18. Desert and Oasis: Arendt Reads Stifter

Among Arendt's unpublished writings is an undated English-language review of Adalbert Stifter's narration "Rock Crystal". This story was translated into English by Elisabeth Mayer and Marianne Moore in 1945.[1] It is not known why Arendt's review, presumably written in the same year, was not published. The review is brief, but it touches on a variety of aspects, and it contains a series of fascinating comments on the relationship between man and nature which she did not elaborate on in the review or anywhere else.

Arendt did later deal in greater detail with the modern natural sciences, and she explained how process thinking and seeking to escape from the imprisonment to earth promoted world alienation, which also implies alienation from nature.

Arendt also found it necessary to take into account human conditionality, which is given by life and the earth, by natality and mortality, as well as worldliness, plurality and fact. Nothing entitles us to assume, as Arendt explains in *The Human Condition*, that we possess "a nature or essence in the same sense as other things."[2] Human conditionality can contribute for better or worse to human existence. At the same time, the human being eludes essentialist explicability, so that the *what* of organic life can be investigated with the forms of human cognition, but not the *who* of the person. The distinction between *what* and *who* is the basis of the modern distinction between natural science and natural philosophy, i.e. the different approaches to nature as object and nature as subject.

The frame of human conditionality and the non-essential determination of the *who* are the phenomena between which the fragments of Arendt's reading of Stifter are situated, hence her interest in Stifter's sense of reality, which underlies his description of man and nature. Stifter was a poet, painter and natural scientist in the middle of the 19th century who grew up in the mountainous world of the Bohemian Forest. He did not view nature from a romantic perspective of the generation before him, nor from a scientific perspective; as he explained, he dealt with science,

1 Hannah Arendt: Great Friend of Reality, Adalbert Stifter, in: *Hannah Arendt, Reflections on Literature and Culture*, ed. by Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb, Stanford University Press 2007, pp. 110–114.

2 Hannah Arendt: *The Human Condition* New York: Doubleday 1958, p. 12.

but did not pursue it. Rather, he described human conditionality through inner and outer nature. Here, in her discussion, Arendt complements her abstract remarks on the human *who* with explanations of the sense of reality and other human qualities that explain her existential-philosophical theses on a Being in the World. A few years later, in an obituary for her friend Waldemar Gurian, Arendt gives an impressive description of Gurian's personality, reinforcing the tenor of the Stifter review.[3] One may therefore assume that Arendt's humanistic descriptions of the *who* of the person[4] are accompanied by a corresponding image of nature, which stands out from process thinking and romanticism and at the same time suggests human conditionality through nature.

This consideration will be explored in the following. In the course of the investigation, new questions have repeatedly arisen that have shaped the route of the investigation in a way that I had not initially expected. I do not want to curtail this path, because it is part of the insight and argumentation. The initial question concerns the extent to which Arendt has a positive image of nature or man-nature that could be unfolded as an alternative to her thesis of world alienation and the world in modern times – or at least indirectly suggests an image that could enrich the discussion about man, nature and environment, and perhaps also uncover a tradition.

Here, some aspects of Arendt's unpublished review are first considered. From these, the question then arises as to the extent to which Stifter's work offers an understanding of nature that also contains some aspects important for today's environmental discussion. Since Stifter's themes, ambience and style are not limited to poets such as Rilke, but also philosophers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Benjamin and Adorno, these will also be considered from the perspective of nature and the environment. We will see how much nature is thereby oriented towards human benefit, which raises the question of whether there is an alternative at all in the history of European philosophy. We come across this in the form of Schelling's monism and increasingly in the theory of the body from Husserl via Merleau-Ponty to Gernot Böhme. We are thus on a wide-ranging, searching and exploratory path that makes it clear that Arendt's fragment indirectly illustrates the state of a contemporary philosophy of nature that has so far localised the connection between man and nature, between spirit and nature in the body, on the side of man, but has not yet developed a restricted subject-object relationship on the side of nature and between nature and man.

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3 Hannah Arendt: Waldemar Gurian, in: *Men in Dark Times*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World 1968, pp.251-262.

4 See chapter 6 in this volume: Who is Capable of Acting? Also Wolfgang Heuer Zum Naturverhältnis einer nachhaltigen Republik. Arendts Kritik der neuzeitlichen Naturwissenschaft weitergedacht, in *Zeitschrift für christlich-jüdische Begegnung im Kontext*, 2021, No. 3, pp. 185–194.

What begins in our walk with Stifter's depiction of an equally subjective and not merely objective natural "force" that is independent of man ultimately leads to the consideration of a far-reaching change of perspective. According to Stifter, man is not the subject and nature the object, but both are subject and object among and between each other. There is no subject-centrism and no hierarchy. Human beings are part of nature, they unite subject and object in their bodies and live in a human and natural environment. From the perspective of human beings, there is an inner, intersubjective environment and an outer one of the rest of nature. Biodiversity corresponds to human plurality, and if one wants to see the republic as the institutionalisation of plurality, then the biotope is the institutionalisation of biodiversity. This change of perspective is linked on the one hand to the connection between Humboldt's cosmos and Arendt's republic that I have described elsewhere[5], and on the other hand to the philosophy of the body, which can be seen as the bridge for this change of perspective. Since a change of perspective always means a change of concepts, I use Arendt's pair of metaphors "desert" and "oasis" as an alternative to the traditional nature-critical juxtaposition of "civilization" and "barbarism" or "culture" and "wilderness".

The final results of this wandering train of thought will be systematised in a later text.

Arendt's Stifter

Let us begin with Arendt's reading of Stifter. She calls him a "great friend of reality". Reality and loss of reality are central concepts in Arendt's analyses of modernity. Experience is as much a part of this as truth. "But this very thinking, originally inspired by truth and yet always distancing itself from it, is what makes truth alive; in it, truth lives and works like the event in memory. This is reality. …The pure experience, the one in which I can experience event and truth, never constitutes reality; it is even alien to reality".[6] Such a thought-out experience, stored in memory, is the object of thinking. "Nothing else! And if we lose the ground of experience then we get into all kinds of theory."[7]

Arendt's text on Stifter refers to the story "Rock Crystal" (*Bergkristall*), but its theses are valid for Stifter's entire work. "Rock Crystal" is about two children in a mountain village whose mother is from a neighbouring village and was never accepted in

5 See chapter 20 in this volume: The Encounter of *republic* and *cosmos*: Arendt and Humboldt.

6 Hannah Arendt *Denktagebuch*, XX, August 1954, Munich Piper 2002, p. 489f. (Translated by WH)

7 Hannah Arendt: On Hannah Arendt, in; Melvyn A. Hill (ed): *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, New York: St. Martin's Press 1979, p. 308.

her husband's village. The inhabitants of both villages, separated by mountains, were strangers to each other. The children regularly went to visit their maternal grandparents in the other village, as they did this Christmas, to exchange greetings and give presents. The grandmother sends the children back to their parents in time so that they would be home before the winter night falls. But on their way across the mountains, a heavy snowstorm causes the children to lose their way completely. They find refuge in a cave, keep awake to avoid freezing to death, and leave the cave at daybreak with clear skies. Eventually they come across the search parties of both villages and make it back to their village unharmed. This joint rescue operation has brought the inhabitants of both villages closer together. "From that day on, the children became the property of the village, they were no longer regarded as outsiders but as natives who had been brought down from the mountain. Their mother… was now also a native", Stifter recounts.

Stifter originally called this story "The Holy Evening" – the Baby Jesus also appears to one of the children in the night – so that in this Christian interpretation one could interpret salvation as an Easter and the reconciliation of the villages as a Pentecost and thus unite the three highest celebrations of Christianity. Arendt is not interested in the Christian interpretation, however, but in what she describes as a sense of reality, with a reference to an undefined "innocence". Both terms stand in clear contrast to the loss of reality and innocence in the age of ideologies.

Arendt praises Stifter as one of the very few great German-language writers and the greatest of the 19th century in terms of "happiness, wisdom, and beauty"[8]. She emphasises his extraordinary precision, "which never becomes pedantry" and which "has its source in the intimate and altogether happy relationship with reality. It never becomes boring because it springs from an overwhelming never-ending gratitude for everything that is."[9] He is "the greatest landscape-painter in literature" and in this he is undoubtedly greater than Goethe, possessing "the magic wand to transform all visible things into words and all visible movements – the movement of the horse as well as that of the river or of the road – into sentences. One knows the gardens and rocks and mountains and rivers and forests of Stifter's novels even if one has never seen the Bohemian Forest."[10] He shares Goethe's mistrust of generalisations, "of the very quality of an abstract world – and this to such a degree that, for him the word *horse* is already too much of an abstraction".[11]

Reality means the relationship between man and nature; " … for Stifter, reality actually means nature and, for him, man is but one of its most perfect products. Again and again he describes the slow, steady, and blessed process for the growth of

8 Hannah Arendt: Great Friend of Reality, op. cit., p. 110.

9 Ibid., p. 111.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

a human being as it lives and blossoms and dies together with the trees and flowers of which it takes care during life-time." Therefore, individual human history, like history itself, is "surrounded by a greater and mightier history". In Stifter's words, "the history of the earth, the most meaningful, the most fascinating history there is, a history in which man's story is only an insertion, and who knows how small an insertion, as it may be followed by other histories of perhaps higher beings". This "calm confidence in nature and in the inherent goodness of all its laws"[12] differs from the mood of doom that emerged after him in the poetry of the 19th century.

Similar to the external laws of nature, the development of the individual personality follows the internal laws. Society as a social space plays no role here, because nature rules everywhere. "As long as man is 'right' … he obeys natural laws in the same way as he obeys the innate laws of the wood and the stone when he builds a house. For, the real masters everywhere are the values of nature'."[13] To this, Arendt adds another indispensable value that can be realised in this environment, trust: "The highest value for man is the development of human nature, and the highest virtue, the prerequisite for this development, is confidence,"[14] This trust appears in Stifter's work on several occasions, in "Rock Crystal" between the siblings, where she spreads fearlessness, "fearless confidence in the very nature of ice and rocks and mountain, which so evidently threatens them with death"[15] . Stifter's strength, which is based in the bond to inner and outer nature, the personality development based on it and the highest virtue of trust, constantly contradicts "our sense of homelessness in society and of alienation in nature."[16]

At this point, the strange concept of innocence enters the picture. Stifter's work, according to Arendt, is characterised by great beauty and "the strange innocent wisdom"; Stifter himself speaks of innocence, and Arendt concludes from this that his highest wish is "to grasp the innocence of the things outside ourselves".[17] And finally, a kind of innocence also characterises the children in their mutual trust, which "fits so well in the sublime majesty of the mountain that they can patiently wait till the village comes to their rescue."[18] Innocence is used by Arendt in an ethical-existential sense: The children, as well as Stifter himself, stand outside society with its rules of conformity, their personalities are in harmony with the natural environment, the interpersonal relationships are based on virtues, above all on trust, and the rela-

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p. 112.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 113.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 110; Adalbert Stifter: Nachsommer, chap. 6, Der Besuch (all quotations translated by WH)
18 Ibid., p. 113.

tionship to reality finally avoids any generalisation. All this together forms a kind of wisdom that is not only innocent, but also strange.

We can enrich these fragmentary reflections with further fragments in Arendt's work. In the obituary of her friend Waldemar Gurian I already mentioned, Arendt does not talk about the *what* of the scientist, which one would expect in an obituary in a scientific journal, but the *who* of his personality in its spirituality and whole physicality. According to Arendt, this was characterised above all by *innocence* and *courage*. He preserved his innocence through his independent *power of judgement*, an "unerring sense for quality and relevance",[19] which he possessed thanks to his human greatness, "intensity, depth, passionateness of existence itself"[20] and recognised in others regardless of social position and achievement. He was strengthened by the fact that he had created a home for himself with *friendship* in the world, Arendt's intersubjective-plural world, not in the conformist, externally guided society, and preserved it through *loyalty* to friends and everything that was valuable to him. Finally, he needed considerable *courage* to resist conformism because his judgements were often understood as provocations. "He was delighted when he could break down these barriers of so-called civilized society, because he saw in them barriers between human souls. At he source of this delight were innocence and courage, innocence all the more captivating as it occurred in a man who was so extremely well versed in the ways of the world and who therefore needed all the courage he could muster to keep his original innocence alive and intact."[21] It is also noteworthy that Arendt mentions that Gurian was very fat and had a gargantuan capacity both for food and food of the mind.

These phenomena are complemented by the truth of fidelity; in her *Denktagbuch* Arendt noted: "*Treue*: true: true and faithful. As if that to which one cannot be faithful were not true either. Its existence depends on us. Just as it depends on us, whether truth is in the world or not".[22] This truth is purposeless: Socrates' "know thyself" produces particular knowledge and calls for it: "Pursue this particular and find its truth and thus your truth. If you keep both at the same time, you will have truth, human truth, without imposing it on others"[23], Arendt notes. Nor can truth claim to take precedence over friendship. Cicero's statement, "better to be wrong with Plato than to be right with these people – this is the political principle in which the person matters", Arendt noted in her *Denktagebuch*."[24]

19 Hannah Arendt: Waldemar Gurian, op. cit., p. 251f.
20 Ibid., p. 257.
21 Ibid.
22 Hannah Arendt *Denktagebuch*, II,9, 1950, p. 38f.
23 Hannah Arendt *Denktagebuch*, XXII, 19, August 1953, p. 413.
24 Hannah Arendt *Denktagebuch*. XXII, 51, June 1958, p . 595.

This *who*, emphasised in its humanity and significance, complements Stifter's humanity in "Rock Crystal". It is the first element of the change of perspective.

Stifter's Sense of Reality

Arendt's description of Stifter's world refers to its special features, which are methodologically and thematically close to Arendt. These are Stifter's relationship to nature, his aesthetics of the sense of reality, his reverence for small things and, finally, his ethics of innocence towards the environment and the world around us.

First of all, Stifter's *relationship to nature*. As already mentioned, Stifter confronted nature as a natural scientist, as a collector and researcher, but even more so as a poet, as an inhabitant of nature. His novel "Der Nachsommer" (St. Martin's Summer) and his other stories are about this life in a nature with its own laws. Stifter's hero is a scientist who, thanks to his pronounced sense of reality, is able to understand nature holistically, scientifically and aesthetically. Again and again, he dwells on details of the rich surroundings:

> The forest flowers listened up, the squirrel paused on its beech branch, the butterflies hovered sideways as they advanced, and the twig vaults cast flashing green carbuncles and flying shadows on the white robes as they passed; the woodpecker shot into the branches, trunk after trunk stepped backwards, until little by little only bits of white wavered among the green lattice – and at last even these no longer – but the rider too plunged into the depths of the forest and disappeared, and again only the shining lawn, the light-dotted trunks, the old silence and wasteland and the meddling brook remained, only the crushed little herbs sought to rise, and the lawn showed its tender wounding. The procession was over – our lovely forest spot had seen its first people.[25]

However, Stifter does not string all these elements of nature together, but rather "sees the forest and nature … as a biocoenosis, as a community of plants and animals, i.e. as a living whole. But he also uses the term 'forest' for an economically oriented and managed forest.[26] This living totality is created by God, but humans are responsible for their environment:

> If the Lord God has given man greater gifts, he also demands more from him – but for that reason he loves his other brothers and sisters, the animals and plants, no less. He has given them dwellings that are denied to man, the heights of the

25 Adalbert Stifter Der Hochwald. In *Gesammelte Werke in sechs Bänden*, Vol. 1, Wiesbaden Insel Verlag 1959, p. 230.

26 Reinhold Erlbeck Die Waldwelt Oberplan zur Zeit Adalbert Stifters, in *LWF aktuell* 116, 2018, p. 21.

> mountains, the greatness of the forests, the vast seas and the vast deserts – there, though no eye may come, He hangs His stars above them, gives them the splendour of their garments, sets their table, adorns them with all kinds of gifts, and comes and walks among them, just as he does here and among the people whom he also loves, although they, as it has often seemed to me, abuse his animals and plants, because in their arrogance they think themselves the only ones, and in their simplicity never go out into their realms and dwellings to learn their language and essence.[27]

Nature does not appear as an object of admiration or exploitation, but as a subject in its own right, which surrounds people in the form of a rugged mountain world, with summer thunderstorms or winter sleet, but also with warming rays of sunshine and the balancing, harmonious night of summer. Understanding nature not as an object, but as an environment and co-environment, implies a rejection of the Cartesian concept of nature.

Subjectivism and dualism of spirit and substance, which Arendt also rejects from the perspective of interpersonal plurality. Nature follows its own paths. Animals, meadows and forests are subject to the even course of their development. The weather can be changeable and dangerous. "Stifter's weather forms the chaotically unpredictable, affectively uneasy reverse side of the order of things persistently exhibited in the foreground. Because it cannot be made into a thing with the best disciplinary will, the weather is the great other of Stifter's order, which it nevertheless needs."[28] Nature is indifferent to people. "There, for example, a stream flows in a beautiful silver mirror, a boy falls in, the water ripples sweetly around his curls, he sinks – and after a while the silver mirror flows again, as before."[29]

And in the whole of the universe, the Earth occupies a completely insignificant place:

> The earth itself is no longer seen from the nearest suns, and even if they had telescopes there that were ten thousand times larger than ours. And when, on that night when our earth ceases forever, a Sirius dweller looks at the beautiful starry sky, he does not know that there is one star less; even if he had once counted them all, and entered them on charts, and counted them again today, and looked

27 Adalbert Stifter Der Hochwald, in *Gesammelte Werke*, op. cit., p. 265.

28 Oliver Grill Unvorhersehbares Wetter? Zur Meteorologie in Alexander von Humboldts Kosmos und Adalbert Stifters Nachsommer in *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, Neue Folge XXVI (2016), H. 1, p. 75.

29 Adalbert Stifter Abdias, in *Gesammelte Werke*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 7.

> at his charts, not one would be missing, and the sky would glow above his head as glorious as ever.[30]

In some texts, border crossers between animals and humans appear, tame birds in "Der Nachsommer" and the brown girl in "Katzensilber". They are weather-sensitive and much more precise in their perceptions than the usual human perception or even meteorological measuring instruments. The brown girl is a creature of nature, lives in the forest and, thanks to her subtle connection to nature, has a feeling for the weather that is far superior to traditional weather rules. Here, two systems of knowledge collide, both based on experience; but the latter is reduced to rules and cannot protect the grandmother, who is bound by these rules, from a sudden hailstorm, whereas the brown girl can. No one knew it. "The priest knew nothing. No such thing had been entered in the parish or school registers, nor had it ever been seen among the parishioners."[31]

Stifter, who actually aspired to a career as a painter, gives this heightened sense of reality its own *aesthetic*. This aesthetic includes not only the repeated meticulous enumeration of everything there is to see, but above all the changing environment: the thunderstorm clouds in the late afternoon, which no longer threaten, but remain in their fullness far away over the mountains; the snowfall, which deprives the children in "Rock Crystal" of all acoustic and visual orientation. "All around them there was nothing but blinding white, white everywhere, which itself only drew an ever-smaller circle around them, and then changed into a light nebula falling in strips, which consumed and concealed everything else, and in the end was nothing but the insatiable falling snow."[32] Above all, the description of an icy rain that covered an entire forest and all the houses, forming shiny icicles:

> From the roof of the house hung all around, forming, as if they were organ pipes, which held a drop of water, which made them longer again, and again more inclined to fall. When I got out, I noticed that the cover of my raincoat, which I usually spread over myself and the sledge so that I could move myself and my arms under it, had in fact become a roof that stood firmly around me and caused a ringing of falling ice in all parts of the sledge when I got out. Thomas's hat was frozen, his coat cracked as he dismounted, and every bar, every piece of wood, every buckle, every part of the whole sledge, as we looked at it now, was covered in ice, as in transparent liquid sugar, even in the manes, like a thousand pale pearls,

30 Adalbert Stifter Ein Gang durch die Katakomben. In *Werke und Briefe. Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 9,1, Stuttgart Kolhammer 2005, pp. 49–62.

31 Adalbert Stifter Katzensilber, in *Gesammelte Werke*, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 278.- Cf. Philippe Roepstorff-Robiano Adalbert Stifters Mensch-Tier-Symbiosen. Vögel, Wolken und das "braune Mädchen", in *Recherches Germaniques* 10/2015, pp. 195–216.

32 Adalbert Stifter Bergkristall, in *Gesammelte Werke*, op. cit., vol. 3, p, 212.

> hung the frozen drops of water, and finally it was stitched around the hoof hairs of the chestnut, like silver borders.[33]

This coating of ice weighed heavily on all branches and even knocked down large trees:

> A high-pitched cracking, as it were like a scream, came first, followed by a short wafting, whizzing or streaking, and then the dull, resounding crash, and a mighty trunk lay on the earth. The bang went through the forest like a roar, and through the density of the dampening branches; there was also a ringing and shimmering, as if endless glass was being shifted and shaken – then it was as before, the trunks stood and protruded one after the other, nothing moved, and the still standing roar continued.[34]

It is not a scientifically objective, not a photographically documented reality, but one that is felt existentially according to subjective experience. Will the lingering thunderclouds bring another thunderstorm, or will they dissolve in the late afternoon? The blinding white of the snow in "Rock Crystal" makes the complete loss of orientation palpable, and the freezing rain gets under your skin because it turns every movement into an unpredictable, threatening adventure.

Stifter's heightened sense of reality and respect for nature is demonstrated in his *reverence for small things*, and respect for flexibility rather than strength. Thus the brown girl, in her naturalness, had not only recognised the approaching dangerous hailstorm, but also knew what would protect against it: "What resisted was crushed, what was solid was shattered, what had life was killed. Only soft things resisted, the earth crushed by the hailstones and the bundles of brushwood"[35], says Stifter, recalling Daoism.

Great is the natural rhythm, not the spectacular. So he explains in the preface to his collection of stories in "Colourful Stones":

> The blowing of the air, the trickling of the water, the growing of the grain, the surging of the sea, the greening of the earth, the shining of the sky, the gleaming of the stars, I consider great. I do not consider the magnificent thunderstorm, the lightning that splits houses, the storm that drives the surf, the fire-breathing mountain, the earthquake that buries countries, to be greater than the above phenomena, indeed I consider them to be smaller, because they are only effects of much higher laws. They occur in isolated places and are the results of one-sided causes. The force that makes the milk in the poor woman's pot boil up and

33 Adalbert Stifter Die Mappe meines Urgrossvaters, in Adelbert Stifter *Gesammelte Werke*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 536.

34 Ibid., 541.

35 Adalbert Stifter *Gesammelte Werke*, op. cit., vol. 1, p .263.

> overflow is also the force that makes the lava in the fire-breathing mountain rise up and slide down on the curses of the mountains.[36]

"All greatness," he adds in a letter to his publisher, "is simple and gentle, as indeed is the world-building."[37] It follows that: "There is nothing great and nothing small. The structure of the little animal, hardly visible to human eyes, is admirable and immeasurably large, the simple roundness of Sirius is small … God does not have the word big and small, for him it is only the right thing."[38]

The resulting "reverence for things as they are in themselves" guides action. It was

> so great for me that in the case of entanglements, contentious claims and the need to put some things in order, I did not look at our benefit, but at what the things demanded only for themselves, and what was in accordance with their nature, so that they might become again what they were, and to get back what was taken from them, without which they cannot be what they are. This trait of mine has caused me much grief, it has brought me great censure; but it has also earned me respect and recognition. When my opinion was accepted and put into practice, then the new order of things endured, because it was founded on the essentials of its nature; it brought greater benefit to our state than if we had formerly striven for the unilateral, because we were protected from new disorders, that is, from repeated exertions.[39]

Finally, the *ethics of innocence* in the human relationship to the environment and the world around us, which dominates Stifter's sense of reality and is based on reverence for small things, does not display any pre-established harmony. On the contrary, there are natural disasters, snowstorms, freezing rain and plague outbreaks, all catastrophic events that correspond to violent disturbances in interpersonal relationships, such as the alienation of the inhabitants of both villages from each other in "Rock Crystal", and whose order is to be restored. This is done symmetrically by appeasing the destructive side of nature through cultivation and by subjecting this act of cultivation itself to a supposed natural law, while at the same time subjecting culture to a human natural law. The cultivation of nature goes hand in hand with the naturalisation of culture.[40]

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36 Adelbert Stifter *Gesammelte Werke*, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 7.

37 Letter to Heckenast, Juli 1847, in Adalbert Stifter *Briefe,* Tübingen Wunderlich 1936, p. 96.

38 Letter to Friedrich Eulemann, 3 February 1854, in *Stifter Briefe*, op. cit., p. 149f

39 Adalbert Stifter Der Nachsommer, in *Gesammelte Werke*, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 718f.

40 Christian Begemann / Davide Giuriato (eds.): *Stifter Handbuch, Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, Stuttgart: J. P. Metzler Verlag, 2017, p. 73. – Stifter explained in a letter how much the storms impressed him: "My first attempts at writing lie in my childhood, where I always described thunderstorms." Letter to Leo Tepe, 26 December 1867, in: Stifter: *Briefe*, op. cit., p. 394.

It is St. Martin's Summer in which nature moderates, "the thunderstorms and the heat have ceased, but a mild warmth and delicate transparency place all objects pure and calm before us, clarified and prepared that one day the near winter may take them up into its shell, which for us may mean death and departure from this earth".[41] And it is the "simplicity, greatness and goodness of the human soul"[42] that makes the naturalisation of culture possible.

This applies not only to individuals, but also to society and politics. Laws and norms of existence and coexistence should be gentle and thus in accordance with the nature of those to whom they apply. The intelligent person, as it says in "Der Nachsommer", must adopt them as his own. In this context, it is not surprising that Stifter's initial enthusiasm for the revolutionary movement waned in 1848 due to excesses.

Before the revolution, he described in a first version of "Das Haidedorf" (1840) a "republic" of nature beings. The young protagonist of the story encounters the following on the heath: "a 'society' of domesticated or wild animals, even of plants and rock formations, whose (social) organisation, as he 'knew from experience', is based on the natural cohesion of living beings or the purposeful division of natural things. Even a rambunctious billy-goat, in its 'unreasonableness', causes only temporary disruption … in the small republic of its fellow citizens, which is former by its inner constitution."[43]

Resonances

It is not surprising that poets such as Rilke, Hesse, Thomas Mann and Kafka were fascinated by Stifter's prose, especially "Der Nachsommer", as were philosophers who were close to poetry such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Benjamin, and Arendt.

For Rilke, it was "one of the most unhurried, even-tempered and equanimous books in the world, and for that very reason one from which an extraordinary amount of purity of life and – mildness can emanate".[44] Hesse emphasised the Daoist-like reverence for small things: "To read one of Stifter's finely penned, well-composed, reverent narratives is, in the midst of today's moods, as fruitful, admonishing and clarifying as a contemplation of Tolstoy's early poetry or the parables of

41 Letter to Gustav Heckenast, 12 June 1856, in: Stifter: *Briefe*, op. cit., p. 178.

42 Letter to Gustav Heckenast, 16 February 1847, in Stifter *Briefe*, op. cit., p. 89f.

43 Monika Ritzer Lektionen in Demokratie Adalbert Stifters politische Essays. Textstrategie und kulturhistorische Heuristik, in *KulturPoetik*, 10/2, 2010, p. 180.

44 Quoted from Joachim W. Storck Stifter und Rilke. In *Adalbert Stifter, Studien und Interpretationen*. Heidelberg L. Stiehm, 1968, p. 293.

Chuang Tse."[45] And Thomas Mann was fascinated by the "strangest, most cryptic, secretly boldest and whimsically gripping narrator in world literature".[46]

Finally, according to Max Brod, Kafka "never had the slightest interest in the authors of the 'night side', of decadence..... He was powerfully drawn to the simple positive forms of life. Among his favourite books were Stifter's 'Nachsommer' and Hebel's 'Schatzkästlein'."[47] But Kafka, as his entire prose shows, considered social progress in the direction of a life-worldly Indian summer to be impossible as long as there was no legally guaranteed "social" possibility of existence. In her 1944 essay "A Hidden Tradition", Arendt describes the existential hopelessness of the Jewish pariah in modern times, and refers to Kafka's poetic vision of "the fate of the man of goodwill."[48]. No life is possible as an exception if freedom and equality of rights are not guaranteed for all. Arendt's friend Gurian, like the actors in Stifter, can live in innocence and in harmony with nature because this is guaranteed and potentially normal. According to Brod, Kafka was very much moved by an anecdote by Flaubert, who, "returning from a visit to a simple, happy family of many children, had exclaimed spontaneously: '*Ils sont dans le vrai*'. "A true human life," Arendt continues, "cannot be led by people who feel themselves detached from the basic and simple laws of humanity nor by those who elect to live in vacuum even if they be led to do so by persecution. Men's lives must be normal, not exceptional."[49]

Nietzsche, too, praised Stifter in the highest tones:

> Apart from Goethe's writings and especially Goethe's conversations with Eckermann (the best German book of all), what German prose literature remains that is worth reading over and over again? Lichtenberg's *Aphorisms*, the first book of Jung-Stilling's *Story of My Life*, Adalbert Stifter's *St. Martin's Summer* and Gottfried Keller's *People of Seldwyla*—and there, for the time being, it comes to an end.[50]

Nietzsche, too, praises the days that "only this late summertime is able to produce: Heaven and earth flowing calmly side by side in harmony"[51]. Tranquillity, harmony

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45 Hermann Hesse *Sämtliche Werke in 20 Bänden und einem Registerband*. Vo1. 8 Die Welt im Buch III. Rezensionen und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1917–1925, Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp 2002, p. 396.

46 Thomas Mann Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus [1949], in *Doktor Faustus. Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, Frankfurt/M. S. Fischer Verlag 1967, p. 773f.

47 Max Brod *Franz Kafka. Eine Biographie* (Erinnerungen und Dokumente). Prague: Heinrich Mercy Sohn 1937, 63f.

48 Hannah Arendt: The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition, in: *The Jewish Writings*, New York: Schocken 2007, p. 276f.

49 Ibid., p. 295.

50 Friedrich Nietzsche: *Human, All Too Human*. A Book for Free Spirits, Translated by Paul V. Cohn, B.A. New York: The MacMillan Company 1913, part II, 109, p. 250.

51 Friedrich Nietzsche Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungs-Anstalten, in *Werke in drei Bänden*. Vol. 3, Munich Carl Hanser 1954, p. 179.

and unison are frequently recurring concepts in Nietzsche's images of autumn. Autumn is "synonymous with bliss, ripeness, sweetness, fullness, even abundance".[52]

To shape this artistically is one of the most difficult things, as he explains in the aphorism "What all art wants to do and cannot":

> The last and hardest task of the artist is the presentment of what remains the same, reposes in itself, is lofty and simple and free from the bizarre. Hence the noblest forms of moral perfection are rejected as inartistic by weaker artists, because the sight of these fruits is too painful for their ambition. The fruit gleams at them from the topmost branches of art, but they lack the ladder, the courage, the grip to venture so high.[53]

But there is no way around the task of a poet as "guide to the future". He will,

> just as the earlier poets portrayed the images of the Gods, portray the fair images of men. He will divine those cases where, in the midst of our modern world and reality (which will not be shirked or repudiated in the usual poetic fashion), a great, noble soul is still possible, where it may be embodied in harmonious, equable conditions, where it may become permanent, visible, and representative of a type, and so, by the stimulus to imitation and envy, help to create the future. The poems of such a poet would be distinguished by appearing secluded and protected from the heated atmosphere of the passions. The irremediable failure, the shattering of all the strings of the human instrument, the scornful laughter and gnashing of teeth, and all tragedy and comedy in the usual old sense, would appear by the side of this new art as mere archaic lumber, a blurring of the outlines of the world-picture. Strength, kindness, gentleness, purity, and an unsought, innate moderation in the personalities and their action: a levelled soil, giving rest and pleasure to the foot: a shining heaven mirrored in faces and events: science and art welded into a new unity: the mind living together with her sister, the soul, without arrogance or jealousy, and enticing from contrasts the grace of seriousness, not the impatience of discord—all this would be the general environment, the background on which the delicate differences of the embodied ideals would make the real picture, that of ever-growing human majesty.[54]

Nietzsche, however, does not comment on Stifter's harmony of inner and outer nature. For him, the critique of moral and scientific norms, on which a false humanisation of nature and the naturalisation of man is based, has priority. The humanisation

52 Renate Müller-Buck "Oktober-Sonne bis ins Geistigste hinauf". Anfängliches zur Bedeutung von Goethes Novelle und Stifters Nachsommer für Nietzsches Kunstauffassung. In *Internationales Jahrbuch für die Nietzsche-Forschung* 18 (1989), p. 539.

53 Friedrich Nietzsche *Human, All Too Human*, op. cit., part II, Aph. 177.

54 Ibid., Aph. 99.

of nature takes place through its "logification", a "forced way of looking at things", through which "the instinctive true and only understanding of nature" has been lost and replaced by "a clever calculation and outwitting of nature".[55] Nature knows no mathematics, logic and regularity. "We are the ones who invented causation, succession, for-each-other, relativity, compulsion, numbers, law, freedom, grounds, purpose; and if we project and inscribe this symbol world onto things as an 'in-itself', then this is the way we have always done things, namely mythologically".[56] At the same time, with this humanisation of nature, it is declared to be good or evil:

> At first men imposed their own personalities on Nature: everywhere they saw themselves and their like, i.e. their own evil and capricious temperaments, hidden, as it were, behind clouds, thunderstorms, wild beasts, trees, and plants: it was then that they declared Nature was evil. Afterwards there came a time, that of Rousseau, when they sought to distinguish themselves from Nature: they were so tired of each other that they wished to have separate little hiding-places where man and his misery could not penetrate: then they invented "nature is good."[57]

The scientific humanisation of nature must be abolished in order to be able to abolish the moral naturalisation of man. Recognising free nature, in which "we are so fond of being out among Nature, because it has no opinions about us"[58]. Acknowledging that we ourselves are nature, but different from "what we feel when we call her name"[59]. It is the instincts of nature and of human beings that must be recognised, from which inequality and the will to power follow.

> It will be the strong and domineering natures who experience their most exquisite pleasure under such coercion, in being bound by but also perfected under their own law; the passion of their tremendous will becomes less intense in the face of all stylized nature, all conquered and serving nature; even when they have palaces to build and gardens to design, they resist giving nature free rein.[60]

In this way, Nietzsche leaves tranquillity, harmony, reverence for small things to the highly praised founder, and to the artists "the representation of that which remains

55 Friedrich Nietzsche Nachgelassene Schriften IV; in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Berlin De Gruyter 1988, p. 716.

56 Friedrich Nietzsche: *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann / Judith Norman, Cambridge University Press 2002, 21, p 21.

57 Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Dawn of Day*, tr. by John McFarland Kennedy, New York: The MacMillan Company 1911, p. 26.

58 Friedrich Nietzsche: *Human, All Too Human*, ibid., part 1, p. 508.

59 Ibid., part II, p. 327.

60 Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Gay Science*, Cambridge CUP, 2001, p. 291.

constant, that which is at peace within itself, high, simple, far removed from the individual stimulus". Nietzsche's orientation towards the perspective of the liberation of the individual, his psyche, drives and will to power, as well as the superman, takes "Der Nachsommer" like a soothing rest, but not as a completely different critique of culture and nature.

In 1964, Heidegger read a third of Stifter's "Eisgeschichte" (Ice Story) on Swiss radio, commented on it briefly and published both together in the volume *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*. For him, what was special about this story was not the unusual natural event or the special aesthetics of the depiction, but the existential threat to humanity posed by a process that did not lie in the spectacular at all, but was "something inconspicuous that silently and gently prevails"[61], to which the poet directed thought. "The showing of the truly great in the small, making visible in the invisible, and that through the conspicuous and through the daily of the world of mankind, letting the unspoken be heard in the spoken – this saying is what works in the words of the poet Adalbert Stifter".[62] The fact that a poet presents the unspoken in the spoken is not unusual; on the contrary, it is a central characteristic of poetry. This unspoken becomes interesting in a context that Heidegger established in the "Black Notebooks" in the 1940s, namely the "event" that must be prepared "if the change of our being is to be founded in a reason."[63] That the poet is the guide here, who alone sees behind the obvious and at the same time is able to direct the thinking of all, is only an assertion that is not substantiated in the "Eisgeschichte". The great project of *aletheia*, of uncovering the hidden truth, is repeatedly thwarted by Heidegger himself, which prompted the actor Klaus Pohl, who plays Heidegger in the Arendt film by Margarethe von Trotta, to say that Heidegger had to be played as a mask, "the mask over the mask over the mask"[64]. And finally, this interpretation shows that for Heidegger the events in the forest have nothing to do with nature, but merely serve as a metaphor for human affairs.

How Heidegger, in another state of concealment, reveals the unspoken in the spoken, is shown by his letter to Hannah Arendt, which he sent to her on the occasion of her first visit to Germany after the Second World War.[65] There are five longer

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61 Martin Heidegger *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 13, Frankfurt/M. Vittorio Klostermann 1983, p . 196.

62 Ibid., p. 197. – Cf. Eva Geulen Reden und Schweigen Walter Benjamin und Martin Heidegger über Adalbert Stifter, in *Worthörig wider Willen. Darstellungsproblematik und Sprachreflexion in der Prosa Adalbert Stifters*, Munich Iudicium 1992, pp. 42–56.

63 Martin Heidegger *Anmerkungen I-V (Schwarze Hefte 1942–1948)*, Frankfurt/M. Vittorio Klostermann 2015, p. 58. Cf. Klaus Neugebauer Heidegger liest Adalbert Stifter, in *Heidegger Studies*, Vol. 34, 2018, pp. 129-146.

64 Klaus Pohl Der Hosenmatzdeutsche oder Die Martin Heidegger-Maske, in Martin Wiebel *Hannah Arendt. Ihr Denken verändert die Welt*, Munich Piper 2012, p .187

65 Hannah Arendt / Martin Heidegger *Briefe 1925–1975*, Frankfurt/M. Vittorio Klostermann 1998, Nr. 53, pp. 83-85.

quotations from Stifter's story "Limestone", which deals with the fate of a country priest. He had lost his family members and the parental farm, and his love for the neighbour's daughter had failed because of her parents' negative attitude towards him. As a priest, he withdrew to the mountains, lived in strict asceticism and shamefully hid the white linen he had bought himself, inspired by the neighbour's love, and which has since reminded him of the love that had passed.

Heidegger obviously identified with this priest, whose "two tiny little lobes of white" peep out from under his worn clothes and "testify" to his dignity. According to the narrator, the priest was in "immense poverty, such as I have never encountered in a person above the level of a beggar". His anxious cleanliness "emphasised the poverty even more embarrassingly". The neighbouring family in his childhood "also had a little daughter, a child, no, it was not a child any more… The 'little daughter' had very fine red cheeks, she had fine red lips, innocent eyes that were brown and looked kindly around her". She had told him, the later pastor, about the importance of white linen and silverware. "I remember at these words… that I had always seen on the body of the speaker at the edge of the neck and on the sleeves the finest white linen." In the last quotation, the priest tells shamefully that he still had this "lovely linen".

In accordance with Stifter's gentle law, Heidegger commented on these quotations with the remark that "no other narration of the story of a love is so shy, no gentleness of never forgetting so powerful". Thus, the unspoken in the spoken is at once an artistic principle, philosophical reflection, a call to silence and, at the same time, hidden private concerns.

Walter Benjamin was also fascinated by Stifter and at the same time interested in metaphysical questions in a way that led him, unlike Heidegger, to vehemently reject him. He reported to Ernst Schoen that he had read a lot of Stifter, "behind whose unremarkable exterior and apparent harmlessness a great moral and great aesthetic problem is concealed. What do you know of him? 'Rock Crystal' and 'The Briefcase of My Great-Grandfather' contain an almost pure beauty, the only one among the many I know of him".[66] Benjamin welcomed this beauty in the form of the "wonderful" descriptions of nature and children as long as it was not associated with the phenomenon of fate. When Stifter combined the two, however, he committed a "monstrous error". In the preface to the "Coloured Stones", where he writes about the gentle law, "he indeed loses the sense for the elementary relations of man to the world in their purified justifiedness, in other words: the sense for justice in the highest sense of this word". For when Stifter had "found the other side, the shadow and night side of that limitation to the small circumstances of life", he did not limit himself to

66 Walter Benjamin An Ernst Schoen, 28 December 1917, in *Deutsche Menschen*. Eine Folge von Briefen. Auswahl und Einleitung von Detlef Holz [1936]. In *Gesammelte Schriften*. Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp 1972, vol. 4/1, pp. 149–233. Nachträge in vol. 7/2, 829 f

that, but carried "that simplicity also into the great circumstances of fate … which, however, necessarily have a quite different simplicity and purity, namely that which is simultaneous with greatness or, better, with justice"[67]. Benjamin considered the strict separation of nature and fate to be indispensable and criticised Stifter's uncertainty and "weak hand" with which he drew the border of this separation in an almost embarrassing manner instead of recognising the "highest inner justice" with which alone a secure distinction is possible.

For Benjamin, bringing nature and humans together existentially was so unthinkable that he resorted to the most negative characterisations of this border crossing imaginable. There is talk of a "spasmodic impulse", a "sub-humanly demonic and ghostly" path, of a "secret bastardisation", a "terrible trait" that reveals "a double nature", "two faces". "In him, the impulse of purity has at times detached itself from the longing for justice, lost itself in the small to then emerge hypertrophically (that is possible!) as indistinguishable purity and impurity". Stifter had no idea that it was about the struggle with the eschatological, final realm of justice and purity: "There is no final metaphysically consistent purity without the struggle for the sight of the highest and outermost realities and one must not forget that Stifter did not know this struggle."[68] In addition, according to Benjamin, there are the deficiencies of representation, which are based on a pronounced visuality of Stifter's poetry. This, he says, is accompanied by an inability to hear revelation and represent shock, hence the demonic. The space in which feelings and thoughts are depicted is deaf, his soul mute, lacking any contact with the world being, the language.

Nature has its place here not only as a successful visual description; if it were not strictly limited, it would contaminate the moral world as the demonic, in which purity, justice, revelation and language are the only things that matter.

For Adorno, finally, Stifter's world of nature plays no role, but rather the world of man and a reflective, enlightened distance from it. This, however, is just as absent from Homeric archaism as it is from "the desperate efforts of the late Goethe and Stifter to bring bourgeois conditions to life as a primordial reality, open to the unexchangeable word like a name".[69] In contrast to enlightened consciousness, to which narrative speech and its general conceptual essence corresponds, "this representational element always appears as one of stupidity, a non-understanding, non-

67 Walter Benjamin Stifter, in *Gesammelte Schriften* II,2, Frankfurt/M Suhrkamp. 1980, p. 608.

68 Ibid., p. 609. See also Peter Demetz Walter Benjamin als Leser Adalbert Stifters, in *Böhmen böhmisch. Essays*, Vienna Zsolnay 2006, p. 89.

69 Theodor W. Adorno Über epische Naivität, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 11 Noten zur Literatur, Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp 2011, p. 35. Cf. Guido Kreis Das richtige Leben. Stifter als Antwort auf Adorno. In *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 78, 2004, pp. 55–94.

knowledge, obdurately clinging to the particular where it is at the same time already determined as dissolved by the general. The epic imitates the spell of myth in order to soften it. … Naiveté is the price."[70]

This literature cannot be reproached for its naivety, only the traditional praise of the "only in the dialectic of form has the stupidity of narration turned it into a conscience hostile, restorative ideology"[71], whereas it originally came from an "enlightened, as it were positivist aspirations. … In the epic naivety lives in the critique of the bourgeois reason.[72]

What prompted the greatest nineteenth-century German storytellers in Adorno's eyes, Goethe, Stifter and Keller, to draw and paint rather than write, and thus to emancipate representation from reflective reason, was their attempt, "to let the real emerge pure, undisturbed by the violence of orders. The narrator's stupidity and blindness already expresses impossibility and hopelessness the time of such a beginning."[73]

This brief look at the interests of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Benjamin and Adorno in Stifter shows that they were not of a natural philosophical origin. Nietzsche and Benjamin were overwhelmed by beauty, but nature appears in Nietzsche only as a law and object of predation, and in Benjamin as an eschatological adversary. For Heidegger, nature in Stifter is the place where the ineffable is revealed in relation to a redefinition of metaphysics, and Adorno, finally, does not say a word about nature; he is concerned solely with the critical reflection of interpersonal relations.

What Nature?

This perhaps surprising separation, defence or even absence of nature in modern German philosophy is a consequence of what Arendt calls world alienation and self-alienation. Both shaped the philosophical directions from Descartes' doubt and English sensualism to existentialism and positivism.[74] To this can be added Marxism and critical theory, which describe nature only as an object of exploitation, a means of reproduction and the other of reason, but do not develop a positive relationship to nature.

This alienation from the world and from oneself is a fundamental experience that shapes not only philosophical reflection, but also ethics. According to Karen Gloy, modern ethics is based on an image of nature as an artificial, manipulable and

70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., p. 36.
73 Ibid., p. 37.
74 Hannah Arendt: *The Human Condition*, op. cit., p. 248.

dirigable object of man and accordingly she sees the relationship between man and nature and between subject and object as one of domination and servitude, interpreted with the dominance of man and the subordination of nature.[75]

Among the few exceptions of a positive relationship to nature in the philosophical field are Spinoza and Schelling. Spinoza rejected the Cartesian dualism of opposing spirit and matter. With his monism, he declared both to be merely attributes of a single substance, so that interactions between spirit and matter as well as body and soul were possible. In a kind of psychophysical connection, every idea therefore corresponds to an object in the material world. Behind this is the assumption that the world can be traced back to this substance and, *deus sive natura*, God is this substance and thus nature. Goethe was filled with this man-nature conception. Spinozism, naturalised in his time, conceived of nature as a living wholeness that develops from itself without dependence on a God, and in which human beings are involved in contemplation and activity. Against this background, it is apparent why Goethe rejected Newton's optical findings as a technical intervention in nature.

Schelling as well as Fichte were impressed by Kant's bold theses on the limited possibility of knowing reality, with which he put reason in the place of faith. He thus opened up the question of the ultimate reason as well as the question of the cognising subject and the unknowable thing-in-itself. Fichte radicalised Kant's subject as the ego that creates the world as a nameless non-ego and "depotentiates" it as a mere representation of the thing-in-itself and also of nature, which contemporary critics such as Jacobi described as a mere fantasy, even a ghost.[76] Nature as a mere non-ego is merely the object of cognitive rationality and thus the expression of the freedom of the absolute ego. Thus, cognition is not oriented towards the objects, but conversely demands that the objects be oriented towards cognition and the conditions of cognition.[77] Although Fichte envisaged natural science as part of his epistemology alongside law, morals and religion, he never elaborated on this.

At this point, Hegel should also be mentioned briefly, because he had a close relationship with Schelling at the Tübingen Stift and later in Jena and had an extremely influential influence on the philosophical thinking of the 19th century. Hegel considered the great importance that Goethe and Schelling attached to natural philosophy to be inappropriate. To place it "above reflection" was "a deviation, because one cannot philosophise from observation".[78] Rather, "in all this wealth of knowledge, the

75 Karen Gloy Natur im westlichen und östlichen Verständnis, in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 44, 1997, p. 165.

76 Karen Gloy Schellings Naturphilosophie. Grundzüge und Kritik, in Michael Esfeld / Jean-Marc Tétaz (eds.) *Généalogie de la pensée moderne. Genealogie des neuzeitlichen Denkens*. Festschrift für Ingeborg Schüssler, Frankfurt/M., Lancaster De Gruyter 2004, p. 187.

77 Ibid.

78 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* II, Werkausgabe vol. 9, Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp 1970, p. 21.

question arises or arises anew for us: What is nature? It remains a problem."[79] It is the task of the spirit, in conceiving nature, "to transform the opposite of the concept into the concept".[80]

For Hegel, nature in relation to the idea is the "idea of otherness", of the negative. Like Kant and Fichte, he defines nature from the perspective of the subject: "Nature has arisen as the idea in the form of *otherness*. Since the *idea is* thus *external* as the negative of itself or *itself*, nature is not external only relatively to this idea (and to the subjective existence of it, the spirit), but the *externality* constitutes the determination in which it is as nature."[81] Therefore, in nature the idea is "external to itself", while in the idea, however, nature is by no means external to itself. Finally, Hegel devotes himself to the diversity of nature with its multiplicity of forms, which, however, he cannot bring to a concept. This is not his problem, however, because it "does not reveal to him the power of nature to oppose the unity of the concept, but rather the powerlessness of nature: it cannot hold the concept. But what appears as the 'impotence of nature' in the perspective of the concept appears as its wealth in the perspective of life. Hegel also speaks here of 'infinite wealth' – but he cannot gain much from it, especially since this is not the subject of philosophy, and so he associates it with 'randomness'"[82].

Thanks to its freedom, its artistic creativity and its morality, the spirit stands above nature. Even then, when "spiritual randomness, *arbitrariness*, proceeds to *evil*," because there "this itself is still an infinitely higher thing than the lawful wandering of the stars or than the innocence of the plant; for what thus strays is still spirit."[83] Thus, Hegel, like Fichte, embodies the modern dualism that elevates human beings with spirit and idea above and against nature, providing another philosophic expression for the Anthropocene.

Schelling now distances himself from Fichte's non-ego and also contradicts Hegel's subordination of nature to the "idea". As already mentioned, Schelling follows Spinoza's monism and brings spirit and nature onto a common level by calling

79 Ibid.

80 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Nürnberger Gymnasialkurse und Gymnasialreden (1808–1816), in *Gesammelte Werke* (GW) vol. 10, Hamburg Felix Meiner 2006, p. 827.

81 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel *Enzyklopädie*, op. cit., § 247.

82 Walter Jaeschke *Hegel Handbuch*, Leben-Werk-Schule, Stuttgart J. P. Metzler Verlag 2016, p. 307. – Cf. Hegel's work on his philosophy of nature Wolfgang Bonsiepen Hegels Vorlesungen über Naturphilosophie, in *Hegel- Studien*, Vol. 26 1991, pp. 40–54. On Hegel's changing definitions of philosophy of nature cf. Gerald Hartung Review der Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur Nachschriften zu den Kollegien der Jahre 1819/20, 1821/22 und 1823/24 in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 24,1, and on the seminar postscripts in 1825/26 and 1828 vol. 24,2 in *v*ol. 49 (2015), pp. 186–192

83 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel *Enzyklopädie*, op. cit., § 248.

"nature the visible spirit and spirit the invisible nature"[84]. In order to understand nature as "unconditional reality", it is necessary to recognise its autonomy as a legislator of itself as well as its self-sufficiency, because "nature … is enough for itself".[85] For Schelling, nature means starting from an all-encompassing organism, from infinite productivity, not from being but from becoming, and finally from an indissoluble bond between nature and human beings. Humans emerged from nature and have their permanent and indispensable basis of life in it.

The freedom of human consciousness brings with it the great danger of forgetting this connection with nature. While Fichte promoted such forgetting and left the field of objectifying natural science and its mathematisation to natural research, Schelling stood for the holistic reference to the world, as also represented by Goethe and Humboldt. They all took a position beyond romantic rapture and positivist coldness. Their approach to the world on an inter-disciplinary or even transdisciplinary basis was challenged by the rising natural sciences and the branching and systematising definitions of research, science and philosophy. Hegel kept up with his conceptualisations and systems, while a supposed romantic like Schelling lost influence. It was not until the 1980s that Schelling's thesis of the productivity of nature was rediscovered and the topicality of self-organisation established in view of its compatibility with Ilya Prigogine's theses.[86]

The juxtaposition of spirit and nature or culture and nature was unchallenged until the environmental crisis in the 20th century. If today the fragmentation of the sciences and the disintegration of science, art and reality are lamented, then this should not only be blamed on the natural sciences, according to Dietrich von Engelhardt, but also on the humanities. For these "have in turn turned away from nature and contributed to a one-sided concept of education. Today, not only two cultures, but four cultures stand relatively alien and unmediated to each other: the culture of the natural sciences, the culture of the humanities, the culture of the arts, and finally the culture of behaviour".[87] What remains is a legacy of this holism in natural science, medicine and psychology, but not in philosophy. German idealism itself, in the form of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, also led to the defeat of those who embodied a holistic view of the world. They broke with Kant's self-critical and modest attitude and radicalised philosophy and their own appearance. Jaspers' work on Schelling in

84 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling Einleitung zu den Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur, in *Werke*, vol 1, Leipzig Fritz Eckardt Verlag 1907, p. 151.

85 Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik Schellings Idee einer Naturphilosophie. Ein noch heute herausforderndes Projekt, in *Information Philosophie*, 27, 2, June 1999.

86 Marie-Luise Heuser-Kessler *Die Produktivität der Natur. Schellings Naturphilosophie und das neue Paradigma der Selbstorganisation in den Naturwissenschaften*, Berlin Duncker & Humblot 1986.

87 Dietrich von Engelhardt Naturwissenschaft und Medizin im romantischen Umfeld, in Friedrich Strack (ed.) *200 Jahre Heidelberger Romantik*, Berlin, Heidelberg Springer 2008, p. 514

the context of the history of ideas highlights human inadequacies alongside his intellectual fireworks: Schelling's gesture of reflexivity without honesty, his objectivity that loses sight of reality and "falls into the non-committal view of phantasms"[88], and a sense of mission that senses the crisis of his time, but in thought is "rather to be ascribed to the modes of concealment of an old (age), a mode of saving that is not rescue but rather false reassurance"[89]. Jaspers also shows the inability of the three philosophers to communicate with each other, and thus the importance of the philosophers' character. Their destructive side and their break with Kant brought about the break with the 18th century Enlightenment. Taking up Schelling means recognising the weakness of the tradition of general natural philosophy and taking up what seems to be profitable for the present question of ecology: monism and a corresponding change of perspective.

Corporeal, Desert / Oasis

Such a change of perspective means starting not from the separation of spirit/human being on the one hand and nature on the other but from a common nature of the terrestrial organism, to which plants, living beings/animals/humans and physical substance/elements/climate belong. In their interplay, they form the Humboldtian cosmos in which all components interact with each other, not people and "nature", but people as elements of their environment. In this way, the "spirit" as a traditional, European reason since antiquity is freed from the opposition of man and nature and becomes a component of nature.

In the 20th century, Edmund Husserl took a significant step in this direction by introducing the body into the relationship between subject and object. This was followed by Merleau-Ponty and others such as Gernot Böhme and Bernhard Waldenfels.[90] For Husserl, the body is the "transition point" between nature and spirit, and it is at the same time part of a double structure of body and body, subjective, sensual experience and objective object. Touching one's own body reveals its double existence as subject and object. But Husserl's so-called constitutional analyses of the three fundamental regions of reality, material nature, animal or animate nature,

88 Karl Jaspers Schellings Grösse und sein Verhängnis, in *Merkur*, 9/83, 1955, p. 27. Extensively in *Schelling. Größe und Verhängnis*, Munich Piper 1955.

89 Ibid., p. 29.

90 Edmund Husserl *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Haag: Martinus Nijhof, vol. 2, 1952. Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *La nature. Cours du Collège de France 1956–1960*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1995. Also *Das Sichtbare und das Unsichtbare*, Munich Wilhelm Fink 1986. Gernot Böhme *Leib. Die Natur, die wir selbst sind*. Berlin Suhrkamp 2019. Bernhard Waldenfels *Das leibliche Selbst*. Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des Leibes. Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp 2000.

and the spiritual world, are explicitly oriented towards the natural sciences; nature itself, according to Böhme, is not mentioned. However, this is not about a redefinition of the human understanding of nature, but exclusively about the question of knowledge. Husserl's critique of Descartes' dualism therefore refers exclusively to the physical understanding of the world, which lacks the psychological dimension.

Merleau-Ponty, influenced by Husserl, abolishes the separation of body and mind in his body phenomenology in favour of a "third way" of being-in-the-world. As with Husserl, he is also concerned with the relationship between subject and object in the cognising human being, not with the abolition of the separation of subject and object in an intersubjective relationship between the elements of the organism, also called cosmos. Nevertheless, he agrees with Bergson that we humans are part of nature.[91]

Gernot Böhme, on the other hand, connects the role of the body with the phenomenology of the German Enlightenment. Drawing on Goethe's theory of colours, he describes the difference between a bodily and a scientific relationship to nature: for Goethe, colours are nature appearing to us through our bodies, whereas for Newton they are scientific data.[92]

Here is an opportunity to return to Arendt. There is no doubt that she is close to Goethe in her book review, as is Stifter. Goethe's and Böhme's phenomenology of the body is a plausible path to an ecological philosophy of nature that should be thought further. Shouldn't all scientific and philosophical-phenomenological concepts of nature be distinguished? What do we understand by subject and object if we no longer tie them to the terms spirit/human-nature? How can we distinguish the who and the what of the person and bring them into a new coexistence with each other as well as introduce them into the relationship between philosophy and science? Shouldn't the concept of landscape also be understood in a new way, for which a comparison with the old Chinese, non-essentialist philosophy could be helpful?[93] And isn't it worth looking back at Montaigne's sceptical plea against the presumptions of human reason and for the perception of the numerous abilities of animals, 200 years before Hegel once again claimed that it is thinking that distinguishes humans from animals? Can the concepts of subject/object be replaced by that of intersubjectivity, as is indicated by the discussion on animal and nature rights? What concepts should replace spirit/human-nature, culture-nature or: civilisation-barbarism?

The pair of opposites oasis and desert, which Arendt indirectly refers to, comes to mind. Arendt uses the oasis to characterise a human-friendly environment. It

91 Maurice Merleau-Ponty *La Nature*, op. cit., p. 351f.

92 Gernot Böhme Phänomenologie der Natur, in *Leib*, op. cit., pp. 122–126.

93 See the description of landscape in classical Chinese philosophy by François Jullien *Von Landschaft leben oder das Ungedachte der Vernunft*, Berlin Matthes & Seitz 2016. See also in this volume: Overcoming Inhuman Perspectives on Nature.

stands as an alternative to the desert, which Arendt uses as a metaphor for the unleashing of totalitarian terror: "… it seems as if a way had been found to set the desert itself in motion, to let loose a sand storm that could cover all parts of the inhabited earth".[94] Another time, she describes the philosophising dockworker Eric Hoffer in San Francisco as an oasis compared to the other intellectual conditions in the United States in the 1950s.[95]

Oasis and desert are of course natural phenomena, but they also those that describe the state of human societies. If we no longer assume a hierarchical order between humans and nature or culture/civilisation and barbarism, but a horizontal equality, then one can compare plurality on the side of humans with biodiversity on the side of "nature", or the institutionalised republic with the biotope. In such a world of people and "nature", the question of sustainability is no longer limited to "nature", but equally concerns the republic and also the republic in its entanglement with nature. For this reason, barbarism is equally a description of the state in nature and in the republic; it is the desert, which is contrasted with the oasis.

Those who live in the republic would therefore do well to get to know the elements of the common cosmos that are intertwined with it, in order to recognise features of oases and deserts and to avoid general inclusions or exclusions of formal groups such as "nature". The destruction of biodiversity today is not only similar to the destruction of interpersonal plurality – both destructions often take place together. In order to understand both destructions, they must not be mere statistical quantities, but must be perceived visibly and tangibly. The diversity of biodiversity, of existences in their spatialities and interactions, can only be understood if we know them and are able to tell stories about them. Like the philosopher Baptiste Morizot, who learns to understand the migrations of wild animals, read their tracks and recognise their world as a space of communication, or the forester Peter Wohlleben, who tells of the communicative relationships of trees with each other, or the anthropologist Philippe Descola, who relativises our view of nature from the perspective of indigenous people as just one of many possibilities. Understanding these and other researchers helps us to understand. We can perceive what Gadamer called a knowledge that is not science, but the ability to engage with the essence, with the stubbornness of the world, with the inner measure that is inherent in being. The Arendtian "world" and the Humboldtian "cosmos" replace the old irreconcilable division of "nature" and "culture", of "civilization" and "barbarism". Nature is not barbaric *per se*, nor is the human world necessarily civilized.

Does the destruction of a human "world" really mean sinking to a barbaric "state of nature", or is it not rather about the destruction of oases, as Arendt called places

94 Hannah Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Meridian 1958, p. 478.

95 Hannah Arendt / Karl Jaspers: *Correspondence 1926 – 1969*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1992, p. 257f.

of political freedom and diversity – oases in the human, plant and animal world? If so then our central problem would not be the state of nature, but the devastation of life caused by humans. The principle of sustainability therefore applies not only to our relationship with the biosphere, but also to our societies, where sustainability is based on participation, public spirit, responsibility and transparency, on freedom and diversity.

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