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Citizens, Denizens and the *Res Publica*: Environmental Ethics, Structures of Feeling and Political Expression

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ABSTRACT

Environmental ethics should be understood as a radical project that challenges the limits of contemporary ethical and political expression, a limit historically defined by the concept of the citizen. This dominant model of public being, frequently justified in terms of a formal or procedural rationality, facilitates an exclusionary ethos that fails to properly represent our concerns for the non-human world. It tends to regard emotionally mediated concerns for others as a source of irrational and subjective distortions in an otherwise rationally ordered ethico-political community. In doing so it underestimates the important role played by 'structures of feeling', those culturally variable patterns of emotionally mediated responses, that provide the (shifting) grounds for *all* ethical experience, motivation, communication and interpretation. An alternative model of political expression more suitable to an environmental ethic, the denizen, is suggested.

KEYWORDS

Emotion, environmental ethics, structures of feeling, hermeneutics, denizen

INTRODUCTION

Environmental ethics, Holmes Rolston (1988, xii) states, is both 'radical and revolutionary' in the sense that it attempts to speak in non-anthropocentric ways about duties to and values in the natural world. As Rolston (p. 2) also points out, the ethical language associated with radical human politics – rights, justice, social contracts and so on – are of limited use in expressing these concerns since they refer to inclusion within and distribution of goods amongst the citizenry of an

entirely human political order based in rationalistic reciprocity (see also Dobson, 1998; Smith 2001). This anthropocentric limitation leads many to reduce the ethical import of the non-human world to its instrumental value in ensuring human flourishing (Norton, 1991; O'Neill, 1993). But the kind of radical environmental ethics Rolston has in mind sits uneasily with attempts to objectify nature in this way, even if instrumental values are drawn widely to include aesthetic and psychological as well as material benefits for humans. Environmental ethics is concerned with our feelings *for* nature, not the 'self-centred' pleasures obtained from experiencing a beautiful sunset or the exhilaration of white water rafting. No doubt feelings for nature are often influenced by, and play an integral part in, such experiences but they are not reducible to them.

For Rolston, the solution is to seek values of a different kind, those found within nature itself. But, leaving aside for the purposes of this paper discussions of (the sometimes reactionary implications of) 'intrinsic' natural values and certain forms of 'ecologism' which can promote narrow ideas of 'following nature' I want to emphasise how radical the repercussions of this 'search' for environmental values might be in terms of both ethics and politics. Indeed, I will argue that, for environmental ethics to be genuinely radical, there has to be a *chiasmus* between environmental ethics and politics such that, when envisaged as a project that takes the side of non-human 'nature', environmental ethics *crosses over* into a critique of the limit of contemporary political expression. This limit is encapsulated in the very idea of the citizen as someone human (who is or should be) represented within a rational political order. By contrast, I will, for reasons to be explained, refer to the 'excess' (Irigaray, 1993: 77), those that are both excluded from and cannot be contained within this ethico-political category, as 'denizens'.

Environmental ethics thus entails an implicit (or indeed explicit) critique of dominant human-centred traditions of envisaging our current state of public being, the *Res publica*. Every genuinely radical environmental ethic, whatever form it might take, and there are many possibilities, is inseparably intertwined with the positing of a different political ethos, one that exceeds (cannot be contained within) current ethical and political conceptions of the state and civil society. So understood, environmental ethics does not provide an extra 'ethical' element to be arbitrarily added on to or thrown into the mix of current conceptions and practices, but is party to a radically utopian political project: utopian not in the sense of being an aimless daydream but because it expresses something of the dual significance of the term as originally envisaged by Thomas More, a u-topia (no place), somewhere that might not yet exist, and a eu-topia (good place) somewhere we might want to be. And Utopia, says More's narrator, is 'not only the best country in the world, but the only one that has the right to call itself a republic' (More in Geohegen 1987: 1).

This kind of utopianism will not dictate the form of an ideal future state that must be established, a state to which 'reality' (whatever that might be) will

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have to adjust itself. It is not about prescribing the parameters for a future environmentally friendly constitution, a specific model of a more inclusive state, or a program for better and greener business practice. As Marx recognised, the error of crude utopianism lies in specifying, and thus dictating, the concrete political and ethical forms future societies should take – societies that can actually only emerge in and through creative social and natural practices. Radical forms of environmental ethics are utopian in the less specific sense that they provide grounds for an imaginative critique of present ideals of public being in anticipation of alternative, less exclusionary ideas of community (in terms of this paper, a critical path that takes the form of a movement from the public being of citizens to denizens). If such critiques begin to seem plausible then environmental ethics ceases to be utopian in the sense of being an impossible dream but takes on an aura of reality – a reality that can be set over and against that insipid vein of political ‘realism’ that, in blatant contradiction to all actual historical experiences, can think of the future only in terms of a repetition and continuation of the present.

Environmental ethics, then, offers the hope of a different state of affairs; and in a ‘state of anxiety’ even of fear, our escape is, as the utopian theorist Ernst Bloch reminds us, ‘a question of learning hope’. Hope is ‘superior to fear, it is neither passive like the latter, nor locked into nothingness’ (Bloch, 1995: 3). ‘The work of this *emotion* requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong The work against anxiety about life and the machinations of fear is that against its creators, who are for the most part easy to identify, and it looks to the world itself for what can help the world; this can be found’ (p. 3). Bloch, then, sets the issue of utopian thought – of the dialectical interplay of the imagination (thinking of a place that does not (yet) exist) and of ethics (thinking of a good place to be) – within and against the context of ‘what already exists’. But he also, against the formal rationality of dominant political traditions, situates this process within and against an emotional context. Here, against the anxiety and fear generated by contemporary society, hope instigates and motivates the desire for change, for a better world.

It is this emotional aspect that this paper concentrates on to realise this chiasmus, to weave a hopeful crossing from ethics to politics. Why emotion? Well, for many ‘reasons’: partly because of the role fear, anxiety, hope, anger, have in motivating environmental concerns; partly because emotions *affect* our evaluations; partly because of the fundamental role that emotional responses play in creating a sense of community, however that community is ‘imagined’ or experienced; partly because such emotional responses are precisely what are deemed inadmissible to our current form of public being which draws a political and ethical boundary around its constituency on the basis of human (reason’s) historical triumph over natural (emotion). Such distinctions and limits are challenged by environmental ethics – not on the basis of simply inverting

categories and prioritising emotions and feelings over reason, but of showing how communities are bound together through an ethos that combines specific forms of conscience and consciousness, values and understandings, emotions and reasons.

After first introducing the affectual aspects of environmental ethics this paper then contrasts the 'affective structures' which I claim underlie such radical ethical values with those sublimated and suppressed by the dominant form of modern public being. Finally it points towards the transformative potential of environmental ethics as an alternative political ethos, a utopian space that might foster environmental hopes.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND EMOTIONS

Given what has so far been said, how might a genuinely radical 'environmental ethics' be characterised? Perhaps as *an attempt to express our feelings for the natural world in a way that speaks for that world's conservation*.

This 'definition', if one could call it that, is intentionally vague since it is intended to place *a priori* limits on what forms environmental ethics might take, or, for that matter, on what might count as 'natural' or what 'conservation' might entail. Yet vague as it is it clearly runs counter to certain dominant approaches to environmental evaluation and politics. It is certainly intended to transcend instrumental approaches but may also conflict with overly rationalistic accounts of 'intrinsic' values, even though they might, quite properly, capture something of the importance of a specific (ethical) kind of value-orientation towards natural 'others', an orientation that would treat them as, in Kantian terms, 'ends in themselves'. This is because, in contrast with the rational formalism associated with post-Kantian philosophy, my characterisation is intended to highlight the ethico-political importance of affectual expression. That is, I want to draw out some of the implications of having *feelings for* nature and how this might be related to *expressing* those feelings and *speaking for* (on behalf and in favour of) nature? These three inter-linked issues might be referred to as the 'affectual', 'expressive' and 'advocational' aspects of environmental ethics respectively.

'Affectual' here means, as I have already suggested, something broader than simply having some emotional attachment to nature. My concern here is with any other-directed feelings that might be produced in the dialectic between natural things and ourselves, such as care, fear, wonder, love, loss and hope. In 'expressing' these feelings we not only give voice to our concerns, we make manifest in a public arena something of the network of ethical relations that are party to and formed through the constitution of these emotional responses. Environmental 'advocacy' is then, I shall argue, not just a matter of representing *our* feelings but, since those feelings are inherently relational and other-directed,

about making a case for the inclusion of certain natural things within the ethos of the polity itself.

There are then both some stark and subtler contrasts between this affectual–expressive model and its rational–formal alternative concerning environmental ethics and politics. The latter position often excludes emotions altogether, regarding them at best as something to be tightly regulated by reason. The key question becomes one of how the interests of non-human others might be reasonably represented to, rather than emotionally reconstitute, the current ethos and polity. This rationalistic model is then generally more willing to accept the dominant model of the *polis* as a rationally organised community of (human) citizens

From an affectual–expressive perspective this remains an exclusionary vision which fails to recognise the radical political potential of environmental ethics. The expression of concerns for nature could and should be made manifest in a new political ethos and a reconceived idea of the *Res publica*, of *public being*. If, as Aristotle (1988: 1) argues, every *polis* is a community ‘established with a view to some good’ the view of that good and of political being will differ immeasurably if we recognise that nature has *not*, as Aristotle thought, ‘made all animals [or environments] for the sake of man’ (p. 11). An expressivist environmental ethic would then challenge the founding anthropocentric logic of the polity (the *logos*) insofar as it excludes the affectual, expressional and advocational aspects of our relations with non-human others. It must also challenge those, less radical, forms of ‘environmental ethics’ that themselves accept an anthropic, objectifying and pragmatic logic, even if they are willing to argue that nature has intrinsic value.

There are many environmental texts whose authors go to elaborate lengths to clothe their own preferences for certain species, taxa or environments in the language of a supposedly ‘neutral’ (or in Weber’s [1964] terms ‘formal’) rationality. They exclude feelings on the grounds that they are merely personal matters that are subjective rather than objective, particular rather than universal, partial rather than disinterested. Emotional responses are regarded as dangerous sources of irrationality that should be debarred from principled arguments about ethical evaluation. In Paul Taylor’s words ‘the ground of respect [of nature] does not lie in the emotional appeal that living things might have for us, the fact that the animal or plant is attractive to us is not relevant to our adopting the attitude of respect toward it or to our expressing such an attitude in the way we treat it. [...] if we have respect for nature their attractiveness or unattractiveness in no way affects our impartial concern for their well-being’ (Taylor, 1986: 91).

Taylor is certainly not alone in regarding ‘feelings’ for nature as somehow ‘inadmissible’ in rational debate, though this kind of ethical rationalism is much more typical of narrowly anthropocentric positions rather than the biocentrism he purports to promote. Indeed, contra Taylor, environmental ethicists in general, and deep ecologists and ecofeminists in particular, have frequently challenged this dualistic opposition between reason and emotion. As Plumwood argues, an

account 'of ethical universalisation as derived from reason alone disguises and denies the dependency of ethical judgement on empathic [though perhaps one should say more broadly affectual] elements' (Plumwood, 1993: 168). Feelings are important, Rolston states, because 'we cannot know the value of anything in the natural world without some feeling about it'. The values we ascribe to nature are not 'received as the conclusion of an argument, or by the indifferent observation of a causal series' (Rolston, 1988: 28), they are not ultimately the outcome of a process formal argumentation, rather they emerge through the 'excitation' (p. 28) we experience if we 'take ourselves to nature and listen for its forms of expression' (p. 41). In Kheel's (1985: 144) words 'we cannot even begin to talk about the issue of ethics unless we admit that we care (or feel something).'

Labelling emotions irrational, subjective and partial masks their foundational role in, for example, providing motivations for ethical intervention, ensuring (or undermining) communicative agreement and extending or narrowing the horizons of our understanding.

Martha Nussbaum's recent work (2003: 2), speaks of the 'intelligence of emotions' arguing that 'we cannot ignore them, as so often moral philosophy has done'. Indeed 'a central part of developing an adequate ethical theory will be to develop an adequate theory of the emotions, including their cultural sources, their history in infancy and childhood, and their sometimes unpredictable and disorderly operation in the daily lives of human beings who are attached to things outside themselves'.

Although it is true that our emotions are 'subjective' in the sense that they can seem intensely private, they are frequently shared with and experienced through our interactions with others. An emphasis on 'emotions' is then important because it situates ecological concerns in what Hetherington (1998, expanding on Williams, 1965: 64) calls the 'structures of feeling' that characterise different individuals, social groups and life-worlds. Structures of feeling might be thought of in terms of shared patterns of overlapping emotional responses that inform the practical cultural, aesthetic and ethical consciousness of certain groups in ways that facilitate common understandings between those groups' members. In this sense a 'structure of feeling' might be thought of as the affectual aspect of what Wittgenstein (1988) would term a 'form of life'. What I've termed an affective-expressive ethics would argue that it is here, rather than in the more rarefied speculations of abstract reasoning, obtuse calculations of utility, or the supposedly value-free descriptions offered by the 'natural' sciences, that we might begin to investigate the shifting grounds of an environmental ethics.

And these grounds certainly are constantly shifting. Structures of feeling do change over time and between places. In a paper first presented in 1931 the historian G. M. Trevelyan (1946) pointed out that our ideas of natural beauty, and our evaluations of the natural environment's worth, underwent a paradigm shift during the eighteenth century. To many early travellers in the Scottish

Highlands or the Alps these mountains were ugly blots on the landscape, signs of poverty and of a lack of civilisation. Dr. Johnson wrote of Scotland that ‘an eye accustomed to flowery pastures and waving harvests is astonished by the wide extent of this hopeless sterility’ (Johnson in Thomas, 1984). The ideal ‘mountain’ scenery for Mr. Burt in his *Letters from the Highlands of Scotland* written in 1725–7 took the form of the poplars and verdant sheep-grazed turf of Richmond Hill which he contrasted favourably with Scotland’s ‘monstrous excrescencies’ (Burt in Trevelyan, 1946). But, as many have since noted (see for example Coates, 1998), within a very few generations all this was to change dramatically, a change that was given expression amongst other places in the poetry of the Romantics.¹

Raymond Williams (who interestingly does not refer to Trevelyan’s earlier essay), argues that the ‘active sympathy’ with nature of Romantic poets like Wordsworth constitutes a ‘real change of mind, the new consciousness if only in a minority’ (Williams, 1985: 127). This new sensibility regarded nature as ‘a principle of creation, of which the creative mind is a part, and from which we may learn the truth of our own sympathetic nature’. This contrasted (though it sometimes coexisted alongside) with dominant ideas of nature as ‘a principle of order, of which the ordering mind is part, and which human activity by regulating principles, may then rearrange and control’ (p. 127).

This tension between these affectual (emotional and expressive) and formal (rationally ordered) positions still persists. From the latter position admitting the emotions as a ground for environmental ethics threatens to introduce temporal and geographic instability into any ordered notion of an ethos or a polity. This is not just because the structures of feeling themselves are subject to radical change across time and space but also because the very idea of active and creative sympathy seldom sits easily with the idea of a stable intellectual order accessible by reason alone. After all, the rationalist will argue, if we want an argument for preserving nature with more than contemporary relevance don’t we need insulate it (and nature) against further unpredictable changes in these structures of feeling? Don’t we need to inoculate ethics and the environment against the possible ravages of an ‘emotional relativism’ that might see society return to something like Johnson and Burt’s position?

Many ethicists and environmentalists thus seek the supposed stability that the application of a ‘value-free’ rationality offers precisely because it promises to anchor ethics within the timeless natural ‘order of things’. If their ethical theories can somehow mirror and capture the underlying and unchanging order of the world then they might develop a universal moral axiology², a set of features, tests or methods, which might establish an indisputable hierarchy of moral considerability. To this end ‘sciences’ from psychology to socio-biology, evolution to ecology, are deployed with varying degrees of subtlety to bolster particular conceptions of our proper ethical relations to the environment (e.g. Mathews, 1991: 129; Westra, 1998). The problem is, of course, that if rational-

ity and scientific 'facts' are genuinely value-free then they can tell us nothing about what we *should* feel or how ethical values should be distributed. And if, as Taylor argues, our affections are irrelevant and yet sciences like ecology are also incapable of judging whether 'a way of looking at and valuing other creatures is inappropriate, wrong, or undesirable' (Taylor, 1986: 52) then what basis are we left with for making ethical judgements?

This is certainly not to argue that sciences are actually value-free, they clearly aren't (see for example, Kuhn, 1975; Shapin, 1994), nor that they are ethically irrelevant.³ Knowledge of ecology, for example, can certainly change the way we feel about the world. It can in Brennan's (1988:135) term effect an 'extension of awareness' in the sense that it enables us to make connections between values we already hold and things that might otherwise have escaped our attention. But we have to recognise that no matter how rational or scientific the basis for such extensions might purport to be, in the last instance, these values are attributed with reference to already existing, and culturally variable, structures of feeling. Whatever 'rational' criterion may be chosen as the basis for extending ethical considerations has, somewhere down the line, to evince and make manifest its connections with(in) these shared patterns of feelings. Only in this way can an ethical argument hope to have any meaningful resonance with its audience. We might say, in Wittgensteinian terms, that structures of feeling are that *vital* part of the context, the 'form of life', within which such ethical arguments become meaningful.

There are thus good reasons for thinking that feelings are vital components of developing and expressing a genuinely ethical relation to others. First, feelings are not just events that arbitrarily spring from within, and are the sole property of, the ethical subject. They are elicited and experienced within the pattern of our whole lives, changing and developing in response to external circumstances and trends. They are, as Gadamer argues, an integral part of our ethical 'formation' or acculturation (*Bildung*), an acculturation that can spring only from the soil of 'traditions' already in place. Our sensibility and sensitivity to others, our feeling for their needs, their ability to stir emotions in us, to elicit a response, is not free-floating but dependent upon the cultural and natural environments, the forms of life, we have been party to. (See also Nussbaum's remarks on the 'history' and 'cultural sources' of emotions above.) This sensibility, developed in relation to others and through reflexive action on ourselves, might also be termed a *sensus communis* (Shaftesbury, 1999). Gadamer, (2000) who is largely interested only in social influences, refers to these traditions which form the basis for all interpretative understanding as our 'effective human historicity' (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*). But, as I have argued elsewhere, (Smith, 2005) an environmental ethics must go beyond the anthropocentric horizons of Gadamer's own hermeneutics. Interpreting the needs of non-human others does not just depend upon a consciousness arising from within a cultural tradition,

but on developing a conscience arising within what we might call an 'affective natural historicity'.

Feelings then are a necessary accompaniment to an ethical interpretation of any given situation. For a circumstance to convey itself to us in a manner that is ethically meaningful it has to 'resonate' with already existing structures of feeling and with our moral sensibility. Wittgenstein describes the similar circumstances in which a work of art might convey a 'felt expression. And you could say that in so far as people understand it, they "resonate" in harmony with it. And [just as] you might say the work of art does not convey *something else*, just itself (Wittgenstein, 1980: 58e)' so too, we might say, the object of our ethical attention conveys or expresses something of itself to us. These feelings thus precede and accompany our ethical apprehension, our understanding of something as a morally considerable other, in a way that the relatively emotionless language of science and/or rationalistic ethics rarely can. In terms of Gadamer's hermeneutics (2000) we might argue that a structure of feeling, expressed as an ethical sensibility, is an inescapable part of the 'horizon' of our ethical understandings.

This, as we shall see, has important implications when it comes to representing the other in moral and political discourse and practice. It also links us to another reason why feelings matter, namely, even the most rationalistic and naturalistic theories have, at some point, to call upon actually existing (and socially and temporarily variable) patterns of feelings to give their theories ethical meaning. Even the driest rationalism must connect to a structure of feeling of some kind to provide the motivation for moral action and the interpretative framework for ethical understanding.

This point might again be made in a Wittgensteinian frame. Wittgenstein argues that understanding only comes from being able to use a concept within a particular kind of language-game, or relate it to something within a particular form of life. We might say that the 'life', that is, the meaningful vitality, of every sign, is the role it plays in a particular language-game. But language-games that emphasise formal rationality do so precisely by cutting their conceptual schemes off from those structures of feeling that might give ethical 'life' to the things of which they speak. In attempting to be value-neutral they cannot help but represent others conceptually as abstract objects, entities stripped of direct moral relevance. The thing thus represented is portrayed as ethically 'life-less', ripped from any context that might connect us to any emotional resonance, any affectual meaning. In other words, to the extent that it succeeds in being value-free, the language of formal ethics remains 'heartless' and its representations remain partial since the understanding it offers is of a world objectified and to treat something as a object is precisely not to treat it ethically.

As Max Weber (1964) notes in his analysis of formal rationality as the governing principle within modern society, it offers little space for the development of an individual or communal ethical sensibility. In place of 'the exercise of

personal ability as an “art” ... discipline substitutes habituation to routinized skill’ (p. 254). The heartfelt experiences expressed through a moral sensibility are replaced by adherence to abstract principles and rules. ‘The rule and the rational estimation of “objective” purposes, as well as devotion to them, always exists as a norm of conduct’ (p. 220). But ironically this devotion to principles and rules also requires, at some level, a form of habituation, a moral sensibility that is not directed towards the other directly but to adherence to abstract principles. There are then moral values associated with formal-rationality but they are those associated with discipline, with acting in conformity to and being ordered by an abstract ‘logos’. In so far as discipline appeals to firm motives of an ‘ethical’ character, it pre-supposes a ‘sense of duty’ and ‘conscientiousness’ (p. 254).

Even these most formal ethics are then linked to a structure of feeling of some kind. But that structure is much reduced, it evokes only the Kantian coldness of having a *sense* of being in conformity to the dictates of reason. Formal-rational approaches are thus associated with a certain ‘insularity’. They presuppose a *desire* to conform to reason’s ‘representations’ to us, a strange desire that requires the excision of all other emotions and all connections with any structure of feeling that might connect us directly to the wider non-cognitive world. What is more dangerous still is that in inculcating a sense of duty (which is by no means universal) the original Kantian insistence on individual rational autonomy, on at least being able to think things through for oneself, easily becomes subservient to mere obedience. Following the dictates of reason easily slips into being dictated to by whatever laws a particular society deems rational. This is why Max Scheler asked whether every ‘formalistic and rationalistic ethics of law does not also *degrade* the person ... by virtue of its subordination of the person to an impersonal *nomos* under whose domination he can become a person only through obedience’ (Scheler in Joas, 2000: 96).

The rationalistic methodology of some forms of environmental ethics is dependent upon and promotes a *distancing effect*. It separates reason and emotion in the sense that it creates a chasm between a partial and abstract representation of that to be valued and the structures of feeling within which natural beings might actually become ethically meaningful to us. Far from showing us things *as they really are* rationalistic ethics present us with an emotionally, and hence ethically, meaningless world. At best they emphasise only those aspects of things that facilitate formal and impersonal relations to others and at worst encourage entirely instrumental relations. The former may be acceptable if one holds an entirely formal view of ethics but, somewhere down the line, even the most formal ethics has to give meaning to ethical practices through the personal, historical and geographically mediated experiences of actual *feelings* for an-other.

From an affective–expressive position ethics is not just a matter of logic, of ordering the world but of being affected by it. If someone said ‘I feel nothing for that creature but I will care for it’ we might justifiably think they had misunderstood the meaning of ‘care’. We need to feel *close* to something in

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order to understand the nature of an ethical relation and our ethical relations to nature (Jodalen and Vetlesen, 1997).⁴ This kind of closeness can rarely be achieved through purely conceptual representation since it requires the evocation of feelings. “‘When we mean something, it’s like going up to someone, it’s not having a dead picture (of any kind),’” We go up to the thing we mean’ (Wittgenstein, 1981 no. 455). And, where ethics is concerned, this means, even if only indirectly, being emotionally involved with it. It requires, in Williams’s terms, that ‘active sympathy’ of which we might say the principle of formal ethics is in denial.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS AND AFFECTIVE EXPRESSION

Weber’s characterisation of formal rationality, and this paper’s own subsequent characterisation of formal–rational and affective–expressive ethics, are, to use his own term, ‘ideal types’. That is, they do not exist in their pure form as timeless polar opposites but are best understood as heuristic constructs derived from experience and imagination which might serve as a prospective, but constantly reinterpreted, typology to aid understanding. These types are, Weber says ‘constructed by searching for the basis of *legitimacy*, which the ruling power claims’ (Weber, 1964: 294).

The rational ordering of human societies has taken many forms – though each, it could be argued, might be linked to specific notions of citizenship that are more or less exclusive, as for example in revolutionary France or ancient Athens where the citizen was exclusively male. The classical description of Plato’s *Politeia* offers us, as Gadamer argues, an ‘ideal type’ of the rational ordering of an ethos. ‘*The Republic*’ is the earliest comprehensive example of a concern with ‘the problem of good and its concretisation in an ideal city. Yet one must recognise that the ethos of Plato’s *Politeia* has a utopian dimension. This ethos appears ... in such a way that everything there is regulated. There it is nearly impossible to do anything that is evil or abnormal’ (Gadamer, 2000: 48). For Plato, emotion was, as we might expect, something to be controlled and an ethos something to be rationally discovered. The appropriate “‘sentiments’ are defined by the transcendent object [...] the Good’ and ‘we can attain a description of this object independent our feelings’ (Taylor, 1996: 372–3). But this totalitarian approach is, of course, only one possible model of a rationally ordered polity.

Weber famously characterises modern societies as dominated by formal rationality in the guise of a legal-rational authority. ‘That is, the legitimacy of the power-holder to give commands rests upon rules that are rationally established by enactment, by agreement, or by imposition. The legitimacy for establishing these rules rests, in turn, upon a rationally enacted or interpreted ‘constitution’. Orders are given in the name of the impersonal norm ...’ (Weber, 1964: 294)

invariably associated with 'bureaucratic' forms of governance. Bureaucracy is the political embodiment and administrative form taken by the principle of formal rationality in modern society. In 'principle a system of rationally debatable 'reasons' stands behind every act of bureaucratic administration' (p. 220) and its authority and legitimacy lie precisely in its claim to order society according to neutral, value-free, and rational means. 'Discipline in general, like its most rational offspring, bureaucracy, is impersonal. Unfailingly neutral, it places itself at the disposal of every power' (p. 254). However, as Weber also notes, bureaucracy, like formal reason, is far from being neutral since the desires that characterise adherence to formal rationality are, as argued above, 'intrinsically alien and opposed' to affective and traditional influences upon ethics. Weber, thus contrasts this formal-rational order with traditionally oriented societies arguing that we face a political 'conflict between discipline and individual charisma' (Weber, 1964: 255) one that closely parallels and influences the rational formal and affective-expressive divide in ethics.⁵

"Equality before the law" and the demand for legal guarantees against arbitrariness demand a formal and rational "objectivity" of administration, as opposed to the personally free discretion' (p. 229) associated with traditional and affective forms of authority. But such equality is often *only* formal rather than substantive and it does not, as Weber recognises, serve the 'propertyless masses' (p. 221) excluded from full citizenry. For this reason the rule of law is always open to ethical challenge by or on behalf of those regarded as different. Where there are questions of '*substantive* justice oriented toward some concrete instance or person [...and we might add non-person] such an "ethos" will unavoidably collide with the formalism and the rule-bound and cool "matter-of-factness" of bureaucratic administration. For this reason, the ethos must emotionally reject what reason demands' (p. 220-1).

The emergence of affectual and expressive strands of environmental ethics threatens modern society's rationalistic status quo, since they challenge both the remit of current 'rules' that exclude the non-human from the ethos of the contemporary polity *and* the very legitimacy of an ethics based on formal rationality. In other words, they might be said to make manifest a *crisis of environmental representation*. The nature of this crisis is such that the dominant rationalistic notions of *political* representation are challenged on the basis that we can (and indeed must) speak of our feelings for non-human nature. Where the rationalistic approach argues that we (humans) are *constitutionally* (in both senses) unable to ethically represent natural others except through the use of a value-free rationality, an environmental expressivism recognises the *constitutive* role of feelings in any ethical attempt to respond to others' needs. From this expressivist position our supposed inability to adequately 'represent' others within affectual discourses and political practices is not a fact of nature but rests on the acceptance of ideological constraints about the nature and the failure to take account of the existence of alternative structures of feeling.

Ethical expressivism struggles to reassert itself within the rationalistic polity as a radical rupture with the given order, the *nomos*. This ‘expressivist turn’ as Charles Taylor (1996) refers to it, is both a philosophical and a political movement that takes many forms, some more radical than others, within, for example, Romanticism, expressivist art and environmental ethics (Raabe, 1974). It challenges the principle of a universal ‘natural’ order discovered and represented by reason, highlighting instead the individual development of an affectual sensibility that encourages receptiveness to nature’s own expressions. In Taylor’s (pp. 369–70) words expressivism involves ‘an inner impulse or conviction which tells us of the importance of our own natural fulfilment and of solidarity with our fellow creatures in theirs. This is the voice of nature within us.’

From this perspective emotions are not a hindrance but a vital aid to understanding our ethical relations to others, to interpreting what nature expresses to us. ‘The medium is here integral to the message: those that haven’t grasped the significance of things inwardly, those that have only a cold external understanding of the world as providential, haven’t really got the point at all. [...] Nature stands as a reservoir [...] In the stance of disengagement, we are out of phase with it, cut off from it, we cannot recover contact with it’ (p. 370). By contrast the ‘instrumental stance involves our objectifying nature ... we see it as a neutral order of things ... [philosophical] [n]aturalism neutralises nature, both without us and in ourselves’ (p. 383). ‘[T]aking up an instrumental stance is a denial of this need for attunement’ (p. 384), for resonance, as, I have argued is the recourse to formal ethics.

This is not to say that nature is without ‘order’ but that those things that are ethically significant are not law-given and fixed. In this sense nature is a flow within which we swim, that envelops us, attracts or repels us, holds us up or pulls us under. ‘To be in tune with nature is to experience these desires as rich, as full, as significant – to respond to the current of life in nature. It really is a matter of having certain sentiments as well as aiming at or doing certain things’ (p. 372). This sensibility, this feeling for and sensitivity toward the expressions of natural others lies at the heart of (an environmental) ethics. As Taylor notes, we may have largely lost the Romantic idea of nature as a ‘current of life’, yet ‘the understanding of nature as a source still survives’ in the battle that still ‘rages today in the controversies over ecological politics’ (p. 384).

This sensibility is something we each need to develop for ourselves, not something that can be presented to us, or represented for us, in an entirely disembodied and dis-interested rationality. As Taylor argues, expressivism is ‘the basis for a new and fuller individuation’ that emphasises the importance of difference and context. It recognises that ‘each one of us has an original path which we ought to tread’ (p. 375). This is not egoism, but self-*articulation* (in the sense of both linking-with and voicing) of our consciousness and conscience. An understanding of our own difference from others also becomes the interpretative ground for an ethics, a concern for others, which is, of course,

the key point of many non-rationalistic ethical theories like those of Levinas (1991) and Irigaray (1993). Indeed 'the idea of nature as an intrinsic source goes along with an expressive view of human life' (Taylor, 1996: 374). How then, in contrast to representational means, is this expressivist ethos to be translated into a polity?

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As Weber (1964: 224) argues, 'mass democracy in contrast to the democratic self-government of small homogeneous units' is the contemporary form most closely associated with rationalisation and the bureaucratic organisation accompanying it. In other words, *representational*, rather than direct or expressive, democracy is associated with a rationally ordered ethos. Within representational democracy the predominant view of public being is of a citizenry composed of active individual participants who represent their own individual interests in the ordering of city-life. Yet these rationally motivated bourgeois subjects are allowed to express themselves only insofar as such expression is in accordance with the law or they can prevail upon their representatives through 'public opinion'. '[O]ne must always remember', says Weber, 'that the term "democratization" can be misleading. The *demos* itself, in the sense of an inarticulate mass never "governs" larger associations; rather it is governed' (p. 225). 'The most decisive thing here – indeed it is rather exclusively so – is the *levelling of the governed* in opposition to the ruling and bureaucratically articulated group, which in its turn may occupy a quite autocratic position, both in fact and in form' (p. 226).

If this 'levelling' and subservience under the law is the fate of the citizenry then those that are excluded from the *polis* altogether, as women and slaves were in ancient Athens and nature is today, are in a far worse position. Wherever possible the controlling bureaucratically articulated group seeks to repress the free expression of such constituents. Where their presence is expressed forcefully enough they may eventually and reluctantly be brought within the body politic by an extension of the rule-governed notion of moral citizenry or through an official recognition of citizens' duties towards them. This is, in effect, the political purpose served by rationalistic forms of environmental ethics like Paul Taylor's. This approach seeks to minimise potential disruption to the status quo by allowing others some form of representation that can still be deemed rationally justified within the existing order. This rational formalism diffuses the potentially disruptive influence of the 'other' by effectively separating its theoretical representation from any structure of feeling associated with it, re-embedding it instead within the relatively emotionless structure of the bureaucratic order.

There are of course expressive alternatives to this rational-formal political ethos, different models of political participation and of political being, some of which are closely associated with a more radical environmentalism. For exam-

ple Hetherington (1998) documents the 'expressive identities' associated with the multiplicity of what might loosely be termed 'alternative' life-style choices on the margins of modern consumer culture including those associated with New Age religions, complementary medicine, new social movements and so on. Perhaps these disparate groups do not quite have the unity of purpose to be termed a 'counter culture' (Roszak, 1970) but recurrent themes emerge in their notions of political agency. For example, they tend to take seriously the idea that the personal is political, that ethical responsibility for others is not something that can be left to bureaucracies. They are much more closely and explicitly aligned to the affectual in terms of their understanding of personal identities and ethical identification with others. 'The relationship between identity and identification is principally connoted by its affectual character' (Hetherington, 1998: 16). And, as Charles Taylor has argued concerning the expressivist turn, they call upon structures of feeling that are 'often deeply romantic in their quest for authenticity in experiences, relationships and identity' (p. 47).

As Hetherington (p. 37) explains, 'expressive identities' present a challenge to 'powerful administrative systems morally, but also provide a form of affectual solidarity which allows – through the creation of distinct lifestyles, shared symbols and solidarity – a process of identity formation that seeks to develop a process of difference and resistance through expressive means and forms of communication. It is not just the rationality of administrative systems, therefore, that is opposed by social movements, but also the supposedly inauthentic, disenchanted instrumentality of interpersonal relations embedded in a routinised, often unjust, everyday life.'

Perhaps then we need to posit an alternative to the very idea of the citizen more in keeping with an expressive politics and with environmental influences. Here the term *denizen* seems at least initially appropriate. A denizen, as the name suggests, occupies a more ambiguous place than the citizen does. Her being is not articulated through a formal order, it is not rule governed but expressive of a more radical form of life. She is one who 'comes from within' a place or has become 'naturalised' (one might also say acculturated) to a place over time. Although they may be widely travelled, denizens are at home in their medium, dwellers within the often anarchic flows of an informal environment of which they have become an integral and active part, as whales in the ocean. The relationship between denizens is not then one of a formal rule-bound equality imposed by external authority, it is not limited to a relation of similarity, but on an understanding and recognition of the importance of context and difference (Smith, 2001).

Denizens might be beings of all kinds, not just human beings. They are part of an inter-specific 'ecological community' (Gottlieb, 1997). The ethical relations that link them together take the form of what Arne Naess (1979) refers to as a *modus vivendi*, a way of living that requires an understanding, a feeling for one's place within and in relation to others (which was also the purpose of

Shaftesbury's idea of the *sensus communis*). All understanding is ultimately, as Gadamer (1998: 269) says, 'knowing one's way around'. This is not to argue that all beings have the 'capacity' to form ethical relations with others but does recognise that all things are potentially capable of expressing themselves in ways that allow something of their being to be understood (Smith, 2002). An ethical community is not one of formal equality (as some have chosen to interpret Naess) nor even of strict reciprocity. As Marx argued, the needs and abilities of community members are not necessarily congruent. The ethical community is one where we listen and attend to the free expression of morally considerable others. 'Belonging together also means being able to listen to one another' (Gadamer in Fiumara, 2001).

Just who or what is felt to be morally considerable is, as I have argued, not dependent upon abstract reason but, in the last instance, on those structures of feeling within which we develop and which we can also choose to belong to by opening ourselves to their message. The ethical understanding associated with expressive identities and environmental ethics thus requires a close connection with and acculturation through structures of feeling that repudiate instrumental and objectifying approaches. An expressive environmental ethics is a discourse that attempts to express a particular *understanding* of the needs of non-human others on the basis of affectually mediated *interpretations*. It is not an exercise in formal reasoning but an expression of a 'way of life' (Hadot, 1995). While theoretical reflection certainly plays a part in this way of life, and, like the natural sciences, may on occasion help extend our ethical awareness, the meaning and vitality of its arguments have to be heartfelt; we must feel that they *come close* to expressing our feelings. The expressive relation to the affectual is thus one of symbiosis rather than that of denial and parasitism characterising formal rationality.

The denizen then has an alternative mode of political being, an alternative *Res publica*. The 'collective, shared lifeworld that is denied expressive outlets within the institutions of modern society, floods out through the sociality of everyday life in the combination of ethical and aesthetic forms of communication' (Hetherington, 1998: 64). Here then we return to the earlier definition of environmental ethics as an attempt to express our feelings for the natural world in a way that speaks for that world's conservation.

NOTES

¹ Of course such opinions may reflect changes in the structure of feeling of an educated social class who could afford to travel and affectual relationships within localities may well have been more stable over time

² For a critique of this axiological approach see Smith, Mick (2001).

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³ Of course, science is not actually free from ethical presuppositions, it presupposes for example that ‘what is yielded by scientific work is important in the sense that it is ‘worth being known’. In this [say’s Weber], obviously, are contained all our problems. For this presupposition cannot be proved by scientific means. It can only be *interpreted* with reference to its ultimate meaning, which we must reject or accept according to our ultimate position towards life’ (Weber, 1964: 143). In other words, once again, even the practice of science must somewhere refer back to structures of feeling.

⁴ Which is certainly not to say that the relation need be one of *comfortable* closeness (Jodalen and Vetlesen, 1997).

⁵ Although I would not want to associate the affectual with charismatic authority as Weber does.

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