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Abstracts

Augustin Berque
A Basis for Environmental Ethics

The overuse of water resources in the upper reaches of the Tarim (Xinjiang, China) jeopardizes the ecosystem of the *huyang* (*Populus diversifolia*) in the middle reaches of the river, which has led the authorities to displace the population of Caohu (Luntai-xian) in the name of environmental security. This paper discusses the ethical basis of such operations by comparing different approaches, and concludes that establishing a genuine environmental ethics implies an ontological revolution: one that will replace the 'being towards death' (*Sein zum Tode*) of the modern ontological *topos* of 'individual body: individual person', with the 'being towards life' (*sei e no sonzai*) of what Watsuji defined as 'the structural moment of human existence', in which being cannot be dissociated from context and history. This ontological revolution, which links human subjecthood with the environment itself, is by the same token the condition of sustainability, which is the most basic human security of all.

Masahiro Hamashita
Forests as Seen by Yanagita Kunio: His Contribution to a Contemporary Idea of Ecology

Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), one of the most representative of Japanese folklorists, sees the different aspects of forests as a composite whole comprising customs, legends and way of life of the inhabitants. Yanagita looks at this in detail, wishing to understand how the forest is related to the life and customs of the people living there, an attitude that could be called an understanding from within. Given the complexity of the issue of the earth's ecology, Yanagita suggests adopting the same attitude.

Workineh Kelbessa
The Rehabilitation of Indigenous Environmental Ethics in Africa

This article explores the rehabilitation of the ethical dimension of human interactions with nature, using cross-cultural perspectives in Africa. Cross-cultural comparison of indigenous concepts of the relationship between people and nature with contemporary environmental and scientific issues facilitate the rehabilitation, renewal and validation of indigenous environmental ethics. Although increasing attention is being given to the

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environmental concerns of non-western traditions, most of the related research has centered on Asia, Native American Indians and Australian Aborigines with little attention being paid to Africa. However, this study has confirmed that, like other multicultural traditions, African indigenous traditions contain symbolic and ethical messages that are passed from generation to generation in order to ensure respect and compassion for other living creatures. The article shows, however, that not all indigenous knowledge is environmentally friendly. Indigenous and modern environmental ethics alike have something to teach as well as something to learn.

Thierry Zarcone
Stone People, Tree People and Animal People in Turkic Asia and Eastern Europe

Some religious groups and trends of thought in the Turkic world, in Asia and Europe, have for several centuries nurtured an unusual vision of nature in which old animistic and shamanistic beliefs, and even nomads' Buddhist beliefs, are combined with Arab philosophy stemming from Neo-Platonism and Muslim mysticism (Sufism). This vision, which in fact is not homogeneous since it exists in several variants, claims that all animate and inanimate creatures – humans, animals, plants and stones – are receptacles of the same 'vital energy' and are consequently intimately bound up with one another, and may even migrate towards each of their respective modes of being, animal, plant or mineral; hence the existence of stone people, tree people and animal people. This article aims to trace the origins of this vision of nature and look at its current influence, paying particular attention to the 'ethics of the environment' (*çevre ahlaki*) it has inspired in recent years in Turkey.

Ornella Pompeo Faracovi
Man and Cosmos in the Renaissance: 'The Heavens Within Us' in a Letter by Marsilio Ficino

In a letter to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco dei Medici, dating from 1477 to 1478, the Platonist philosopher Marsilio Ficino develops the classical theme of the correspondence between man and cosmos on the basis of the astrological techniques. The inner heaven, a term of the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm, takes the form of what astrologers call the birth theme: the series of astral positions at the moment of birth and related to its place. Taking up Origen's theme of the inner heavens, he systematically applies the theory of planet-signs to deciphering underlying themes of individual personality.

Frédéric Obringer
***Fengshui*, or the Search for a Very Human Dragon**

Fengshui is a practice and skill whose origins go back to Chinese antiquity. It is about finding the best possible arrangement in space to position a grave or a habitation in such a way that human beings who have a link with that place might have success and happiness. The basic idea is that a good geomantic site will fill the distant ancestors with peace in their grave and that they will thus do everything to help their family. The text deals with the history of *fengshui*, its methods as well as its conception of nature.

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Thierry Paquot
City and Nature, a Missed Opportunity?

When town planning emerged at the end of the 19th century, its proponents did not envisage the city without nature. Some, such as Ebenezer Howard, believed the garden city would become the new face of the urban landscape, bringing together only the positive aspects of both city and country. Others, health experts and rationalists, advocated functional planning, where the 'green space' was part of the overall plan. And so nature was not forgotten. But what 'nature'? A 'nature' external to the town-dweller, like an ornament or decoration? Something that enhanced the built environment and not the very condition of our existence as human beings? Behind the planners' inclusion of 'nature' lie very different intentions, from one period to another and one culture to another. The globalized, standardized 'nature' that was subsequently part of marketing the city is just an image; whether wild or tamed, it is no longer localized, no longer a partner in our condition as denizens of the earth. Thierry Paquot examines these continuing processes of change.

Graham Parkes
Thinking Rocks, Living Stones: Reflections on Chinese Lithophilia

Chinese culture is distinguished among the world's other great traditions by the depth and intensity of its love for rock and stone. This enduring passion manifests itself both in the art of garden making, where rocks form the frame and the central focus of the classical Chinese garden, and also on a smaller scale, in the practice of collecting stones to be displayed on trays or on scholars' desks indoors. This essay sketches a brief history of lithophilia in China, then adduces the most important philosophical presuppositions for it, and concludes by suggesting some implications for our experience of, and interactions with, the realm of stone and rock.

Fabienne Verdier
The Spirit of Nature: A Conversation with Thierry Zarcone

In a poetic conversation with Thierry Zarcone, the painter and calligrapher Fabienne Verdier exposes her deep and harmonious connection to nature. She tells of her garden, her house and her osmosis with nature. Painting is to her an art of living and being that recalls the Tao masters as well as some Christan mystics.

Wolfgang Wackernagel
The Genius of Our Lady Nature. Pierre Hadot, *Le Voile d'Isis. Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de Nature*

This is a review enriched with personal thoughts. The topics covered are: the various interpretations of a fragment from Heraclitus 'nature loves to conceal herself', deposited 2500 years ago in the temple of Artemis at Ephesus; the idea of nature's secret;

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ecumenism in practice: the convertibility of ancient deities; the case of the cult of Isis-Artemis and other personifications of Our Lady Nature; different approaches to the notion of modesty; the misunderstandings around the opposition between 'paganisms' and 'monotheisms'; a little-known example of iconoclasm against a statue of Diana-Artemis and the decline of the old nature religions; Neo-Platonism and an apology for the 'genius of paganism'; an appeal for religious tolerance; Orphic or Promethean approaches to unveiling the secrets of nature, with a reference to Roger Caillois, founder of *Diogenes*; and bioethics and the genesis of the modern technosciences.

Thierry Zarcone
The Myth of the Mandrake, the 'Plant-Human'

There is no plant that embodies the encounter between humans and plants better than the mandrake, whose myth, as Arlette Bouloumié writes, 'has the cosmic sense of a profound correlation between nature and humanity and the possibility of their merging'. Zarcone presents a collection of extracts on this theme, under three main headings: (1) ancient documents in which legend and scholarship are mixed in varying degrees; (2) contemporary scholarly studies; and (3) literary texts.

Francis Laget
From its Birthplace in Egypt to Marseilles, an Ancient Trade: 'Drugs and Spices'

This report is the testimony of a man who worked with plants, specifically, in what used to be called the 'drugs and spices' trade, selling simples for around 40 years. And what better vantage-point than the trader's to trace, over several decades, the evolution of the attitude of French people (and Europeans more generally) towards plants and, by extension, towards 'nature'? Beneath the need for medicinal plants, seasonings or flavourings there is a hidden desire of varying strength for 'nature'. This account describes the decline and disappearance of herbalism, the 'return' to plants and the 'organic' movement, the manipulations that ran alongside that 'comeback', and the market in 'bogus nature' created by the synthesizing laboratories.

Gilles Schaufelberger and Guy Vincent
'Nature' in the Epic *The Mahâbhârata*

The Mahâbhârata is a fundamental reference for Indian culture. Because of its philosophical scope and encyclopaedic character it is in many respects universal, offering scope for study and comparison to those in the fields of law, ethnology, mythology, geography, the arts and philosophy. The authors sketch the conception of nature as it appears in several texts in the first volume: 'The Sacrifice of Serpents', 'The Pilgrim's Guide', 'Skanda'.

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