingly been put high on the agenda. In 1972, for example, Sweden's Prime Minister, Olof Palme, appealed to ecocide in his opening speech on behalf of the Swedish delegation at the plenary meeting of the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment, or, the Stockholm Conference. It should be added to this picture, that in the same year as Mr. Palme's appeal to ecocide, the ideas of rights of nature, Earth rights, or Earth jurisprudence were introduced. One of the most significant contributors to this development was Christopher D. Stone. In his book *Should Trees Have Standing?*, Stone explains that, ontologically, humans' own survival depends on a healthy natural world that exists independent of humans, and, normatively, therefore, the same ethics that justify human rights, should also justify nature's rights (Stone 1972). Now, let us return to ecocide, and be aware of its potential role within the context of Earth jurisprudence. Against the horizon of the ecological crisis explicitly referred

to by Palme and in view of the accessible scientific knowledge about this disaster at that time, he stated the following about ecocide:

> The immense destruction brought about by indiscriminate bombing, by large scale use of bulldozers and herbicides is an outrage sometimes described as *ecocide*, which requires urgent international attention. … We know that work of disarmament and peace must be viewed in a long perspective. It is of paramount importance, however, that *ecological warfare* ceases immediately.
>
> (Palme 1972, 6, emphasis added)

The UN Conference on the Human Environment achieved several important goals: the conference was the first world event to make the environment a major issue that was organized by the UN; environmental governance was put higher on the agenda than before; environment and poverty were approached together and treated as a shared problem; it established a series of similar international UN conferences (e.g., the 1992 Rio Earth Summit); the conference's opening day, June 5, later became the World Environment Day; the conference institutionally accomplished the establishment of the UN Environment Program (UNEP). Another important achievement of the Stockholm Conference was its issuing of the so-called Stockholm Declaration. This international declaration consisted of 26 guiding principles through which humanity's shared responsibility regarding the environment and development was articulated, including an action plan with 109 recommendations and a resolution. The declaration had an irrefutable influence on the succeeding international environmental law. Among these principles, Principle 1 states that

> Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations.
>
> (UN 1972)

From Principle 2, we learn that "The natural resources of the earth, including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as appropriate" (ibid.).

Though Sweden's prime minister put ecocide high on the agenda at the Stockholm Conference, there appear to be no explicit traces of this concept in the Stockholm Declaration as such. Still, in her book *Eradicating Ecocide*, Higgins is preoccupied with Principle 6 of the that declaration (Higgins 2010, 93). This principle demands the following: "The discharge of toxic substances or other substances and the release of heat, in such quantities or concentrations as to exceed the capacity of the environment to render them harmless, must be halted" (UN 1972). Further, since ecocide is partly linked to weapons of mass destruction, the declaration's

Principle 26 seems relevant to the issue ecocide, as well. This principle reads thus: "Man and his environment must be spared the effects of nuclear weapons and all other means of mass destruction" (ibid.). To better understand the link between ecocide and weapon of mass destruction, let us take a closer look at a standard definition of the latter concept and thereby accomplish a better picture of the potential impacts—hereunder environmental ones—of such weapons. Weapon of mass destruction refers to a weapon that brings substantial injury or even kill plentiful people or produce great harm to natural structures (e.g., mountains), the ecosphere, or artificial structures (e.g., buildings). Further, weapons of mass destruction influence in these manners by means of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or any other armament causing the described destruction. Thus, I suggest, one more important achievement of the Stockholm Conference was how the idea of ecocide was both directly and indirectly addressed. It was directly addressed by Mr. Palme in terms of both ecocide and ecological warfare. Indirectly, ecocide was addressed by the parts of the declaration dealing with weapon of mass destruction.

Fascinatingly, in 1973, only a year after the Stockholm Conference, the notion of ecocide understood as an ecological warfare was further developed by Richard A. Falk. In his paper "Environmental Warfare and Ecocide: Facts, Appraisal, and Proposals", including references to Palme and the UN Conference on the Human Environment, Falk defines ecocide as any acts committed with "the intent to disrupt or destroy, in whole or in part, a human ecosystem" (Falk 1973, 93). Further, Falk explains, ecocide can take place by means of a wide range of weapons: weapons of mass destruction (i.e., nuclear, bacteriological, chemical, or other), chemical herbicides to "defoliate and deforest natural forests for military purposes", the "use of bombs and artillery in such quantity, density, or size as to impair the quality of the soil or to enhance the prospect of diseases dangerous to human beings, animals, or crops", the "use of bulldozing equipment to destroy large tracts of forest or cropland for military purposes", the "use of techniques designed to increase or decrease rainfall or otherwise modify weather as a weapon of war", or, finally, the "forcible removal of human beings or animals from their habitual places of habitation to expedite the pursuit of military or industrial objectives" (ibid.). Like the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, or, the Genocide Convention (1948), which was established after the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg (1945–1946) in the aftermath of the genocide and other evil actions during World War II, Falk suggests that an Ecocide Convention should be established as part of international law to condemn future environmental warfare (ibid., 84). To do so, Falk prepared a draft for what he names as the International Convention on the Crime of Ecocide. This draft was "introduced as part of a review process which sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the Genocide Convention" (Higgins et al. 2013, 259). The aim of such a convention is to accomplish the following action:

> To take steps to strengthen and clarify international law with respect to the prohibition of weapons and tactics that inflict environmental damage, and

> designate as a distinct crime those cumulative war effects that do not merely disrupt, but substantially or even irreversibly destroy a distinct ecosystem.
>
> (Falk 1973, 90)

From Falk's standpoint, the preamble of the International Convention on the Crime of Ecocide could be formulated thus:

> The Contracting Parties acting on the belief that ecocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations, and condemned by peoples and governments of good will through-out the world;
>
> recognizing that we are living in a period of *increasing danger of ecological collapse*; acknowledging that man has consciously and unconsciously inflicted irreparable damage to the environment in times of war and peace;
>
> being convinced that the pursuit of ecological quality requires international guidelines and procedures of cooperation and enforcement.
>
> (Falk 1973, 93, emphasis added)

I find it significant that the draft convention in its preamble speaks about the increasing danger of ecological collapse. Then, it addresses one of the greatest dangers—if not the greatest danger—of our time. Also, by stating this in the very preamble is in accord with the custom of legal documents a way in which to formulate its core aim—to contribute to preventing ecological collapse. The draft of The International Convention on the Crime of Ecocide consists of 20 articles. I shall not quote all of them. Yet, I think it is worthwhile quoting Article 1 to illustrate some other core elements of the convention. In Article 1, we learn that,

> The Contracting Parties confirm that ecocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.
>
> (Falk 1973, 93)

A couple of decades later, in 1998, the idea of ecocide occurred as part of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, or, the Rome Statute. This treaty is founded the International Criminal Court, which is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal seated in The Hague, Netherlands. Importantly, the environment is explicitly mentioned in Article 8(2)(b)(iv) of the Rome Statute. Consequently, the following acts are criminalized:

> Intentionally launch an attack in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or *widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment* which would be clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated.
>
> (Rome Statute 1998, 5, emphasis added)

Based on of the Rome Statute, the court's jurisdiction internationally prosecutes individuals for four crimes against peace: crimes of genocide (Article 6); crimes against humanity (Article 7); war crimes (Article 8); crime of aggression (Article 8) (Rome Statute 1998). Some lawyers argue that there are convincing arguments for including "the 5th crime against peace" as part of the Rome Statute and the court's jurisdiction: the crime of ecocide (Higgins 2010, 61, 172, 175, 179; Higgins et al. 2013). However, as Higgins underscores, it took more than 50 years from the establishment of the UN Charter (1945) to the International Criminal Court was founded in 1998. Higgins refers to this historical fact and development to show that it may take many decades until the concept of ecocide is recognized as part of international law (Higgins 2010, 61–62). To increase the possibility of this taking place, Higgins appears to suggest, we can learn from legal history. In turn, the acknowledgment of ecocide as a fifth crime against peace can be just around the corner. Falk's addressing of ecocide five decades ago might indicate the same. Still, due to the present ecological crisis being characterized as existential, planetary, and acute (Chapter 1), the world society has no time too loose to establish and apply ecocide law as part of our toolbox to struggle against this disaster.

Now, after a brief introduction to the historical and legal context of ecocide, let us move to Higgins' perspectives on ecocide. She addresses ecocide as an adequate response to environmental destruction within the framework of international criminal law. In the book *Eradicating Ecocide*, the crime of ecocide is minimally defined as a "large-scale destruction, in whole or in part, of *ecosystems*" (Higgins 2010, 62, emphasis added). Higgins also explains that the concept of ecocide is an abbreviation of "ecological genocide" (ibid., 192, note 5). On a more comprehensive key, however, Higgins defines ecocide as,

> *the extensive destruction, damage to or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished.*
>
> (Higgins 2010, 63, original emphasis)

According to Higgins, the above general definition of ecocide can be further divided into two main forms of ecocide. First, non-ascertainable, namely ecocide employing where,

> the consequence, or potential consequence, is destruction, damage or loss to the territory *per se*, but without specific identification of cause as being that which has been created by specific human activity.
>
> (Higgins 2010, 63, original emphasis)

And second, what Higgins labels ecocide as ascertainable ecocide when,

> the consequence, or potential consequence, where there is destruction, damage or loss to the territory, *and* liability of the legal person(s) can be determined.
>
> (Higgins 2010, 63, original emphasis)

Higgins further explains that the driving forces behind ecocide can be both direct and indirect activities (Higgins 2010, 63). She seemingly does not explain the difference between direct and indirect driving forces. Yet, Higgins mentions events such as nuclear testing, exploitation of natural resources, polluted waters, and dumping harmful chemicals (ibid.). If we backtrack to the previous page of her book *Eradicating Ecocide*, Higgins holds that ecological genocide can be caused by two factors. First, "external factors" (e.g., a flooding or an earthquake), and, second, factors based on "human interventions" (ibid., 62). To me, it is a bit unclear whether the labels of direct and indirect as well as internal and external are meant as synonyms or not. In any case, regarding the human factors, Higgins suggests, they can be generated by "[e]conomic activity, particularly when connected to natural resources" (ibid.). Higgins explicates what she argues is a link between the internal and external factors in the following manner: "By its very nature, ecocide leads to resource depletion, and where there is an escalation of resource depletion, war come chasing close behind" (ibid.). From Higgins' standpoint, ecocide should therefore be understood as a crime against peace (ibid.). To attempt to avoid the crime against peace in the meaning of "trans-boundary" and "multi-jurisdictional" ecocide, then, "legislation of international scope" is required (ibid.). The aim of such ecocide-law, within the context of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, is to prevent any extensive destruction, damage to, or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory. Higgins here observes that despite the "ecocide is already in use[, it is so only] to a limited extent" (ibid.). If this observation is correct, and bearing in mind that this remark was made more than a decade ago and that the picture might have changed somewhat since then, Higgins nonetheless claimed this while it in her own time was 40 years after the UN Conference on the Human Environment, which in the present time counts 50 years, in light of the evolving ecological crisis, the ethical and legal ideal of ecocide law still remains to be included as the 5th crime against peace of the Rome Statute and thus a law which can be prosecuted in a transnational ecocide tribunal.

To attempt at achieving the goals of establishing an international criminal law which covers ecocide to deal with the ecological crisis, Higgins offers eight principles. In brief, to protect the planet, the goal of these principles is to "make ecocide a crime" (Higgins 2010, 166). To accomplish this aim, one must "[b]reak the cycle of harm to wildlife, nature and the land" (ibid.). The first of these principles to make ecocide a crime, which is directly linked to this harm, is the following:

> Laws to prevent, pre-empt and prohibit ecocide
>
> 1 Amend all compromise treaties, laws, rules and regulations:
> i replace with prohibition of all damaging and destructive practices; and
> ii include provisions to enable restoration of damaged territories to be prioritized over
>
> existing practices that are premised on financial penalty alone.
>
> (Higgins 2010, 57, see 167)

Though Falk was a pioneer to the development of the idea of ecocide, he is not mentioned in the index of Higgins' book *Eradicating Ecocide*. Nonetheless,

it is difficult not to recognize the similarities between their proposals for the establishment of a concrete ecocide law. In a later book, *Earth Is Our Business: Changing the Rules of the Game*, Higgins adds to her rather short list of principles in *Eradicating Ecocide* a longer and more detailed list of principles on how to avoid ecocide and to a gain a healthier Earth (Higgins 2012, 157–189). This part of her book also contains a concrete draft of an ecocide law.

What, then, about critical theorist Bernstein's story about ecocide? In his book *Of Ecocide and Human Rights*, Bernstein supposedly addresses the ecological crisis along similar lines as I elaborated in Chapter 1. In the following passage, I think, Bernstein captures the core of his understanding of ecocide and its relationship to the Anthropocene:

> [I]f collective humanity has (differentially) become equivalent to a force of nature [i.e., anthropocenic], then collective humanity must (differentially) take responsibility for the well-being of the Living Earth System. If [*global] collective responsibility* is a necessary condition for acknowledging the *Anthropocene condition*, the *minimum necessary* form for such a collective taking of responsibility would be an *Ecocide convention*.
>
> (Bernstein 2023c, 1, emphasis added; see Bernstein 2023a)

On my reading, what Bernstein labels as a global-collective responsibility is among the main lenses through which he describes the connection between ecocide and the Anthropocene. Given that, he does so in five steps; two ontological steps and three normative steps. First, ontologically, he takes the Anthropocene for granted in terms of the knowledge gathered by the natural sciences and beyond. Here, it is documented that the probability is high that the Earth geologically has transformed from the Holocene to the Anthropocene.

Let us now move to the second ontological step of the Bernsteinian argument. This step is based on a claim made by many scientists in the natural sciences and elsewhere. The claim assumes that humans and human activities are the main drivers behind the Anthropocene. These ontological aspects are by Bernstein portrayed more detailed thus:

> The Anthropocene, I want to contend, is a catastrophic and constitutive event for the meaning of human living on earth; once its most basic lineaments are grasped, it should make *the doctrine of the reality of living nature the fourth constitutive fact of consciousness of Western man*. That is, the Anthropocene signals such a profound alteration in the meaning of human living on earth, that if it is universally grasped, grasped the way ordinary individuals grasp that death is the terminus of every life or that the earth revolves around the sun, then its status will be of that order, it will be a constitutive existential fact of human consciousness.
>
> (Bernstein 2023a, 19, original emphasis)

From Bernstein's angle, the Anthropocene turns the world into a mode of crisis. He here appears to be most concerned with this catastrophic event on behalf of

humans. Subsequently, the Anthropocene is primarily studied concerning to what degree humans can still live on the Earth. As outlined in Chapter 1, the idea of the Anthropocene is addressed in many ways, partly different from the one we find in Bernstein.

The first among the three normative steps of the Bernsteinian argument introduces the concept of global-collectively responsibility. Here, he holds that since humans are the main driver behind the present and evolving geological epoch and its impacts on the Earth system, we humans should be collectively responsible on a global scale for these transformations and for their many, diverse, and partly intersecting impacts. The following passage from Bernstein's book *Of Ecocide and Human Rights* is a pregnant, I think, to understand his conceptualization of a global-collectively responsibility:

> If the doctrine of the reality of living nature is an emergent existential fact of consciousness, an emergent experience of a *global domain of injury*, of the Earth being composed of *injurable ecosystems* and biosphere, the practical acknowledgement of the Anthropocene would be an acceptance of [*global] collective responsibility* for the well-being of the Living Earth System.
>
> (Bernstein 2023c, 1, emphasis added; see Bernstein 2023a)

From my view, Bernstein understands global-collectively responsibility as ways to protect both humans and the rest of Earth system. To recognize both these parties as potentially affected by the negative consequences and side effects of the Anthropocene, he refers to injurability. To be injurable, I believe, makes one's life dependent on others' responsible treatment of you—or, the lack of that (Chapter 3). In the first case, one can flourish, whereas in the latter case, one is mistreated or even killed. Noteworthy, in his book on ecocide, Bernstein characterizes the Earth system as constituted by, for instance, ecosystems. Similar to other parts of the world, ecosystems, too, are injurable. So, as far as Bernstein builds further on Higgins' definition of ecocide—namely, the harm to ecosystems—he appears to add a phenomenological layer to her description. If so, injurability—and its counterpart: dependency—can be understood as certain existential preconditions of all that exist (Chapter 3). A global-collectively responsibility is, then, a normative ideal aiming at protecting all vulnerable beings by virtue of the dependency that collectively weave the world together. A concrete manner in which to do so, is by establishing and developing ecocide law. Subsequently, international law in general and an ecocide convention in particular can provide a "normative structure" for the negative political morality of responsibility (Bernstein 2023b, 3). Further, since the harms caused by the Anthropocene are planetary, Bernstein underscores, the normative structure of an ecocide convention requests a legal framework that moves beyond cultural boundaries and state borders.

The second normative step deals with what Bernstein conceptualizes as "the "negative" political morality of responsibility" (Bernstein 2023b, 1). This ideal aims at "specifying those actions that must never be done to the Earth System in acknowledgement of the destruction of self-regulating Holocene normativity" (Bernstein 2023b, 1). Here, Bernstein echoes Theodor W. Adorno's negative

political morality—"A new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen" (Adorno 1966, 365)—and Hans Jonas' negative morality of responsibility—"Act so that the effects of your action are not destructive of the future possibility of such life" (Jonas 1979, 11). Further, echoing Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Bernstein holds that there is an interchange between the ethical and law: he perceives the negative political morality of responsibility as "*essentially judiciable* norms in accordance with the idea that law generally and higher international law specifically is to be conceived as *the actuality of morals*" (Bernstein 2023b, 1, original emphasis). And, finally, echoing Immanuel Kant, the Bernsteinian ideal of a negative political morality of responsibility holds that

> law without politics is empty (an ideal legislative norm without a corresponding collective will behind it), and politics without law is blind (an arbitrary collective will without the constraining forces of normative regulation or the institutional durée necessary for social effectiveness).
>
> (ibid., 2)

Moreover, the actualization of an ecocide law on this planetary level calls for what Bernstein defines as an ethical holism:

> only the actual norms regulating the interactions of lives always already bound together and *mutually dependent* on one another must instance the joining together of ethical force with legal authority.
>
> (Bernstein 2023b, 4, original emphasis)

Again in Hegelian terms, the ethical and the legal are outlined as interconnected. Consequently, the authority of law is understood as the ethical answer (or, at least one answer) to the challenge of how to safeguard humans' dependency on mutual relationships. Here, Bernstein seems to have in mind that law—on both the level of states and the level of international relations—should ethically protect this human mutuality. Yet, though the Anthropocene requires development of new international ethical-cum-legal frameworks of ecocide law, this has not yet occurred—at least not in practice. Bernstein therefore suggests that ecocide law should be further developed, both as an ideal and in reality. According to him, there are at least two reasons why such a development should take place. First, a "*law prohibiting ecocide can be recognized as the determinate negation of those practices that historically have been essential to the production of Anthropocene damages and destructions*" (Bernstein 2023b, 11, original emphasis). Second, law prohibiting ecocide is related to legal transformations from jus cogens (i.e., a peremptory norm) to lex lata (i.e., existing law). In Bernstein, this transformation is described in this way:

> [O]nly if ecocide were recognized as a *jus cogens* norm, a categorical imperative of international law – and thereby listed as having the same overriding

> legal standing as the Four Crimes Against Peace … – could the apparatus of higher international law, its processes of legal and political actualization be reignited or relaunched enabling humanitarian international law to leave the domain of *ideal future law* and become lex lata, actual law.
>
> (Bernstein 2023b, 11, original emphasis)

To achieve the goal of turning an ecocide convention into actual law, Bernstein continues, the actual mutually dependent totality of the Earth—both among humans and between human nature and more-than-human nature—must be recognized as a condition without which it could be no existence on the planet or, for that matter, no Anthropocene harm. In turn, the actual mutually dependency between human lives and states can be developed into what Bernstein labels as an ethical-political operation: "*The ethical-political operation of an international Ecocide convention would be the actualization of our taking collective responsibility for the Earth System that is not an object but a value-saturated space of shared collective habitation*" (Bernstein 2023b, 12, original emphasis). To obtain the ideals of the negative political morality of responsibility, too, Bernstein occurs to hold that we should establish and develop ecocide law. Here, we learn that this normative ideal is,

> best addressed in the first instance through an international law framework, namely, through proposing an Ecocide convention as a *jus cogens* norm of international law….
>
> (Bernstein 2023b, 2, original emphasis)

Here, Bernstein recommends that to develop such a transnational legal framework, we should learn from the processes behind crimes against humanity of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court or the UN 1951 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The third, and final, normative step of the Bernsteinian argument is what he characterizes as ecological egalitarianism (Bernstein 2023a, 24). This term is a manner in which to "acknowledge the immediate ethical meaning of the Anthropocene" (ibid.). I find the following passage illuminating with respect to the ideal of ecological egalitarianism:

> Ecological egalitarianism portends a *political morality* in which our responsibilities to *living nature* are coordinated with our responsibilities to our fellow humans to the degree that we cannot intelligibly, meaningfully and rationally, pursue ecological sustainability without pursuing a human rights version of equality; and conversely, we cannot now pursue the project of human equality performed in the emergence of human rights without pursuing an *ecologically sustainable form of life*. Political morality and environmental ethics are now *radically and indissolubly joined* – ecological egalitarianism.
>
> (Bernstein 2023a, 24, emphasis added)

In the Anthropocene, Bernstein evidently suggests, we need a new normative framework. In the past, scholars dealing with normative issues have either done so in terms of political morality or environmental ethics. Also, previously, these fields have to a large degree been separated from each other. Today, however, to be able to address normative matters in the Anthropocene, we need to combine insights from both political morality and environmental ethics. To capture this combination, Bernstein introduces the concept of ecological egalitarianism.

Let me add to my portray of Bernstein that he makes an interesting observation related to Rachel Carson. She is one of the pioneers of the environmental movement, herself being an environmental thinker and the author of the 1962 classic book *Silent Spring*. Bernstein quotes the following passage from that book: "Can anyone believe it is possible to lay down a barrage of poisons on the surface of the earth without making it unfit for all life? They should not be called 'insecticides' but 'biocides'" (Carson 1962, 7–8 quoted in Bernstein 2023b, 61, note 20). Carson natural-scientifically documented the deadly impacts for ecosystems made by the indiscriminate usage of a range of pesticides. Bernstein finds it interesting, I believe, to recall this documentation, which was published more than 60 years ago. Today, we know that Carson's proposed concept of biocide was later exchanged by the term ecocide (ibid., 18). Yet, to understand both the harm to and injurability of ecosystems, Bernstein appears to mention Carson partly due to the fact that ecocide was documented as long time ago as six decades and still ecocide law has not been recognized on par with actual law, such as the Rome Statute or the UN 1951 Genocide Convention.

Now, after having presented what I take be the core of Higgins' and Bernstein's accounts of ecocide, respectively, I will discuss their perspectives. I will do that dealing with two issues. First, I raise the issue of the ontology of nature in the ecocide framework. I am here interested in the view on nature which we find in Higgins and Bernstein. Second, I explore the normative aspects of ecocide in Higgins and Bernstein. I am especially curious about whether ecocide requires an ethical aspect, though this concept to many scholars primarily is perceived in legal terms.

Regarding the first issue around the ontology of nature, I wonder if the ecocide framework demands any particular understanding of nature. To recall, Higgins defines ecocide as a crime against ecosystems and ecological genocide. She also refers to ecocide in terms of an "ecological devastation" (Higgins 2010, 3). In other places, Higgins relates ecocide even to the "planet" and the "planet Earth" (Higgins 2010, xiii). As explained, an ecosystem involves a wide range of natural phenomena, including both animate and inanimate parts. The same goes for the prefix ecological regarding the two latter concepts, namely ecological genocide and ecological devastation, as well as the Earth or the planet. Now, the crucial question is whether Higgins speaks of both animate and inanimate parts of nature simply ontologically or even normatively. The answer to that issue is linked to whether her account of ecocide is based on an anthropocentric or a non-anthropocentric view on nature. Noteworthy, at least ontologically, both these standpoints can include both animate and inanimate phenomena of nature. So, I guess the crucial difference is if ecocide

according to Higgins aims at protecting ecosystems on behalf of human sustainable lives alone or whether this protection is based on ecosystems' intrinsic moral value. If the latter is the case, Higgins' idea of ecocide should be located in the non-anthropocentric terrain. In the latter case, ecocide morally protects the animate and inanimate elements of ecosystems on par with each other, instead of simply ontologically include them within the same framing. Further, if Higgins adopts the latter view on nature, ecocentrism occurs to be the most adequate stance to defend. I guess she argues the same while referring to life in terms of "all life" (Higgins 2010, xiii) and "a living planet" (ibid., 163). In this context, ecocide is "in essence the very antithesis of life" (ibid., 62). Based on the seemingly strong role played by life in Higgins, the view on nature which may come closest is biocentrism. A biocentrist is preoccupied with life defined as living organisms. In turn, only these natural phenomena are presumed to have an intrinsic moral value. In contrast, however, as I explained earlier, the concept of life can be defined in at least two ways (Chapter 1). First, life can be defined narrowly as organic life in line with the biocentric view on nature. Second, life can be characterized widely in terms of all existence, and thereby building further on the ecocentric approach to nature, such as many deep ecologists do. Higgins may here subscribe to ecocentrism since she relates ecocide to life in the following manner: "But what of the well-being of *all* life – not just that of humanity – but of all who inhabit a territory …?" (ibid., 61, original emphasis). Let me admit, Higgins never appears to reply to her own seminal questions. Given that, there is no textual evidence at hand that can navigate us when trying to understand this aspect of ecocide. Nonetheless, since the core of ecocide law after all is to protect against harm made to ecosystems, partly involves inanimate aspects of ecosystems, it occurs strange if Higgins defends biocentrism instead of ecocentrism. If so, Higgins would support the claim that ecosystems have an intrinsic moral value independent of their usefulness for human lives and sustainability. However, she also describes the link between humans and ecosystems as follows: "The well-being of human life is ultimately dependent upon the successful operation of ecological ecosystems" (ibid., 129, see 130). Subsequently, Higgins can draw on an anthropocentric view on nature. If so, does she defend a weak, human-centered or a strong, human-instrumental anthropocentrism? As far as ecosystems is understood as a condition for the well-beings of human lives, this perspective may sound like an instrumental approach to nature in the case of ecosystems. If Higgins rather defends weak anthropocentrism, she must somehow recognize ecosystems from a human-centered perspective. To summarize, as I read Higgins, her conceptualization of ecocide points in different directions regarding its view on nature (i.e., anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism).

Bernstein, on his side, refers to various parts of nature. Let me mention those parts which I find the most relevant to my discussion. Bernstein's list includes humans and an ecologically sustainable form of life. By quite often speaking of humans, Bernstein may subscribe to anthropocentrism. Further, the same can be said about the idea of ecologically sustainable form of life. Then, the latter term can be interpreted as how humans can live sustainable lives. As I have repeated several times, anthropocentrism comes in a weak, human-centered and a strong,

human-instrumental version. The latter account of anthropocentrism ostensibly collides with critical theory, the tradition to which Bernstein belongs. In this line of thought, from Adorno via Jürgen Habermas and onward, instrumental engagement with the world (e.g., global growth- and profit-driven capitalism or disrespect of human dignity) is almost always rejected. Given that, and if Bernstein supports anthropocentrism at all, it nonetheless appears reasonably to link his outlook to the weak account of anthropocentrism. Noteworthy, if Bernstein defends anthropocentrism, his ontology can still include the rest of the world—hereunder both animate and inanimate parts of nature. So, ontologically, even anthropocentrists might acknowledge the entire existence (whatever that viewpoint indicates metaphysically), yet they normatively rank humans above all other parts of reality. In contrast to the anthropocentric option, however, Bernstein also refers to living nature. As I showed in Chapter 1, such terms as living nature can be associated with biocentrism. Then, nature is conceived as living organisms, either individually or collectively. We should not forget that Bernstein is preoccupied with the Anthropocene. Ontologically, this phenomenon consists of both organic and inorganic aspects. Given that, ontologically, his standpoint can move Bernstein beyond anthropocentrism and into a non-anthropocentric terrain.

In my interpretation, Bernstein's account of nature comes close to Higgins, and yet no cigar. In their addressing of ecocide, they are preoccupied with nature in terms of ecosystems. However, as I discussed with respect to Higgins, ecosystems can imply various and partly competing views on nature (e.g., weak anthropocentrism and strong anthropocentrism as well as non-anthropocentrism in terms biocentrism and ecocentrism). Further, both Higgins and Bernstein appear to relate ecocide and ecosystems to a wider picture of the planet, the Earth system, or the Anthropocene. Yet, I think, it is difficult to say exactly which view on nature that they defend.

Second, and finally, I delve into the normative aspects of ecocide. I especially wish to shed light on the ethical ones. A couple of years after the publishing of the book *Eradicating Ecocide*, Higgins publishes a new book which further studies the theme of ecocide. This publication is titled *Earth Is Our Business: Changing the Rules of the Game*. Here, she enlarges her original suggestion in *Eradicating Ecocide* on how ecocide should be perceived. In doing that, Higgins includes an ethical dimension. I here have in mind that she now bases ecocide law on Arne Naess and deep ecology (Higgins 2012, 30). Admittedly, she only spends one page of the entire book on the issue of philosophy of nature and environmental ethics of deep ecology. Yet, when doing that, Higgins in fact quotes all the eight ethical principles of the deep-ecological platform. As I explained in Chapter 2, the first, and perhaps the most important principle of the platform runs like this: "The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value" (Naess 1989, 29). To this, Naess adds, "The value of non-human life forms is independent of the usefulness these may have for narrow human purposes" (ibid.). As underscored, the concept of life can be defined at least in two ways. First, narrowly defined, life refers to living organisms, either individually or collectively, in line with the biocentric view on nature. Second, life can be widely defined by enveloping both

animate and inanimate parts of nature. To be sure, Naess' deep ecology is grounded in the ecocentric view on nature (Chapter 2). In effect, deep ecologists subscribe to a wide understanding of the notion of life. So, when Naess speaks of life connected to human and nonhuman life on Earth, I suggest, he does so based on life widely defined. It is, thereby, all existence on the Earth—and to some deep ecologist even the cosmos—which deep ecology supposes has an intrinsic moral value and therefore should be protected in accordance with that value. After having briefly outlined some of the core elements of Naess' deep ecology, let us move back to Higgins to consider which role the Naessian thought can play for ecocide. As I see it, Higgins never appears to explain how her legal account of ecocide can go hand in hand with the ethics of deep ecology. This gives us, then, the chance to speculate in a good manner. One such speculation is to read the link between ecocide and deep ecology as an articulation of an ethical ideal demanding an ecocidal struggle against harms to ecosystems. If so, the natural phenomena of ecosystems should be understood in light of ecocentrism. In arguing so, the Higginsian idea of ecocide normatively adopts a view on nature which not simply protects ecosystems or their surroundings (e.g., rocks, temperature, and humidity), but even all other existing parts of the world.

In Bernstein, too, there seems to be at stake an ethical core of ecocide law. Above, I outlined his normative ideals—the global-collective responsibility, the negative political morality of responsibility, and ecological egalitarianism. In what ways, then, reveals these ideals some ethical aspects of ecocide—in an anthropocentric or a non-anthropocentric (i.e., biocentric or ecocentric) manner? In my interpretation, global-collective responsibility is anthropocentric in normative terms. I here suggest that though this normative ideal incorporates ecosystems along with other animate and inanimate parts of nature, both the agents and addresses of global-collective responsibility are humans. As mentioned, since Bernstein belongs to critical theory, he most certainly rejects a strong, instrumental account of anthropocentrism. What, then, about the negative political morality of responsibility? Here, Bernstein invites the standpoint that in the Anthropocene, there are certain actions and certain destructions—certain negations of the Earth system—which are morally forbidden. Still, we must ask whether the perspective of a negative political morality of responsibility is anthropocentric or non-anthropocentric. Certainly, here, too, both the agents and the addresses of the negative political morality of responsibility can simply be humans. If so, I argue, for the same reason as above, Bernstein cannot be labeled as a defender of a strong anthropocentrism, but rather a weak one. However, if a negative political morality of responsibility literally aims at morally protecting the Earth system, ecocentrism would be a more relevant basis for the Bernsteinian normativity. The premise here is the fact that the Earth system is made up of both organic and inorganic elements of the natural world. Finally, let me reflect on what Bernstein refers to as ecological egalitarianism. This ideal combines political morality and environmental ethics. Thus, one could expect that the environmental-ethical side of the story demands that Bernstein presumes some intrinsic moral value to nature beyond humans. If so, Bernstein must subscribe to either biocentrism or ecocentrism. In his book *Of Ecocide and Human Rights*,

he refers to several classic voices in the field of environmental ethics, such as Aldo Leopold's 1949 book *The Sand County Almanac* (Leopold 1949) and Hans Jonas' *The Imperative of Responsibility* (Jonas 1979) as well as Paul W. Taylor, Tom Regan, and Peter Singer (Bernstein 2023a, 48–50). Yet, Bernstein does not occur to subscribe to any of these environmental-ethical stances. Rather, concerning environmental ethics, he explains that,

> My modest assumption is that *individual [living] organisms* do have *a good of their own*, but that is simply a potential for moral meaning because it is a potential for meaning in general. Rather than beginning with morality, one needs to start with its ingredients: *purpose, life, relations to an environment, death, etc.*
>
> (Bernstein 2023a, 49, emphasis added)

In my interpretation of the above quote, Bernstein justifies biocentrism. However, according to himself, he does this different from Taylor. As I explained in Chapter 4, Taylor ascribes intrinsic moral value to if not all individually living organisms, so at least to individually living animals and plants. However, instead of building further on Taylor's biocentrism, Bernstein is inspired by another biocentrist—Helmuth Plessner. With reference to Plessner's book *Levels of Organic Life and the Human: An Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology*, Bernstein finds an alternative account of biocentrism (Plessner 1928). In light of the above passage, I suggest, Bernstein interprets Plessnerian biocentrism as individual (e.g., particular members of species) instead of collective (e.g., species) along with substantial (e.g., purpose) rather than formal (i.e., moral). Given that, Bernstein's Plessnerian biocentrism defends the ethical ideal of an intrinsic good in the individual living organisms.

In a nutshell, this subchapter has studied ecocide. To do that, I brought together Higgins and Bernstein. With respect to the issue of the view of nature, they evidently shared one significant matter: the statements of Higgins and Bernstein, respectively, can be interpreted in different ways—some anthropocentric, whereas others' biocentric or even ecocentric. When it comes to their normative perspectives, the picture was almost opposite. I here have in mind the ways in which Bernstein champions Plessner style biocentrism as his ethical justification of ecocide, whereas Higgins promotes ecocentrism based on Naess' deep ecology.

Throughout the present book, I have defended an ecocentric view on nature. To me, then, Higgins' ecocentric endorsement of ecocide is more promising than Bernstein's biocentric one. Further, I suggest, Higgins' ecocentrism resonates with the ecocentric framing of ecological democracy Eckersleyian style, which also has been at the heart of my book. Further, Higgins and Eckersley share the claim that to adequately tackle today's ecological crisis, we need to enhance structures on a transnational level, as well. Regarding the issue of ecocide, the practice of ecocide law suggests the development of transnational tribunals.

6 Conclusion

The Widening Circles of Ecological Love

Ecological Democracy: Caring for the Earth in the Anthropocene is the title of the book that you so far have read. The idea behind this book began with the crossroad of two scholarly interests that requested my attention. The first was an interest in philosophy of nature, whereas the second was an interest in theories of democracy. The journey toward this crossroad was motivated by a personal engagement. I have always been concerned with the ecological crisis. Now, this book draws to a close. It is hardly surprising, then, that the ecological democracy framework and the ecocentric approach to nature are among the main themes of the book. Here, I studied this model of democracy through the lens of what it means to care for and ecologically love Mother Earth.

To attempt achieving the above ambitions, I encountered several influential voices in the field of green political theory. I have been sparked the most by reading works by the thinkers Robyn Eckersley, Freya Mathews, John S. Dryzek, and Jonathan Pickering. They all offer, I believe, highly relevant ways to address the ecological crisis at the crossroad between philosophy of nature and theories of democracy—namely, ecological democracy. In this context, I expressed my fascination for what I consider is still an original idea and a radical promise of democracy, even after 40 years of its development. Based on both theoretical and empirical research, most advocates of this framework wish to bring the ecocrisis closer to an end by bringing the current world nearer to the ideal of ecological democracy. In this book, I wished to contribute to the further enhancement of this framework.

I have tried accomplishing the above goals by supporting and enriching the ecocentric approach to nature. This approach was introduced and developed by Eckersley and Mathews, among others. In the context of ecological democracy, Eckersley and Mathews are partly inspired by the deep ecology of Arne Naess or Warwick Fox. In brief, both ontologically and normatively, ecocentrism presumes an intrinsic moral value of animate and inanimate parts of nature—of all existence, on Gaia and even in the cosmos. In doing that, I suggested, the Earth system as whole and the rest of the universe are recognized as part of humans' moral circle of concern. In turn, ecocentrism assists one to better understand and more efficiently tackle the ecocrisis. As I tried to outline throughout the book, today's environmental disaster can be characterized as existential, planetary, and acute, for instance,

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by affecting both animate and inanimate parts of nature. Also, this disaster puts the present generations under a very hard temporal pressure—we have no time to lose to find the most effective ways to tackle this tragedy, yet we have lost decades. So, to protect all the potentially and actually affected parties, I think, we need an account of democracy which deeply listens to these parties. To emphasize how such listening and learning can be created and encountered, I was inspired by Mathews' idea of ontopoetics as well as the animist thought of David Abram, Stephan Harding, and Andreas Weber. Thus, inspired by the ecocentric approach to nature, I perceived all existence as alive in the widest understanding of the term life. Then, even what some define as inorganic parts of nature (e.g., water and rivers) are perceived as enlivened.

Another aim of this book was to shed light on the intersection between green political theory and critical theory—especially non-anthropocentric accounts of the latter tradition. One reason to do so, is due to the great influence of several seminal critical theorist on some of the most central green political theorists. Though others could have been mentioned, I particularly explored how the green political theorists Eckersley and Dryzek are inspired by critical theorists such as Herbert Marcuse, Joel Whitebook, and Jürgen Habermas. One upshot of this study appears to be the achievement of a better understanding of the lost opportunity since Habermas himself and many Habermasians have not yet, after four decades, replied to the challenges raised by green political theorists or developed their own theories to adequately respond to the ecocrisis—today's most existential and acute global trouble.

In contrast to the earlier-described and supposedly dominating anthropocentrism of critical theory, however, various non-anthropocentric versions of critical theory have been and still are developed. In my book, the label non-anthropocentric critical theory refers to scholars from any generation of critical theory who address the problem of nature and/or the ecological crisis from either a biocentric or an ecocentric view on nature. Further, they do so preferably by stressing democratic or other societal issues. In this context, I inquired the important figures Hartmut Rosa, Maeve Cook, Jay M. Bernstein, and Arne Johan Vetlesen, to only mention a few. By calling attention to these critical theorists, I wanted to show the other side of the coin: the potential to move beyond the Habermasian limitation by expanding critical theory to become capable of addressing the ecocrisis in a non-anthropocentric way.

One way forward, I suggest in this book, is to bridge the gap between green political theory and critical theory. So, instead of losing precious time by dealing with the above Habermasian denial of nature, an actual dialog between present green political theory and non-anthropocentric critical theory can have more relevant implications. To illustrate, such a dialog may contribute to a refinement of the ecological democracy framework by including Rosaian cosmic resonance. Or, this dialog might make critical theory more critical by perceiving the ecocrisis as the most acute issue to raise in our time.

In addition to green political theorists and non-anthropocentric critical theorists, the readers of this monograph have become acquainted with other

names on my academic heaven. I was especially inspired by deep ecology and ecophenomenology. In these traditions, I found the works of the already mentioned Abram, Weber, and Harding highly inspiring and appropriate. In the ecophenomenological tradition, as I have already outlined, sense-based experiences of the flesh are often the focal point. Additionally, as noted, I drew on Abram's, Weber's, and Harding's as well as Mathews' engagement with animism in terms of the magic, ontopoetics, or enlivenment of nature. Partly inspired by Weber and Mathews and partly by improving my own concept, I also conceptualized an ecophenomenological notion of love—ecological love—or, even cosmological love.

By taking everything into consideration, I guess that the readers of the present book have already realized that while undertaking my study, I am inspired by and draw on different theoretical traditions and standpoints. Here, I hope to have been able to show the richness and relevance of these various theoretical traditions—green political theory, non-anthropocentric critical theory, deep ecology, ecophenomenology, animism, and beyond. Moreover, I wish to have encouraged the readers themselves to continue the journey into these intellectual landscapes after having read my book. In line with that, I actively hope that the readers are inspired to inquire how these theories can be put into practice—for instance, by walking barefoot to really feel the world, to experience that Gaia holds you and care for you, to encounter the ecological love inside and between all existing beings in the cosmos.

In this concluding chapter, I will not summarize the content and findings of each of the previous four main chapters (Chapters 2–5). From my view, the richness of each of the chapters should be read and dealt with on their own premises. I will, however, end this book by reminding the readers of the core of my argument: ecological love. As I explained in Chapter 1, this idea was one of the guiding matters for me throughout the present study. To recollect Chapter 4, ecological love means a concrete form of love that is directed toward and between all existence—both humans and more-than-humans, both animate and inanimate elements of the world in a shared web of life. Such love is a way in which to bodily and sensuously open oneself toward and resonate with the world—even encountering the cosmos. Thus, ecological love can be understood as the experience of cosmological love, as well. In doing that, the more-than-human nature can awake humans and communicate with us through magic, ontopoetics, enlivenment, or otherwise.

That said, the readers probably expect to hear something about the questions which I raised in the introduction chapter. Certainly, throughout this book, more questions have been asked than answers given; and for each answer proposed, new questions have arisen. Yet, I think that it is worthwhile to bring to mind the guiding questions that I introduced in the first chapter to see if we by now have better insights regarding these matters. The guiding questions were posed by Mathews more than 25 years ago, and ask if the representative democracy can respond adequately to today's ecological crisis, or if this system is based on an anthropocentric ethics (at least a weak one) and thus is inadequate to address the environmental emergency? If the latter is correct, is the ecological model of democracy based on a better account of nature' moral value (Mathews 1996, 3)? After having read the

book *Ecological Democracy*, I hope to have explained why the representative democracy is not representative enough, and that we need a more robust framework—ecological democracy grounded in ecocentric ethics.

One more refrain has been sung throughout this book: we are today facing an ecological crisis, which is existential, planetary, and acute. Thus, we have no time to lose—neither to risk to move beyond the planetary boundaries of the Earth system nor to open for the authoritarian possibility of undemocratic pathways while addressing this crisis. Rather, the entire book you are now holding in your hands wishes to contribute to the opposite: ecological democracy—the principles and practices of a democratic approach to the ecocrisis as well as a golden mean between representative democracy and authoritarian rule. In this connection, this book wishes to offer a radically alternative cosmology. This cosmology understands ecological democracy as ecocentrism in practice. I also suggested that ecological love is a seminal way to create various spaces to practice ecocentrism. To achieve the ideal of ecological democracy, then, I believe that ecological love matter more than we may think. We should, therefore, be aware of and listen carefully to the deep resonance of our ecological love toward Mother Earth and to the rest of the universe.

When I began writing this book, I read a moving poem by author Rainer Maria Rilke. The poem is titled "Widening Circles" and it is part of his 1905 collection *Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*. Joanna Macy has translated this poem from German to English. In addition to herself loving Rilke's poetry, Macy is an internationally renowned philosopher and deep-ecologist, Buddhist scholar, and author of many books, including poetry. Macy is also an environmental activist. Among Macy's most well-known academic contributions are the ideas of "the work that reconnects", "active hope", and "the great turning". In my interpretation, these ideas are frameworks for spiritual, social, and ecological change. Macy is, as we speak, 93 years old. I imagine that she has gone through many ups and downs throughout her life, both intellectually and as an activist. How, then, to motivate oneself to continue, again and again, decade after decade, to believe in and lay the ground for the great turning on behalf the entire world—a vision suggesting that today might be the last day in darkness and environmental tragedy, and tomorrow can be the first of a new era, for instance, of ecological democracy and ecological love. Macy replies that "[o]f all the dangers we face, from climate chaos to nuclear war, none is so great as the deadening of our response" (Macy and Brown 1998, 18). Macy's entire life witnesses that she has believed—and still believe—in the great turning instead of deadening our response to act individually and collectively. I find her engagement breathtaking and highly inspiring.

Along the lines of the great turning, let us return to Rilke's poem "Widening Circles" (Rilke 1905, 45). I will bring my book to an end by quoting this beautiful and insightful poem. Rilke's poem reads the following way:

I live my life in widening circles
that reach out across the world.
I may not complete this last one

but I give myself to it.
I circle around God, around the primordial tower.
I've been circling for thousands of years
and I still don't know: am I a falcon,
a storm, or a great song?

One particular phrase from the poem has stayed with me. After countless hours of writing the book you now have read, I could still hear Rilke's voice within myself: "I live my life in widening circles". By having read my book, my active hope is that its insights concerning ecological democracy, ecocentrism in practice, and ecological love will inspire to widening circles—in your own life and beyond.

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