Beyond the Anthropocene:
Perspectives on Human–Nature Relations, Old and New

In these heady days, the discourse on environmental values often seems caught between catastrophism on the one hand, and an exuberant embrace of the Anthropocene's brave new world on the other (Baskin, 2015; Spash, 2015). It is thus refreshing to encounter nuanced and perhaps overlooked conceptual resources for understanding human relations to the natural world. The articles in this issue focus on understanding human–nature relations from a variety of angles. Four of the articles are explicitly philosophical; the fifth combines conceptual and empirical research to explore the views people currently hold about their relationships to the natural world, as well as links between these views and environmental behaviour. These articles stand outside today's dichotomies – alarming headlines of melting glaciers, rising seas, and climate chaos juxtaposed with techno-optimist visions of a human-managed planet in the form of a not-so-rambunctious garden (cf. Marris, 2013) – offering a space to reflect on future possibilities, in part by keeping past perspectives in view.

In the spirit of challenging dominant paradigms and discourses, Ben Dixon offers a reinterpretation of Aldo Leopold's work. Dixon challenges J. Baird Callicott's Humean-Darwinian interpretation of Leopold (Callicott, 1987; for more recent discussions of Leopold, see Callicott et al., 2011 and Varandas, 2015, which focuses on the aesthetic dimensions of Leopold's ethic), in which the land ethic fits into a 'hierarchical ordering of moral communities' (p. 281). In this hierarchical interpretation, duties can be conceived of in terms of concentric circles, with family and friends at the centre, broader human communities further out, and duties to the natural world more distant still. Dixon argues that Leopold's writings fail to support this hierarchical ordering. Instead, he interprets Leopold as a moral pluralist who embraces diverse sources of value and seeks harmonies among them. Thus, for Dixon, at the heart of Leopold's philosophy of conservation is 'the negotiation of the kinds of value conflict it invariably involves' (p. 289). On this view, Leopold's ethics focuses on dissolving value conflicts, rather than determining which values take precedence. This approach seeks solutions that honor multiple values, including human-centred concerns. Dixon's interpretation challenges the common view of Leopold as an ecocentrist whose land ethic is captured in a single line from *A Sand County Almanac*: 'A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise' (Leopold, 1949:. 224-225). Although he is not the first to suggest that this encapsulation of the land ethic oversimplifies Leopold's thought (see, e.g., Budolfson, 2014: 443), Dixon draws attention to the richness and range of Leopold's ideas and offers a fruitful reinterpretation of his work.

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Like Dixon's article, the next two articles also reexamine the views of earlier thinkers. These articles might be thought of as forms of philosophical archaeology. Both Lewis Coyne and Nir Barak seek to unearth important perspectives in the work of thinkers whose relevance to environmental philosophy has not yet been fully appreciated, namely: German philosopher Hans Jonas and Austrian artist and architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser.

Coyne argues that although Jonas has garnered the attention of environmental philosophers for his theory of responsibility to future generations, Jonas's philosophy of life has been overlooked. More specifically, Jonas offers a teleological account of life, grounded in a phenomenological approach that takes seriously the embodiment of all living things. Coyne notes that Jonas develops an immanent teleology, not a transcendent one: Jonas does not claim 'that the development and apparent order of the natural world is in accordance with a preordained plan or goal' (p. 301). Rather, every living thing embodies a certain purposiveness, and this grounds Jonas's teleology. This purposiveness begins in the simplest of organisms with metabolism, through which individuals exchange material with the surrounding world while 'maintaining a more-or-less continuous structure' (p. 302). In more complex organisms, new forms of immanent teleology emerge. For example, animals not only exchange material with the external world but also actively seek to satisfy their metabolic needs. In humans, still more complex capacities – such as the capacity for abstract thought – generate complex forms of freedom and purposiveness. Although Coyne acknowledges challenges and questions for these views, he suggests that Jonas's ideas might ground an ontology in which every living thing has 'a good of its own', which corresponds with Paul Taylor's (1986) biocentric ethic. Thus, Coyne concludes 'that Jonas's philosophy of life, if rectified, could act as a basis for such [a biocentric] ethic in bridging ontology and axiology via teleology' (p. 312).

Barak argues for the relevance of Friedensreich Hundertwasser to environmental ethics, and specifically to a broader ecological understanding of the self. Visitors to Vienna cannot help but notice Hundertwasser's colourful contributions to the urban landscape, and many visit Kunst Haus Wien, a building he designed, in which his paintings and other works are displayed. However, despite Hundertwasser's visibility in certain domains, few environmental philosophers have deeply engaged with his ideas, and Barak provides a starting point for such exploration. The article begins with a biographical sketch, then turns to a discussion of Hundertwasser's 'five-skinned socio-ecological self' (p. 321), which is offered as an alternative to an atomistic or egoistic conception of the self. As Barak explains, 'the "skins" of the self extend through the individual's epidermis (first skin); clothes (second skin), house and architecture (third skin), social environment/identity of family, groups, communities, cities, nations, traditions, heritage, etc. (fourth skin), and the Earth (fifth skin), which includes all non-human beings and ecosystems' (p. 321). By

incorporating the second, third, and fourth skins, Hundertwasser's perspective provides a nuanced account that does not jump directly from the egoistic self (the first skin) to the broadly ecological self (the fifth skin), as Barak suggests that deep ecology tends to do. Instead, Hundertwasser's approach makes space for the material, social, and infrastructural dimensions of human life, suggesting that human relations to wider nature are mediated by these other layers, which themselves need to be taken into account by environmental ethicists, particularly where urban sustainability is concerned. Throughout the article, Barak draws on the sketches, paintings, and architecture of Hundertwasser to illustrate his ideas and to show how Hundertwasser used the aesthetic features of his buildings to reflect and instantiate certain values, such as interconnectedness and interdependence (p. 331).

The aesthetic dimensions of human-nature relations are also the theme of the fourth article in this issue by Qi Li and John Ryan. They describe the Chinese ecological aesthetic of *yijing*, arguing that '*yijing* couples the artist's emotional realm to objects or scenes in the external world' (p. 344). As such, *yijing* is an *ecological aesthetic* that emphasises relations and interactions rather than an *environmental aesthetic*, which 'considers the possibility of nature as an artistic object' (p. 344). The authors trace *yijing*'s history back to the eighth century, during the Tang Dynasty; however, they argue that the idea retains deep contemporary relevance. In the interpretation developed here, two key aspects of *yijing* include engagement and empathy. These elements are related, because empathy is in part what enables the resonance between the artist (or subject) and the external world that is central to engagement, understood as a form of subject-object correspondence (p. 345). As Li and Ryan explain, '*yijing* foregrounds the aesthetic harmonisation of perceiving subjects (selves, bodies, psyches) and perceived objects (nature, environments, cosmos)' (p. 359). This, in turn, is relevant to environmental ethics and to human-nature relations in the contemporary world: by emphasising the embodied relations between persons and world, *yijing* aesthetics 'fosters engagement with nature whereby beings and elements co-exist in a shared world and negotiate a common future' (p. 360).

The final article is also concerned with the frameworks through which humans understand their relations to the natural world, though from more of a social scientific point of view. Michael Braito, Kerstin Böck, Courtney Flint, Andreas Muhar, Susanne Muhar, and Marianne Penker explore human–nature relationships (HNR) both conceptually and empirically. They seek to understand and clarify a variety of different conceptions of human-nature relationships; develop improved methods to measure these conceptions; and examine how these conceptions inform human behaviour. Building on a previously-constructed typology of conceptions of human–nature relations, Braito et al. employ this typology to assess the perspectives of college students in the United States (Utah State University) and Europe (University of Natural

Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna). The typology includes six types – Master, Steward, Partner, Participant, User, Apathy, and Nature Distant Guardian – that characterise different relationships to the natural world. They find that students tend to affiliate with four HNR types – Steward, Partner, Participant, and User – all of which involve engagement with the natural world. Students tend to affiliate less with types that emphasise distance or domination (Apathy, Master, and Nature Distant Guardian). Exploring connections to behaviour, the authors find linkages between the more engaged types (Steward, Partner, Participant, User) and pro-environmental behaviour, whereas other types lack this positive correlation. The study also examines relationships between environmental values (as expressed through responses to a multi-statement values questionnaire), HNR types, and behaviour. Overall, Braito et al.'s work reveals the complexity of understanding relationships between attitudes and behaviour, and in measuring environmental values and attitudes (for related discussions, see Howell and Allen, 2017 and Katz-Gerro et al., 2017).

Together, the articles in this issue draw on ideas whose origins extend from more than a millennium ago to today, and whose provenance ranges from China to Austria to the United States. The diversity of ideas here is hopeful and engaging. Some of these articles are beginnings, reminding us that the work of thinking through human relations to and embeddedness in the natural world continues, extending beyond dominant discourses and broadening the possibilities for understanding these relations and the values that ground them.

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