

# Creative Explorations



# Ethics of Care and Responsibility: Bridging Secular and Religious Cultures

## 1 Religion and the Eco-Crisis of the Anthropocene

We live in the midst of a massive anthropogenic ecological crisis whose manifestations include global warming, shifting weather patterns, extreme weather events, retreat of glaciers, rising sea levels, mega-droughts and desertification, threats to available water, food and shelter, mass extinction of species, loss of fisheries and forests, acidification of oceans, pollution of air, water, and soil, and shifts in the range and prevalence of diseases (Henson 2014). The anthropogenic eco-crisis marks the dawn of a new geological age, the Anthropocene, a new period in geological time that marks human transformation of environmental systems (Steffen et al 2011; Ruddiman 2013; Ruddiman et al 2015; Williston 2015; Angus 2016; Bonnheuil and Frescoz 2017; Ellis 2018). In the Anthropocene humankind has become a geophysical force as the boundary between »nature« and »humanity« has collapsed when »people and nature interact reciprocally and form complex feedback loops« (Liu 2007: 1513). Currently, all forms of life on planet Earth are impacted by human activities permanently and irreversibly. The temporal scope, causes, and implications of the Anthropocene are still disputed as the Anthropocene »has become a contentious term and a lightning rod for political and philosophical arguments about what needs to be done, the future of humanity, the potential of technology and the prospects for civilization« (Dalby 2016: 34).

How should humanity respond to the new reality it has created? What should guide the deliberations about the technological, economic, social, political, and moral choice it will face in the Anthropocene? Can modern technoscience provide the guide to the perplexed if technoscience is the primary cause of the crisis we now face? These complicated questions are hotly contested, but as Mike Hulme has already noted in regard to the debate on climate change, »what is

contested are not observable facts and physical realities but the *interpretations* of those facts, namely, the meaning we ascribe to them, and the cultural, social, political and ethical practices that flow from them« (Hulme 2009: 147). The global eco-crisis poses social, cultural, and ethical questions that require humanity to engage its deep moral, religious and spiritual resources as it charts its responses. Hulme has already noted that »climate change is increasingly discussed using language borrowed from religion, theology and morality« (Hulme 2009: 173) and indeed the relevance of religion to human coping with the Anthropocene has been increasingly acknowledged (Kearns 2011; Clingerman et al 2014; Deane-Drummond et al 2018).

Religion is the repository of sacred narratives that frame our worldviews, morality, attitudes, and practices. Religion matters most to the environmental crisis because the overwhelming majority of people in the world conceptualise reality in religious categories (Grim and Tucker 2014: 28). Human beings understand themselves, their societies, and their daily life through sacred narratives and symbolic rituals that point beyond themselves to an ultimate reality. In the context of religious worldviews human beings organise their life and find meaning, purpose, and hope as they face an unknown future. Religion provides the moral lens through which humans evaluate every aspect of life and decide what is good and bad, what is permitted and forbidden. Religion also expresses human existential and emotional needs and frames—that which we care most about, namely, our ultimate concern. Because religion expresses human orientation toward ultimate reality, humans are willing to kill and die for it so that religion mobilises people to action more than any other factor. If we are to mitigate the environmental degradation by changing human conduct, we cannot leave religion out of environmental discourse. Indeed, the depth and scope of our eco-crisis demands that we reframe it in religious categories, because no other dimension of human life (e. g., science, law, or philosophy) is more compelling than religion. Religion, however, is not a set of fixed beliefs or dogmas but a comprehensive way of life that encompasses human attitudes toward time, space, place, embodiment, sex and gender, family, community, and ultimately, life and death. Judaism, a small but foundational monotheistic religious tradition, is a case in point.

Judaism articulates an environmental ethics of care and responsibility that addresses our contemporary eco-crisis, but it does so by cutting across the boundary between »religious« and »secular« cul-

tures. That Judaism is environmentally relevant is not uncontroversial because the Judeo-Christian tradition has been blamed for the current ecological crisis (White 1967). According to Lynn White Jr., the Bible (Gen. 1:28) gave humanity the mandate »to have dominion« over the Earth, using and even exploiting its natural resources for human benefits. Furthermore, White has charged that Christian dualism of body and spirit has facilitated the disenchantment of nature because it made possible the rise of modern science and technology which brought about the ecological crisis. »Disenchantment« or »demagification« (*Entzauberung*) is the term coined by Max Weber (1917) to denote the fact that in the modern world nature was no longer regarded as the abode of divine presence but is rather viewed as inert matter that can be manipulated and mastered for the benefit of humanity. In the modern secular worldview God became increasingly irrelevant to the understanding of life on Earth and was replaced by the human who was now seen as »the creator and arbiter of values [who] is free to interpret and manipulate nature as it pleases« (McGrath 2002: 54). The replacement of God by humanity was the core of the modern secularization and its Enlightenment faith in the perpetual »progress« of humanity by means of science and technology. Along with other forces of modernity—capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism—the Enlightenment’s ideology of progress yielded massive devastation of nature as well as the subjugation of human populations who were viewed as mere »resources« for empowerment and enrichment of Western »enlightened« nation-states (Anker 2001; Hedrick 1988; Tucker 2000).

Within three centuries of rapid technological development, geopolitical expansion, and exploitation of nature, modernity has resulted in massive environmental degradation and the collapse of Earth systems we now associate with the Anthropocene. Life on Earth has become so precarious not because the Judeo-Christian tradition gave license to humans to exploit nature, as Lynn White has argued, but rather because the ecological message of the Bible that humanity is responsible for the natural world and must take care of the world has been occluded or ignored. The responses of theologians, scholars of religions, and activists to White’s accusations have given rise to the discourse of religion and ecology which consists of ecological hermeneutics, eco-theology, comparative analysis of religious traditions, and religious environmental activism (Hargrove 1986; Taylor 2005; Gottlieb 2006; Jenkins, Tucker, and Grim 2017; Hart 2017). All world

religions, each in its own unique way, harbor profound ecological wisdom that guides humanity to care and protect the natural world. In the Abrahamic traditions ecological wisdom is rooted in the doctrine of creation according to which God is the sole creator and sustainer of nature and God has commanded humanity to care of the created world that ultimately belongs to God. Especially in America, »religion is the most likely way that Americans can move themselves to care for the Creation« (Oelschläger 1994: 75). The Judeo-Christian tradition then does not mandate human domination and control of nature but calls humanity to care for creation so as to protect the divinely created world (e. g., Habel 2000; Berry 2006; Horrell 2010).

## 2 Jewish Environmentalism: Religious and Secular

Jewish environmentalism emerged in the early 1970s in direct response to Lynn White's claims that the Bible is the cause of the environmental crisis (Helfand 1971; 1986; Lamm 1972). The initial response was indeed apologetic, arguing that White selectively focused on the biblical command to »subdue the Earth and have dominion over it« (Gen. 1:28), which seems to justify human mastery and control of nature, while ignoring the command to the human »to till and protect« the Earth (Gen. 2:15), which sets a clear task for humanity. White's short essay focused on Genesis to the exclusion of the rest of the Bible and it had nothing to say about rabbinic Judaism, the normative interpretation of the Bible, or post-rabbinic developments of Judaism. Contrary to White, Jewish theologians and exegetes noted the richness and the complexity of the biblical portrayal of nature and the role that nature plays in covenantal relationship between God and Israel (Kay 1988 [2001]; Artson 1991 [2001]). Jewish environmentalism is engaged in the recovery, retrieval, and reconstruction of the Jewish tradition in light of the values and attitudes of contemporary environmentalism: interconnectedness of all beings, sustainability, concerns for future generations, and compassion for nonhuman animals (Tirosh-Samuelson 2002). A dominant value of the movement is the commitment to *Tikkun Olam*, literally »the repair of the world«, a rabbinic idea that evolved over the centuries and has become the catchphrase for Jewish social activism (Troster 2008). In rabbinic Judaism the phrase expressed the eschatological hope for the coming of the Kingdom of God. In medieval Kabbalah, the concept was reinter-

puted to refer to the transformation of all levels of reality by means of theurgy performed with the proper intention. In modern Judaism, especially in Reform or Liberal/Progressive variants, *Tikkun Olam* pertains to the range of human activities that bring about social justice so as to improve the human condition. The Jewish environmental movement has adopted the concept of *Tikkun Olam* interpreting it to mean a fusion of social justice and eco-justice through a wide range of environmental activism.

The Judaic ethics of responsibility is inherently religious: humans are responsible *for* the well-being of the created world and responsible *to* God for the treatment of the divinely revealed created world. The care of God's created world flows from human responsibility to God which is framed not in terms of the intrinsic *rights* of nature but as human *duties* toward the natural world which God had created (E. Schwartz 1997 [2001]). Scriptures spell out the ways in which humans should treat the land, water, plants, animals, and other human beings in order to protect God's created world (Richter 2010). In the Scriptural worldview, God the Creator is the true owner of the Earth and humans are but temporary tenants. Therefore, Scripture commands Israel to give the first portion of the land's yield (Hebrew: *bikkurim*) to its rightful owner in order to ensure the land's continuing fertility and farmer's sustenance and prosperity. Scriptural land based-commandments (e.g., Lev. 19:23) pay attention to trees and command that during the first three years of growth the fruits of newly planted trees and vineyards are not to be eaten because they are considered to be God's property. Scripture also recognises the goodness of biodiversity, protects diversification and prohibits mixing different kinds of species of plants, fruit trees, fish, birds and land animals (Hüttermann 1999). The biblical concerns for animal welfare are evident in the stringent limits on human consumption of animals by differentiating between »clean« and »unclean« animals, the concern for the perpetuation of life of non-human animals, and the prohibition on causing unnecessary suffering to animals (Tirosh-Samuels 2017).

The most distinctive feature of Jewish environmental ethics is the causal connection between the moral quality of human life and the vitality of God's Creation. Conversely, the moral corruption of society evident in unjust treatment of the marginal elements of society is closely linked to the corruption of nature. In both cases, injustice arises from human greed and the failure to protect the original

order of Creation. The just treatment of the marginalised in society—the poor, the hungry, widows, orphans—must follow Scripture’s legislation (Deut. 15:1–7). Thus, parts of the land produce are to be given to those who do not own land. When people observe the commandments, the soil itself becomes holy and the person who obeys the commandment ensures the religious-moral purity necessary for residence in God’s land (Deut. 4:40). Failure to treat other members of society justly and to protect the sanctity of their lives is integrally tied to acts extended toward the land. Put differently, there is no tension between the principle of justice and the practice of care, a tension that concerned contemporary secular moral philosophy and its feminist critics.

The connection between land management, divine worship, and social justice is most evident in the laws regulating the Sabbath and the sabbatical year (Hebrew: *shemittah*). On Sabbath, creative work is prohibited in order to enable humans to devote time to reflection and recognition of human subservience to greater power. Rest is imposed not only on humans but also on the domestic animals in their service; environmental legislation impacted animals even though they were not directly commanded. On the seventh year the principles of the Sabbath were extended to the land during which it is forbidden to plant, cultivate, or harvest grain, fruit, or vegetables; in the sixth year it is forbidden to plant in order to harvest during the seventh year. Crops that grow untended are not to be harvested by the landlord and are to be left ownerless for all to share, including the poor and animals. On the seventh year, debts contracted by fellow countrymen are to be remitted, which provided temporary relief from these obligations. Judaic social justice is intrinsically ecological justice and vice versa. Contemporary environmentalists have coined the term Eco-Kosher to capture the ethics of care and responsibility (Waskow 1996). Today Jewish environmentalists seek to revive the practice of *Shemittah* not only to express their Eco-Kosher mentality but to create a utopian society (Krantz 2016).

The causal relationship between human conduct and the thriving of the natural environment expresses the relational nature of the covenant: all creatures, both humans and nonhumans, are embedded and interdependent; all exist in a web of relationship with each other and with God; humans who are created in the »image of God« are responsible to God and their task is to care of creation. The quality of the covenant between God and Israel is expressed through the

prism of the Land of Israel: when Israel conducts itself according to divine commands, the land is abundant and fertile, benefiting its human inhabitants with the basic necessities of life, but when Israel transgress divine commands, the blessedness of the land is temporarily removed and the land becomes desolate and inhospitable (Lev. 26:32). When the alienation from God becomes so egregious and injustice fills up God's land, God brings about Israel's removal from the land by allowing Israel's enemies to overcome it.

Rabbinic Judaism (70 CE-600 CE) evolved during the exile of Israel from its ancestral land. The rabbis expanded the ecological concerns of the Bible but also gave rise to a scholastic culture that distanced Jews from the natural world. An example of rabbinic extension is the interpretation of the biblical prohibition on destruction of fruit bearing trees in time of siege (Deut. 20:19) to justify the prohibition on all sorts of destruction. The rabbinic principle »Do not destroy« (*bal tashchit*) covered the prohibition on cutting off water supplies to trees, overgrazing; unjustifiably killing animals or feeding them noxious food; hunting animals for sports; species extinction and the destruction of cultivated plant varieties; pollution of air and water; overconsumption of anything and squandering mineral and other resources (E. Schwartz 2001). These environmental regulations indicate that the rabbinic tradition required that one carefully weigh up the ramifications for every interaction with the natural world; it also sets priorities and considers conflicting interests and permanent modification of the environment. Similarly, on the basis of Deut. 22:6 the rabbis articulated the general principle of *tza'ar ba'aley hayyim* which prohibits the affliction of needless suffering of animals. Although rabbinic ethics is undoubtedly hierarchical and human centered—for example, cruelty to animals is forbidden because it leads to cruelty toward humans—the rabbis often presented animals as moral exemplars and recognised special animals as »animals of the righteous«, who live in perfect harmony with their Creator (Rosenberg 2002; R. Schwartz 2012).

In rabbinic Judaism, duties and virtues are closely intertwined: the observance of divine commands generates the desirable character that behaves in the proper way toward other human beings, and ultimately toward God (Tirosh-Samuelsan 2003). The rabbis extolled certain virtues (e.g., humility, modesty, moderation, self-control, generosity and benevolence) and they denounced certain vices (e.g., arrogance, greed, or profligacy) and in the Middle Ages, Jewish phi-

losophers explicated rabbinic virtue ethics in the framework of Aristotelian virtue ethics (Weiss 1991). Rabbinic virtue ethics is compatible with environmentalism: the character traits of the ideal Jew can be applied to protection and conservation of the created world. That awareness, however, is quite recent and it manifests an environmental sensibility that did not exist in traditional Judaism (Sokol 2002). Until the rise of Jewish environmentalism in the 1970s, Jews did not see the connection between rabbinic virtue ethics and the natural environment. Rabbinic Judaism established a culture of learning that glorified the study of Torah above all the other commandments. In this regard, the ideal rabbinic Jew was, as Steven Schwarzschild put it, an »unnatural Jew« (Schwarzschild 1984 [2001]), namely a person whose life was devoted to the observance of divine commands and whose spiritual goal was to transcend human embodied physicality to attain communion with God (in Hebrew: *devekut*). The moral imperative that guided traditional Jews was not derived from observation of nature, a world governed by predation and violence, but from an ethical imperative that transcends the natural order because it cares for the weak and the socially marginal (Wychogrod 1991 [2001]).

Modernity profoundly challenged the traditional worldview and lifestyle. When Jews were granted civil rights in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of them sought integration in Western society and culture but in return Jews were expected to modernise Judaism by differentiating between their »religious« private sphere and the »secular« public sphere (Batnitzky 2013). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jews subjected their tradition to critical examination in light of the Enlightenment's ideals, and one aspect of the drive toward modernization was a new attitude toward the natural world. Nature was no longer that which should be transcended but rather the source of renewal and vitalization of Jewish life in the »secular« world (Finer 2010). In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century new forms of Jewish secularism emerged, but all of them had a residue of their religious tradition in which the secular and the religious were never apart (Biale 2015). The most revolutionary of Jewish responses to modernity was Zionism which called on Jews to return to the ancestral Land of Israel where a new, modern, secularised Hebraic culture was to be established and where Jews could regain their political sovereignty. From the start Zionism was conceived as the return of Jews to nature, that is, to embodied physicality that would give birth to a new »muscular Jew« who will be rooted in the

land and who will redeem him/herself through physical labor and land cultivation (Neumann 2011).

For the past four decades in the Diaspora and in the State of Israel, Jewish environmentalism has emerged as a distinctive voice within contemporary Judaism. In the Diaspora, where Jews are a tiny religious minority, a grass-root Jewish environmental movement educates Jews about environmental matters, inspires Jews to lead an environmentally correct lifestyle, implements »green« communal practices, and rallies Jews to support environmental legislation through interfaith advocacy. The main activities of Jewish environmental organizations and initiatives include nature education, environmental awareness, advocacy on environmental legislation and community building. Jewish environmental advocacy has transformed the practices of Jewish institutions, be they synagogues, day schools, communal organizations, Jewish community centers, and youth movements. Today there are many organizations, programs, and initiatives that promote sustainable practices (e.g., energy efficiency, elimination of plastics, recycling, and waste reduction programs); reduce consumption and promote new eating habits; plant community gardens; link sustainable agriculture to urban Jewish life and education; include environmental issues in the education of youngsters and adults, organise nature walks and outdoor activities; celebrate Jewish holidays (especially Sukkot, Shavuot and Tu Bishvat) with attention to environmental agriculture themselves; promote justice in food production with attention to sustainable agriculture and compassionate treatment of farm animals, and encourage Jews to live sustainably. These programs transcend congregational and denominational boundaries and are often carried out in inter-faith settings in collaboration with non-Jewish organizations.

In Israel, where the Jews are the majority, Zionism has endowed the physical environment of the Land of Israel, its topography, flora and fauna, with spiritual (albeit secular) significance, inculcating intimate knowledge of the Land through nature hikes, field trips and camping. Paradoxically, the outdoor culture has enabled secular Israelis to understand the natural imagery and metaphors of the Bible, the document that legitimised the Zionist nationalist project, while at the same time distance themselves entirely from rabbinic and post-rabbinic Judaism. Jewish environmentalism in Israel is thus overwhelmingly secular. More problematically, the success of the Zionist project exacted a toll on the fragile environment of the Land of Israel:

steep rise in population, rapid urbanization, the on-going Arab-Israeli conflict and initial mistakes about resource management have generated a long list of environmental problems (e. g., air and water pollution, soil erosion, overuse of water, etc.) requiring legislative solutions. Today the state of Israel addresses these environmental challenges through a mixture of policies, legislation, and alternative technologies (e. g., hydroptic agriculture, solarization and de-salinization) and environmentalism thrives in Israel through green political parties, numerous environmental NGOs, and creative education and trainings programs (Tal 2002; Orenstein, Tal, and Miller 2013). Many of these environmental initiatives and organizations deal with concrete environmental problems without reference to Judaism, but some organizations draw direct inspiration from Jewish religious sources in their theoretical justification and educational programs. The degree to which Israeli environmentalism should be grounded in traditional Jewish sources is hotly debated in Israel and the movement is quite different from its American counterpart.

Particularly in America, Jews have generated eco-theology which has sought to »re-enchanted« nature, namely restore the symbolic meaning of nature so as to integrate environmentalism with the religious sources of Judaism. The re-enchantment of nature has taken two routes: one inspired by Hasidism and Kabbalah and the other inspired by ancient paganism and Goddess religion. The former trend was launched by Schachter-Shalomi (1993; 2007) who was brought up in Hasidism but who called for a »paradigm shift« in Judaism that will put an end to ecocide. Schachter-Shalomi inspired others, especially in the Jewish Renewal Movement, to articulate a Neo-Hasidic eco-theology that espouses panentheism and highlights the presence of God in all aspects of reality (Green 2002; 2010; Seidenberg 2015). A somewhat different focus is evident in the attempts to articulate Earth-based Judaism rooted in ancient Israelite rituals which had been repudiated by the Deuteronomic reform of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Golden 2015).<sup>1</sup> Other Judaic attempts to reenchant nature are inspired by Shamanism, Eastern mysticism, Feng Shui, or feminist Earth-based spirituality (Winkler 1998; 2003), giving Jewish environmental spirituality a distinct eclectic flavor common to progressive spirituality (Lynch 2007). Regardless of the sources of inspiration, the Jewish environmental movement in America offers an environmentally conscious way of being Jewish in the world, a way that is

particularly appealing to millennial Jews or to Jews who have been previously alienated from the organised Jewish community.

### 3 Judaism, Ethics of Care, Ecofeminism, and Environmental Virtue Ethics

The ethics of care and responsibility is also shared by Christian and Muslim environmentalism. In Christian environmentalism, the ethics of care and responsibility comes under the banner of either »stewardship« or »creation care« (Ball et al 1992; Northcott 1996; Rasmussen 1996; Kearns 1996; Hessel and Reuther 2000; Moo and Moo 2018) as Christian eco-theologians have translated environmental concerns into religious communication, practices, and rituals. Islam, in which the human being is believed to be a vice regent (Khalifa) of creation, also sees the task of humanity as managing the balance and harmony of the created world and gave rise to eco-theology and environmental activism (Foltz, Denny, Baharuddin 2003; Foltz 2005). Stewardship of the Earth is similarly promoted by secular environmental ethicists who see human beings not as the owners but rather as the care takers of the Earth (Attfield 1983; Callicott 1994). In other words, the discourse on stewardship or care of the Earth is intercultural, interdisciplinary, interreligious, interdenominational, and international (Rozzi 2015). However, religious environmentalists who promote creation care and many secular environmentalists who advocate for Earth stewardship have made relatively little use of ethical theories that put the practice of care at the front and center of ethics. I refer to the feminist ethics of care, a distinctive moral theory that is linked to virtue ethics, on the one hand, and to ecofeminism, on the other hand. Let me clarify how these discourses relate to each other, how they intersect with Judaism, and how they integrate religious and secular dimensions.

The intersection of environmentalism, feminism and ethics originate in the social movements of the 1960s: the Civil Rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the students' movement, and the women's movement. Despite their difference they all shared the critique of modernity and the assumptions of the Enlightenment Project. At the forefront was feminism which exposed the sexism, inequality and injustice that women suffer in patriarchal society. Since its emergence, the so-called second-wave feminism has trans-

formed all aspects of society (e.g., economy, law, politics, education, arts, and even sports) and profoundly impacted the academy as women demanded inclusion, equality, and justice and promoted gender as category of analysis. Within the discipline of philosophy, feminism has made profound impact as feminist philosophers challenged many assumptions and conventions of the Enlightenment Project about the human Self and the construction of knowledge (Code 1991; Fricker and Hornsby 2000). Within the sub-discipline of ethics, feminist philosophers critiqued the dominant liberal theories: Kantian deontology, consequentialism/utilitarianism, and justice theory. These theories understood society as an aggregate of individuals who are autonomous, independent, and rational, and constructed moral theories in terms of abstract rules and values, be it duty, rights, impartiality, utility, justice, or fairness. By contrast, feminist theorists insisted that the Self is relational, dependent, and vulnerable and that human relations, especially the practice of care, rather than abstract rules constitute the core of ethics.

Carol Gilligan (1982) was the first to articulate the feminist ethics of care when she criticised the work of her mentor, Lawrence Kohlberg, on moral development of the human being. Born Jewish, Gilligan's Jewish identity was rooted in Reconstructionist Judaism, a socially progressive interpretation of Judaism that promoted the holistic view of Judaism as a civilization, integrating »religious« and »secular« dimensions (Kaplan 1934; Goldsmith, Scult and Seltzer 1990). Gilligan attended Hebrew school at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in New York, which was founded by Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan in 1922, and her understanding of the Self reflected the relational, communal, and worldly outlook of Reconstructionist Judaism. Trained in psychology, Gilligan argued that Kohlberg's theory of moral development was wrong because it ignored the different perspectives (or »voices«) of men and women. Whereas men focus on abstract principles of impartial justice and abstract responsibilities, women focus more on people and relationship that emerge within relationship and in concrete situations. Women's moral outlook emphasises solidarity, community, and caring but their moral voice has been silenced by patriarchy. The care perspective has been ignored or trivialised because women were traditionally in positions of limited power and influence.

Gilligan's path-breaking studies gave rise to the feminist ethics of care that construed the Self as relational, interdependent, vulner-

able, and concerned with the wellbeing of others. The Self is always in relationship and needs to be understood from this perspective. The feminists, interestingly enough, were not the first to articulate a relational view of the Self. Male Jewish philosophers, most famously Martin Buber in his *I and Thou* (1922), already conceptualised the Self relationally when he distinguished between two types of primary relations: I-It and I-Thou. The former is conditional, instrumental, mediated, treating the Other as a means to an end, whereas the latter is unconditional, non-instrumental, and immediate, treating the Other as an end to whom the Self is intrinsically responsible. The dialogical philosophy of Buber and other Jewish »existentialist« philosophers (e. g., Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Levinas), does not mean that Judaism is inherently feminist or that feminist ethics of care is inherently Jewish, or that Jewish dialogical philosophers are necessarily concerned about the environment. Indeed, Buber was no feminist, Rosenzweig and Levinas, who used the category of »the feminine« extensively in their philosophy, had no interest in ecology, and Rosenzweig's scathing critique of paganism could be applied to environmentalism (Tirosh-Samuels 2005: 289). However, feminist ethics of care has much in common with Jewish dialogical philosophy because both highlight the relational nature of the Self, the focus on vulnerability and dependency, and the importance of responsibility and responsiveness (Batnizky 2004; Diedrich, Burggraeve, and Gastmans 2006; C. Taylor 2005). Also the ideas of Buber and Levinas have already been applied to environmentalism (McFague 1997; Edelgrass, Hatley and Diehm 2012): for Buber nature is a moral subject (Buber 1970 [1923]:75) and for Levinas nature is the Other that places infinite responsibility on the Self (Levinas 1969). Jewish dialogical philosophers and feminist ethicists share the focus on relationality, responsibility, and care.

Care, the practice in which we attend to the needs of others, characterises the relational Self. In patriarchal society caring is gendered: for the duration of their life women are the primary care givers, caring for children, sick spouses, and aging parents. Feminist theorists who promoted ethics of care as alternative theory originally argued that caring manifests a distinctive female morality. For example, Nel Noddings who argued that caring is »rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness« (Noddings 1984: 2) closely analyzed the dynamic relationship between the care giver and care recipient although to whom care is due remained a debated issue. Sara Ruddick

(1989) used care to theorise the experience of mothering which she viewed as a unique approach to moral reasoning and a ground for feminist politics of peace. Virginia Held (1995; 2006) construed care as the most basic core value and explored the characteristics of the caring personality; in so doing she linked ethics of care to virtue ethics, while insisting on the differences between them. And Eva Feder Kittay (2011) developed a dependency-based account of equality rooted in the activity of caring for the seriously disabled and called for institutional reforms of professional care workers, recommending welfare for all care givers, akin to worker's compensation or unemployment benefits.

The ethics of care, however, was also critiqued from within the feminist discourse by Joan Tronto, a Jewish woman whose upbringing in New York was not so different from Carol Gilligan's. Tronto (1993) chided feminists for associating care exclusively with women and for disregarding the political context within moral arguments. Trained at the City University of New York, the bastion of Jewish academic secularism in the 1960s and 1970s, Tronto focused on the political implications of the practice of care.<sup>2</sup> Care, she argued, has always been undervalued and disregarded in order to uphold the structures of power and privilege. Rejecting the notion that any work connected to care ought to be done women, or the notion of feminine morality, Tronto argued that everyone as citizen of a democracy has a responsibility towards care. Toronto called for the moral boundaries to be shifted in order to create more caring societies. In her *Caring Democracy* (2013) Tronto elaborates the argument: if everyone accepts the responsibility and participates in allocation of care responsibility, some fundamental values and commitment will be addressed. Care should be included as a public concern in order to strive for true freedom, equality and justice for all citizens. The key elements of care— attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness— should be understood politically and not only ethically. Tronto's political emphasis would deeply impact the feminist ethics of care as well as ecofeminism.

Feminist ethics of care was not the only moral theory to challenge the reigning ethical theories of Kantian deontology and consequentialism. Another approach to ethics—virtue ethics—did the same without reference to feminism, although the people who argued for it were female British philosophers—G. E. M. Anscombe, Philippa Foot, and Rosalind Hursthouse. Already in the late 1950s, An-

combe (1958) charged that secular approaches to moral theory are without foundation because they use concepts such as ›ought‹, ›obligated‹ and ›right‹ that are all legalistic and require a legislator as the source of moral authority. In the past God occupied that role, but secular moral theories that dispense with God as part of the theory are lacking the proper foundation for meaningful employment of these concepts. As an alternative she insisted that we need to develop a moral theory based on moral psychology, moral facts, the facts of human nature, and an account of the good for humans. A similar critique came from Philippa Foot who like Anscombe urged philosophers to take their inspiration not from Kant or Mill but from Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. The result was the emergence of virtue ethics, which focused on character, virtue, and human flourishing as an alternative moral theory to the reigning approaches that focused on duties, abstract rules, or the consequences of actions. In virtue ethics the question what should one do is inseparable from the question what kind of person one should be (Statman 1997; Slote 1992; Crisp and Slote 1997; Hursthouse 1999). The precise relationship between ethics of care and virtue ethics continues to be debated: some have argued that ethics of care cannot and should not constitute a comprehensive moral theory, others have claimed that ethics of care has its own moral domain, for example, friendship, and still other have preferred to view ethics of care as part of the more comprehensive moral framework, namely virtue ethics (Halwani 2003).

As feminist ethics of care and virtue ethics came into their own, so did environmental ethics, the philosophical response to the environmental crisis (Jamieson 2001). Traditionally, ethics was viewed as distinctly human: only humans are moral agents and the ethical situation is restricted to social relations among human beings. The environmental crisis brought new questions to the fore: Do humans have obligations to the natural world? Does nature have a moral standing? In Kantian deontology ›moral duties to nonhumans exist, but they are secondary to the primary imperative to treat rational human beings as ends in themselves‹ (Keller 2010:10). Environmental ethicists challenged this anthropocentric perspective by posing the question: ›Do human beings really constitute the entire scope of moral considerability?‹ At first, environmental ethicists argued that standard moral theories are sufficient to ground environmental ethics by extending moral considerability to non-humans (Singer 1975; Regan 1982) but most environmental ethicists went beyond ›extensionism‹

to argue that the moral categories of Western ethics cannot ground environmental ethics: a new paradigm rooted in non-individualistic ontology is needed, which can take into consideration ecological wholes, inclusive of human and nonhuman biota and the abiotic environment. By including non-humans in the moral situation, environmental ethics moved beyond the anthropocentric perspective of traditional moral philosophy which identified humans exclusively as the subject matter of ethics. Like feminism, environmentalism challenged existing moral theories and gave rise to various strands that debate the ontological basis of environmental ethics: »To whom is care due, why, and how should care be given«?

The theoretical debates among ethicists crystallised in two major approaches—Deep Ecology and Social Ecology—although these two do not exhaust the range of environmental moral theories (Krebs 1999). The former was non-anthropocentric (also known as »biocentric« or »ecocentric«) whereas the latter was anthropocentric. Deep Ecology (Naess 1973; Devall and Sessions 1985; Sessions 1995) articulated egalitarian biocentrism and metaphysical holism. Dismissing conservation and resource management as »shallow ecology«, Deep Ecology advocated deep rethinking of the place of humanity in the ecological whole. Deep Ecology was concerned with the flourishing of non-human life, values and diversity of life and the need to sustain the very conditions for the diversity of myriad forms of life. By contrast, Social Ecology claimed that the source of the ecological crisis is the very human tendency for domination. Murray Bookchin (1990), a Jewish left-leaning social philosopher, acknowledged that humans are part of nature but also insisted that humans are also more than just nature. As a Marxist critic of Darwinism, Bookchin argued that nature developed not through competition but through cooperation and mutualism to every greater possibility for diversity, freedom and subjectivity. Humans are indeed part of nature but they are also a »quantum leap« within the natural process: only humans actualise the potentiality for nature to become self-conscious and free and therefore only they have the responsibility to nature, contrary to the instrumentalism of modern industrial capitalism and in contrast to biocentric egalitarian approach of Deep ecology. Human responsibility to nature could be properly carried out only if humans first eliminate practices of exploitation, domination and hierarchy by developing communitarianism.

Elimination of oppression was also the focus of ecological femin-

ists, or ecofeminists.<sup>3</sup> Ecofeminists brought to the fore the gender dimension of the environmental crisis: in all cultures and in all societies women have been associated with »nature« so that »the oppression and exploitation of women and the oppression and exploitation of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing« (Warren 1996). Therefore, it is impossible to liberate nature or nonhuman animals without taking the oppression of women seriously, or liberate women without taking the oppression of nature (or specifically non-human animals) seriously. Ecofeminists thus sought to make feminism environmental and conversely reconceive environmental ethics in feminist categories (Gaard 1993; Mies and Shiva 2014 [1993]; Adams and Gruen 2014). The essentialists among them argued that women are closer to nature and the ethics of care expresses »the essential voice of women's lived experience and sense of self as embedded in relationship« (King 1991: 76). Other ecofeminists took a conceptualist approach arguing that »an ecofeminist environmental ethics must redress the conceptual opposition that patriarchal culture sets up between men and culture on the one hand and women and nature on the other. These dualisms underlie a parallel that exists between the oppression of women and the domination of nature in a patriarchal society« (King 1991: 76). Regardless of these differences, all ecofeminists decry male domination that supports the oppressive framework of patriarchy, but they are deeply divided about how to accomplish the egalitarian goal, how to justify it philosophically or how to relate ecofeminism to religion. Some secular ecofeminists align themselves with Social Ecology (e.g., Biehl 1991; Salleh 1997) while others promote Earth-based spirituality and Goddess religion that are more attuned with Deep Ecology (Reuther 1992; Christ 1998; 2003), and still others (Plumwood 1993, 2002) argued that ecofeminism should focus on the development of a particular character that could care for the environment.

Generally speaking, ecofeminism offers a feminist orientation to Earth care (Merchant 1995 [1991]), but ecofeminism is too variegated and nuanced to be summarised here. Philosophically speaking, ecofeminism is contextual, pluralistic, concrete, and situational, making no attempt to be »unbiased«, »value-neutral« or »objective« (Warren 1994; 1996). Speaking from the standpoint of the oppressed (be they women or nature), feminist ecological ethics rejects as meaningless or untenable any gender-free or gender-neutral description of humans, but how the ethics of care relates to ecofeminism is a matter of dis-

pute. Some ecofeminists promote the integration of feminist care ethics and environmental ethics and claim that »feminist environmental ethics of care is not limited to caring for sentient beings« but should be extended to all existents (Whyte and Cuomo 2017). Furthermore, women take a particular role in environmental protection because of their local knowledge about communal wellbeing, »especially where basic rights and needs are threatened by destructive projects that generate profits for outsiders« (Whyte and Cuomo 2017: 243). In the age of climate change and global warming, such local knowledge is most crucial for survival, making the social caring and ecological care-taking interwoven. Yet, there are other ethicists who have noted that while ethics of care has »an intuitive appeal« to feminist ecological ethics »without further development into a political dimension, Gilligan's research may be turned against feminist and ecofeminist objectives« (Curtin 1991: 66). Indeed, recent ecofeminist discourse (e.g., Sandilands 1999; Cuomo 1998; Macgregor 2006; Kheel 2008) follows the lead of Joan Tronto by contextualising and politicising the practice of care and inquiring who does the caring and who or what is cared for; who gets to make these decisions; what models of human-to-human care are we invoking in the process, and what are the gender dynamics of our models of care.

The more ecofeminism concerned itself with the practice of care and the function of women in actual communities, the more it had to pay attention to religious traditions, since religion frames the cultures of traditional societies.<sup>4</sup> Secular ecofeminists have acknowledged that caring toward nonhuman others »is a basic good in African traditions«, that ethics of care has parallels in Buddhism, »where there is a foundational commitment to compassion for all sentient being«, and that there is considerable overlap between »feminist and indigenous conceptions of care ethics« (Whyte and Cuomo 2017: 243). The relevance of Jews and Judaism to ecofeminism and feminist ethics of care, however, has often been overlooked. That is unfortunate because Jewish women (e.g., Betty Friedan, Bella Abzug, Letty Cottin Pogrebin among many others) were at the leadership of the feminist movement and within ecofeminism many of the proponents of Earth-based spirituality were born Jews, whose feminist critique of patriarchal Judaism led them to adopt ecofeminism as a spiritual alternative to traditional Judaism, without denying their Jewish (ethnic) identity. Thus Starhawk (1979) (aka Miriam Simos) became the High Priestess of the Wicca cult in the United States, Riane Eisler (1989), a Jewish

human rights activist, highlighted egalitarian and universalist dimension of ecofeminism; and Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein (1990) teased out the political implications of ecofeminism (Tirosh-Samuelson 2012). For all of these Jewish-born ecofeminists Earth-care is a spiritual practice and women are the paradigmatic care takers.

Feminist ethics of care, virtue ethics, and ecofeminism all focus on the moral quality of the agent rather than on abstract rules or on the consequences of the act. But the arguments for integrating virtue ethics and environmentalism were articulated not by ecofeminists but by environmental ethicists who promoted environmental virtue ethics (van Wensveen 2000; Sandler and Cafaro 2005; Treanor 2014). Since the First Earth Day in 1970 the environmental movement scored many successes, but in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it became clear that environmentalism has failed to change human behavior toward the environment. Global warming, climate change, the destruction of marine life, extreme weather events, desertification and pollution of air, water, and soil have all worsened notwithstanding important legislative achievements. This awareness led Ronald Sandler (2007) to insist that environmentalism has to move from the focus on legislative activity to the cultivation of character, since »a virtue-oriented approach provides action guidance in environmental contexts and on environmentally related issues« (Sandler 2007: 102). Environmental virtue ethics insisted on the need to cultivate an environmental personality type that is disposed to appreciate, respect, wonder and love nature. The emergence of the environmentally good personality should be the focus of education. The advocates of environmental virtue ethics maintain that environmental virtues are not limited to character traits that enhance our experience in environmental contexts (e.g., openness, appreciation, receptivity, love and wonder) but include as well character traits such as temperance, fortitude, commitment, optimism and cooperation that are favorable dispositions to securing environmental goods, resources and opportunities. By contrast, environmental vices are those dispositions that are detrimental to environmental health at the level needed to provide the good necessary for humans to flourish, or traits that prevent us from realising benefits that the natural environment can provide. Environmental virtue ethics is politically relevant because action is right to the extent that it best accomplishes the target of the operative virtues for a particular agent in a particular situation. The virtues

provide the standard of rightness; action guidance is accomplished through their application to a concrete situation.

Interestingly, and perhaps even ironically, although virtue ethics was initially proposed as a secular alternative to Kantian deontology, secular environmental virtue ethics reminds us of the importance of religious values and attitudes. Many environmental virtues have religious analogues, and conversely, virtues praised by the religious traditions are conducive to environmental conduct. Louke van Wensveen, a major contributor to environmental virtue ethics, has correctly observed the ubiquity of virtue language within the environmental discourse: »ecological virtue language turns up in the writings of social ecologists as well as Deep ecologists, bioregionalists as well as animal rights activists, creation theologians as well as environmental philosophers, main stream theologians as well as radical ecofeminists« (van Wensveen 2005: 16). Her list of environmental virtues consists of the following: »adaptability, benevolence, care, compassion, solidarity, connectedness, creativity, cooperation, fostering, friendship, frugality, gratitude, healing, hope, inclusivity, joy, justice, moderation, or restraints, openness, passion, perseverance, realism, self-examination, sensuousness, sharing, spontaneity, vulnerability, wisdom and wonder« (van Wensveen 2005: 21).<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, many of these virtues, values, and attitudes are promoted by world religions as well as in the writings of ecofeminists or feminist ethicists of care. By the same token, the environmental vices she lists—»anthropocentrism, arrogance, carelessness, competitiveness, consumerism or greed, contempt, cruelty, denial, despair, domination or mastery, dualistic thinking, elitism, exploitation, ignorance or thoughtlessness, indifference, insensitivity, manipulation, pride, otherworldliness, reductionism, romanticism, and wastefulness« (van Wensveen 2005: 21)—have parallels in religious traditions although they can also be accused of promoting some of these vices. The relationship between religious virtue ethics and secular environmental virtue ethics requires further discussion, but van Wensveen helps us to see their connection by noting that the person most responsible for »the use of virtue language among ecologically minded people« was no other than Lynn White Jr (van Wensveen 2005: 19)! When he critiqued the Judeo-Christian tradition for authorising domination of nature, he did not intend believers to leave behind their religious commitment but rather to identify the relevant resources within the Judeo-Christian tradition that support a non-exploitative attitude toward nature. For White it was

St. Francis's »belief in the virtue of humility« (White 1967: 1206) that anchors ecological consciousness and caring.

The virtue of humility, of course, is also the primary virtue of rabbinic Judaism (Nelson 1985) in which the paradigmatic humble person was the prophet and lawgiver, Moses. In rabbinic Judaism the virtues are cultivated by following divine commands and living the life of Torah. For the rabbis there is no conflict between ethics of duty and ethics of virtue: rather, it is divine law that enables individuals to cultivate the appropriate virtues in inter-personal relations and in their relationship with God (Tirosh-Samuelsan 2003). The virtues extolled by Judaism, such as humility (*tzniut*), modesty (*anavah*), continence or self-control (*kibbush ha-yetzer*), moderation (*metinut*), and simplicity (*histapkut be-muat*) are all conducive to environmental behavior. The ideal Jew is not one who exploits and plunders nature but rather one who is compassionate, caring, devoted to the well-being of others, including non-human animals. The compassionate treatment of animals is a principle that has guided Jewish religious jurisprudence for centuries as much as it has inspired contemporary laws of the Israeli government that regulate all aspects of animal treatment (1994). The ethics of care and responsibility guide the normative Jewish tradition as well as Jewish meta-ethics as articulated by dialogical philosophers such as Martin Buber, Hans Jonas and Emmanuel Levinas (Werner 2008; Tirosh-Samuelsan 2017: 186–194). Jewish dialogical philosophy shares with ecofeminism the relational concept of the self, the attention to community over individualism, the focus on character and virtue cultivation, and the ethics of responsibility and care. The relationship between ecofeminism and Judaism is quite complex: certain aspects of ecofeminism are more compatible with Judaism than others, and much depends on how one interprets Judaism (Tirosh-Samuelsan 2005).

#### 4 Conclusion

The severity of the eco-crisis compels us to develop an integrative approach that cuts across boundaries between individuals, nations, religions, philosophies, ideologies, and disciplines. Awareness of the eco-crisis emerged in the 1960s as part of the wholesale examination of the Enlightenment Project and its ideology of »progress« The Holocaust, Hiroshima and the anthropogenic eco-crisis made it clear that

humanity is not marching toward a more just, peaceful and verdant world, as the Enlightenment had promised, but rather toward potential destruction of life on Earth, including human life. A plethora of voices and perspectives (e.g., feminism, environmentalism, postcolonialism, posthumanism, postsecularism and others) critiqued the negative aspects of modernity worldview, showing it to be philosophically inadequate, socially unjust, or culturally repressive. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century these criticisms generated numerous academic discourses, disciplines, sub-disciplines that flourished side by side in the professional academy with little interaction with each other. Today it is clear that what is needed to combat the destruction of life on Earth is no more theoretical clarification, philosophical refinement, or ideological purism; instead, environmental activism is required and it calls for collaboration and cooperation between international and national bodies, governmental and non-governmental organizations, scientific and humanistic disciplines, religious and secular cultures. This essay has proposed the ethics of care and responsibility as the overarching principle that can give coherence to this multivalent effort because the ethics of care and responsibility bridges theory and praxis, individuals and communities, human and non-human worlds, values and actions, and most importantly the secular and the religious.<sup>6</sup> In the Anthropocene caring for the world is a religious obligation as much as it is a secular ethical imperative.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Zelig Golden is the co-founder and leader of Wilderness Torah, a Jewish environmental organization located in Berkeley, California, that seeks to actualise the vision of Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. This is just one example of contemporary Jewish attempts to reenchant nature.
- <sup>2</sup> Tronto's understanding of political theory was shaped by her teacher Sheldon Wolin, a Jewish political theorist.
- <sup>3</sup> Christine Cuomo (1998) differentiates between ecofeminism and ecological feminism but in this essay the terms are used interchangeably.
- <sup>4</sup> The same holds true for environmental ethics: the more it shifted from debates about the ontological conditions for environmental ethics to the environmental needs and concerns of real communities, the more environmental ethics became attentive to religion. Within environmental ethics those who advocated environmental pragmatism (Light and Katz 1996; Minteer 2011) made it possible for the secular discourse of environmental ethics to pay attention to religion because communities use religious narratives. The significance of narratives for inspiring, motivating, and instructing is also recognised by proponents of environmental virtue ethics (Treanor 2014).
- <sup>5</sup> In *Dirty Virtues* van Wensveen (2000) listed 189 environmental virtues and 174 environmental vices! The list presented here is considerably shorter.
- <sup>6</sup> The Earth Charter (2000), which has been endorsed by thousands of organizations, hundreds of city governments, several national governments and UNESCO, states as its second principle: »Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.« Clearly the ethics of care and responsibility has already been shown to cross religious and secular boundaries.