

Individual, Community and Entirety

Faber, M., Frick, M., Zahrnt, D. (2019) MINE Website, Individual, Community and Entirety, accessed on 20 January 2019, www.nature-economy.com

Abstract

The interests of human beings have been considered in different reflections throughout the history of humankind. Philosophers, theologians, political economists and famous literary writers have examined the different interests, like Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, Alasdair MacIntyre and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, to name a few.

The challenge of this element is to develop a framework which focuses on three interests of a human being: interest (i) in the individual, i.e. in him or herself, (ii) in society and (iii) in entirety. While Mainstream Economics focuses mainly on the individual, Ecological Economics is concerned with all three interests. To begin with, note the behaviour of living beings' issues from their needs. In contrast to non-human beings, human beings can and do reflect on their needs. This opens up alternatives, e.g. to postpone the satisfaction of certain needs in favour of other needs. Reflection that leads to a decision operates within the sphere of rationality, a sphere different from that of needs. This explains the observation that the development and behaviour of human individuals is far less predictable than the development of non-human beings.

In contrast to Mainstream Economics which focuses on needs and preferences, our standard of choice in this element focuses on the term *interest*. Interest is linked to needs, but it is separated by reflection, and thus human beings gain distance to move beyond what they directly perceive. The concept of interest, contrary to that of needs, is orientated toward longer periods of time. This element opens new perspectives for long-term environmental research, in particular concerning sustainability. Our practical examples show how difficult it is to deal adequately with interests. This is particularly true for interest in entirety.

Related elements: TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NATURE, BASICS OF LIFE; HOMO OECONOMICUS & HOMO POLITICUS; IGNORANCE; SUSTAINABILITY & JUSTICE; POWER OF JUDGEMENT; RESPONSIBILITY; ABSOLUTE & RELATIVE SCARCITY

1. History

What is referred to in this element as the *interests* of human beings has been considered in different forms of reflection throughout the history of mankind. Philosophers, theologians, political economists have examined the different interests as well as famous writers of literature. We will consider these different approaches, thus enabling the reader to obtain different points of view to understand how human beings manage to make a decision based on reflection and ultimately translate this choice into action. This is of particular importance for environmental problems since they are often characterised by the fact that very different kinds of interests make their solutions so difficult, if not impossible [see concepts SUSTAINABILITY & JUSTICE; HOMO OECONOMICUS & HOMO POLITICUS; POWER OF JUDGEMENT; RESPONSIBILITY]. Philosophers have widely discussed the different interests and their consequences for the life of human beings.

Self-interest in philosophy

Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) was the first to formulate the self-interest of human beings, which later led to the concept of homo oeconomicus that still dominates Mainstream Economics [for more information see Section 3.1 below and HOMO OECONOMICUS & HOMO POLITICUS].

Philosophy's interest in community

“This interest in humanity lies at the foundation of all the great ethical designs of the previous centuries. Thus, Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) formulated the following categorical ‘the interest in Community’ and especially ‘the interest in the State’ into his famous categorical (i.e. absolute and without exception) imperative: ‘Act so that you treat humanity, whether in our own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only’ (Kant 1785/1990: 46). This demands relinquishing the separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’. From this perspective of humanity, all others are no longer others, but are included in ‘we humans’.

One particular significance of the interest in humanity for solving environmental problems lies in the fact that, as Hans Jonas (1903 – 1993) demonstrated, no concept of environmental education can be formulated without including an interest in the long-term survival of humanity. Accordingly, Jonas (1979/1984: 36, German edition) formulates the following categorical imperative: ‘Act in such a way that the consequences of your actions are compatible with the permanence of true human life on Earth’. In other words, this

interest includes the dimension of sustainability” (Faber and Manstetten: 2010: 149) [SUSTAINABILITY & JUSTICE; RESPONSIBILITY].

Alasdair MacIntyre (*1929) showed in his book (1999) that a “human being is not only an independent individual, but to an equal extent (if not originally) a creature that is dependent on other creatures; a creature which could hardly survive for a large part of its life without the attention and care of other human beings” (Faber and Manstetten 2010: 146) and therefore is necessarily interested in the community that surrounds him or her.

Interests in literature

As in philosophy, different writers of classic literature dedicated parts of their works to representing and dealing with different kind interests that determine people’s behavior. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 – 1832) reflected the self-interest of human beings in his famous drama ‘Faust’: “Thus I reel from desire to fulfilment, and in fulfilment languish for desire” (Goethe 1976, Faust I, Verses 3249 f.).

Another German poet and writer, Novalis (1772 – 1801), refers to the interest in the entirety and the interdependence of human beings and nature when he writes: “Does the cliff not become a unique [you], whenever I speak to it? And what am I but the stream when I look sadly down into its waters and lose myself in its flow?” (Novalis 1949: 89). Similar motives can be discovered in the work *The Archipelago* by Friedrich Hölderlin (1770 – 1842) (Faber and Manstetten 2010: 82-84, 153; see also Becker and Manstetten 2004).

Interests in religion

Not only great minds in philosophy and literature have reflected on interests but also religiously orientated authors, as for example John of the Cross (Juan de la Cruz, 1542 – 1591), “one of the great Christian mystics, writes in his book *Ascent of Mount Carmel*: ‘If you cling to anything, you refrain from casting yourself into the entirety. For to come wholly to the entirety, you must let go of yourself completely. And when you reach the point of holding the entirety, then hold it without desires’ (Juan de la Cruz 1981: 82, our translation). For John of the Cross, a properly understood interest in the entirety is a continual process of opening oneself up and of letting go. It is expressed when human beings do not cling to their own needs and interests, nor allow themselves to be directed by the particular demands of their own community, but rather develop their listening and hearing potential beyond all that seeks to lay claim to them” (Faber and Manstetten 2010: 152).

The three interests in the work of Adam Smith

Adam Smith (1723 – 1790) is generally accepted as the founder of Economics in general and Mainstream Economics in particular. He dealt at length with all three interests in his work, mainly in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. To illustrate this, we quote him: “How selfish soever [sic] man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it” (Smith 1759/1776: 9).

For a comprehensive analysis of Smith’s work in general, see Hottinger (1998), and for his view on the three interests in particular, see Manstetten, Hottinger and Faber (1998). It becomes evident that in Smith’s view all three interests are of relevance, in particular self-interest and interest in the community; but interest in the entirety is not to be neglected.

2. Theory

In this Chapter we deal with self-Interest (Section 3.1), interest in the community (Section 3.2) and interest in the entirety (in Section 3.3). Each time we shall first define the concept and thereafter explain its importance for the understanding of human behavior and decision making in general and concerning environmental problems in particular.

We shall make use of our teleological approach which we introduced in TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NATURE, which has also been employed in BASICS OF LIFE. It will emerge that the three interests can be directly related to the three tele in the following way :

- self-interest corresponds to the 1st telos, self-preservation,
- interest in community corresponds to the 2nd telos, self-replication and self-renewal
- interest in entirety corresponds to the 3rd telos, services to others.

2.1 Self-interest

Self-interest and the first telos

“The most natural form of interest appears to be interest in the development of one’s own self: self-interest. Although it appears to be the conscious form of human self-preservation

and self-interest, it is not entirely congruent to the first telos [TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NATURE, Chapter 2, Section 2.1]. An animal follows its first telos by largely appearing to be one with its particular urge. An animal does not, however, have an interest in the development of its self – for this would mean that it weighs up alternative possibilities of self-development. It would be better to say that the animal *is* the development of its self. Apart from highly developed animals such as apes, elephants, dolphins and perhaps dogs and wolves etc., it seems rather pointless to ascribe interests to animals. As the term *interest* includes the possibility of distancing oneself from a state of being in the pure present and turning towards alternative actions beyond the present, it cannot be applied to animals as we experience them.

Contrary to other living things, human beings place their first telos within the scope of their interest, thus making it self-interest. The term *self-interest* is a generic term for all those interests of a human being that refer to the preservation and development of his or her own person. Different and even mutually contradictory aspirations can enter into the self-interest of a human being. Drives from the physical realm – hunger, sexuality, weariness – accompanied by wishes and illusions from the realm of the imagination (see Faber and Manstetten 2010: 82-84, 153) are confronted within the scope of self-interest with a certain image that humans create of themselves and their lives. Self-interest provides practical and effective answers to the questions:

- Who am I in my individuality?
- Who do I wish to be as an individual human being distinct from other human beings?
- What is good for me in light of who I wish to be?

It is the answers to these questions which provide a measure for how human beings deal with their needs. However, it is at the same time possible that human beings are sometimes or often entirely unable to act according to this image of themselves.

Individual freedom and rational utility maximisation

- Does every human being always know what is truly in his or her interest?
- Are not some, or many, or perhaps even most people often mistaken about what is good for them?
- Do we ever really know who we truly are?
- If we do not know this, then what value does the image have that we form of ourselves and seek to communicate to others?

These questions, which almost every unprejudiced person occasionally asks him or herself, provoke counter-questions:

- How can we judge whether someone has defined their self-interest appropriately?
- For that matter, is anyone other than myself justified in identifying what my ‘true interests’ are or should be?

Throughout history, attempts have continually been made to force people into things ‘for their own good’. The powers that be – be they the representatives of a religious hierarchy or the functionaries of a unity party – like to view themselves as possessing the knowledge that knows what is good for people. Powers of this kind coerce all people within their sphere of influence to follow their ‘true’ self-interests as dictated to them, and whoever does not obey can be punished, even killed: These alleged true interests principally disregard individuality, the uniqueness of the particular person.

Against this background it is understandable that in Western liberal societies another path has been chosen. It is part of the foundations of these societies that every person receives the right to define and pursue their self-interests according to their own discretion as long as they do not come into conflict with the self-interests of others. This implies that every person is assumed to have a standard for measuring what is beneficial to him or herself and what is not. Hence it becomes impossible to commit a person to a standard which he or she has not made their own. Thus, humanity’s standard for the treatment of each other and nature must be developed out of the personal standard of individuals.

Self-interest in modern times

Today, self-interests are understood as the personal interests of free people. The stipulation that human beings must be allowed to freely decide to make interests (which represent the standard for their lives) their own was articulated particularly during the time of the Enlightenment of the 18th century and played an important role in the foundation of the United States of America and in the first French constitution after the revolution of 1789. Its principal content can be summarized as follows: Every individual is to be granted freedom and self-determination. Every individual should be able to lead a life according to his or her own goals. In the sense of the American Declaration of Independence of 1776, every individual is granted the right to the pursuit of happiness. Today, this European-American idea of individual freedom is asserting its rights globally – if not always successfully – as is demonstrated in the struggle for human rights, for instance.

Every interest that a human being makes his or her own can be viewed as a self-interest. In a more narrow and more common sense, however, the term *self-interest* comprises all

those interests of a human being that refer to one's own person. Everybody experiences themselves directly within the boundaries of their own body; they experience joy and pain individually; they know that everyone will die a personal death, and thus every human being is, as a person, something distinct and unique in regard to everything else. In its uniqueness the individual person cannot be represented by anyone else. However, linked to this uniqueness are aspirations and interests through which every human being wishes to preserve and develop his or herself as an independent, autonomously existing unit. Self-interest in this sense is familiar to all of us in our everyday experience.

The economic-scientific concept of self-interest

The economic-scientific concept of self-interest is derived from human self-interest, interpreted in this sense. This concept, however, determined by the strictures of science, is a reduction of the interest in one's own person. The human being is reduced to the figure of the 'egoistic, rational utility maximiser.' (Mueller 1995: 1ff). This means: Self-interest is understood in modern economic theory egoistically or, more precisely, egocentrically as the rational pursuit of the goal of the maximum need satisfaction of an individual [HOMO OECONOMICUS & HOMO POLITICUS].

Modern economic sciences often stipulate granting the alleged egoistic nature of human beings the widest possible space. This stipulation is a result of the fact that in mathematical models of economic processes (whose correspondence to reality is, however, a point of debate) (Manstetten 2000: Chapters 7 and 11-13) it can be shown that, when rational egoists strive for maximum need satisfaction, this can, under certain circumstances, result in a state of the entire economy which can be described from an economic perspective as optimal (e.g. Debreu 1959: Chapter 6).

Difference between economic optimality and what is normally regarded as happiness

This form of optimality is not to be confused with the following consideration: On the level of every-day understanding, the idea of maximal need satisfaction is nothing foreign to us: Non-satiation – that always wanting to have more (see Faber and Manstetten 2010: Chapter 11, 137-138)– continually tells us, 'more, more – and if not of this, then of that!' Indeed, it is conceivable that, driven by an always-wanting-more, we manage to employ our means of need satisfaction in such a way that (under the given circumstances) we actually achieve a maximum of satisfaction. Yet this maximum is relative – from another perspective it is always too little. Furthermore, we not infrequently experience that such need satisfaction is followed by the stale feeling, 'Actually, what I wanted was something completely different'. And we know that this is still not 'it'. Everything we attain shows us,

‘this is not what you seek’ – at least after a short moment of believing to have found it. If this feeling comes often, the result is a fundamental dissatisfaction; our forms of life become unstable. However, those who finally realise that all the means of need satisfaction ultimately cannot provide satisfaction may become haunted by the fear that, in the end, all of life could turn out to be a state of dissatisfaction. Such a fear can turn into panic – one can feel driven to devise (aided by one’s imagination) ever more extreme or exotic means to end the cycle of dissatisfaction. Yet it is this very search for ever new means that keeps the cycle going; this search is even the impetus of the cycle – for it is precisely the craving for maximal satisfaction that is principally insatiable (as none of the attained, relative maximums can be enough). If this fear becomes too great, a person might become incapable of experiencing satisfaction or fulfilment and hence can say with Faust, ‘Thus I reel from desire to fulfilment and in fulfilment languish for desire’ (Goethe 1976, Faust I, Verses 3249 f.).

Origin of the dynamics of modern society

As ever new things are required to sustain this structure, the fear and craving drives this cycle into dimensions of the illimitable. This is one of the sources of the momentum of the dynamics of our society which was called the ‘Faustian dynamics’ in Faber and Manstetten (2010, Chapter 7). The way of life resulting from this structure grants space to other people, under the weight of the severity of the law, but not to nature which has no law of its own to protect it. Nature is nothing more than a form of storage for the self-service of human beings, futilely pursuing the goal of maximal need satisfaction. Thus, the economic concept of self-interest in the sense of egoistic, rational utility maximisation is certainly appropriate for one side of our humanity. If, however, the human being were nothing more than this one side, our lives would be little more than the agony of choice: greed and agitation on the one side, exhaustion and listlessness on the other.

From self-interest to an interest in community

Even an egoistic person needs other people in order to successfully pursue his or her interests. This is expressed in the sphere of the economy: the area within which people lay claim to the services of other people by providing their own services for the use of others. The exchange, the basic form of all market relationships, is the particular way in which people extract the services required by themselves from the huge fund of humanity. Before people exchange, however, they must have distinguished between different spheres of interest and mutually recognised the established borders: Here the concept of private property emerges, the condition for the possibility of exchange. For this a legal system

must be implemented; laws must hold without their being subjected to the egoism of one individual. So even a society of egoists requires that human beings serve one another and that areas exist in which the egoism of the individual does not have the last word. For a sphere like the sphere of law to be established and preserved on a long-term basis, however, interpersonal communication is required – communication that cannot be characterised by egoistic self-interests seeking to take advantage of others.

In the context of the implementation of a legal system in a previously lawless situation, the dilemma of a purely egoistic, self-oriented self-interest lies in the fact that it must set itself aside (in some circumstances for a long period of time), in order for a state of law to emerge in which someone can pursue their goals without hindrance [HOMO OECOMICUS & HOMO POLITICUS]. The relevant period of time can be so long that the bearer of the interest may die before it ends. For a rational egoist it would therefore be best if everyone else were to engage themselves in the establishment of a system of communication and law – the result being, if everyone were to think alike, that no form of communication would occur (Faber, Petersen, Schiller 2002; see also Bernholz 1997). In reality, there is no necessity to derive those interests of human beings relating to the society from their egoistic strivings (a certain exception is that narrow view of the scientific perspective as it appears in the so-called ‘rational choice theories’ to which extensive parts of economics can be included). As Adam Smith also recognised, ‘being human’ includes having an interest in community, an interest which is no less elemental than the interest in one’s own person” (Faber and Manstetten 2010: 141-145, see also Smith’s citation at the end of Chapter 1 above).

2.2 Interest in community

Interest in community and the second telos of living things

“As was the case with the first telos, self-reproduction and self-renewal are not goals which living things *have* but rather are goals that they *are* through their activities – even human reproduction is often not a goal human beings have but one that they realise by being sexual creatures. When, on the other hand, the second telos becomes an interest by way of reflection, reproduction can be either consciously prevented or intentionally induced (thanks to advances in modern medicine). In the latter case, a human being makes the second telos the content of an interest; in the first she or he expressly rejects it on the basis of an interest.

However, an intensified interest in either reproduction or its prevention, although related to the second telos of living things, is often more a variant of self-interest than the human

version of the second telos. Although the second telos is the biological basis of human society, interest in community is far more than a simple representation of the second telos through reflection. This interest characterises human beings in a way for which few parallels exist in nonhuman nature. A human being is not only an independent individual, but to an equal extent (if not originally) a creature that is dependent on other creatures; a creature which could hardly survive for a large part of its life without the attention and care of other human beings (see e.g. MacIntyre 1999). The entirety 'becoming human' of a human being (if successful) never occurs entirely outside the relationship to other human beings. On the one hand, a human being experiences him or herself directly and initially within the borders of his or her own body. Yet what a human being in its earliest infancy first sees as an entirety is not itself but another human being – usually the mother. Generally, we only see the entirety of ourselves (and even then, not completely) in a mirror – reflected in a foreign medium. But even the inner picture of our own person we see as if in a mirror. From earliest infancy onwards, we see ourselves as we think we appear in the eyes of others: 'An eye cannot see itself,' says an old Buddhist proverb. We encounter many hidden aspects of ourselves only when we try to see ourselves as others do. On the other hand, in our consideration of imagined others, we sometimes lose all sense of ourselves. In any case, it could be said: our image of ourselves as it guides our self-interest always contains the view of others. And because it is difficult to develop a sense of self-worth without the recognition of those we live with, a dimension pointing beyond our own person is already within what we have defined as our personal self-interest.

Forms of communities

The need to participate in and be recognised by a world shared by all members of a society, places human beings within the scope of the second telos [TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NATURE, Chapter 2, Section 2.2]. Against these needs for participation and recognition, human beings' self-development (the first telos) drives them beyond their own self-interest fixed solely on their own person, towards an interest in some form of community. In one of its most original forms, this community is the family (in this form, the human beings' second telos is most closely related to that of other living things). A circle of friends, a gang, a firm, a party, a sports club, a religious community, the state, or even the entirety of humanity – all these are equally communities to which human interest extends. Those interests which relate to participation in a community are forms of the *interest in community*.

Realisation of the second telos of human beings

Such interests represent the manner in which human beings realise their second telos in their human way [TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NATURE]. Human self-reproduction and self-renewal does not consist solely of natural reproduction. For human beings, the passing on of life is the performance and passing on of what constitutes 'being human'. This includes exercising and passing on capabilities that allow human beings to be communal – in the philosophical tradition this is known as 'virtues'; these include the reception and further development of proven forms of life – traditionally, one speaks of manners and customs. This also includes the expansion and passing on of technical, practical and theoretical knowledge, as well as the practice and passing on of art, wisdom and religion (Sen 1985). These interests in the community extend to the entirety of social life in all its different cultural forms. In particular, almost everything that is part of education is only possible within the framework of an interest in community. Since it is only education that makes the development of a reasonable self-interest possible, the interest in community is a prerequisite for any such self-interest.

A concealed aspect of the second telos: service

The interest in community reveals an aspect which is concealed within self-interest: the aspect of service. Whoever actively serves the development of a community disregards (if he or she acts rightly) all those private needs that are not in harmony with the community. Interest in community is realised in a form of selflessness. This can be observed in team rowing, choral and orchestral music, and group dancing. The same is true whenever tasks and positions involving responsibility are taken up (for example in a firm or the government). Serving something other than one's own person is experienced by many people as an essential form of self-development. Conversely, not being needed by others, although one might have a great deal to offer them, is experienced as humiliating. As a result, many people think, 'If others can't use me, then I'm also worthless to myself' (Faber, Petersen 2008).

Not every case of selfless service within a community is praiseworthy

However, not every case of selfless service within a community is praiseworthy – in fact, in many cases it is not even to be condoned. A properly understood interest in community requires a critical examination of the quality of the community in question: National Socialism instigated the cult of the so-called 'national community', declaring selflessness and dedication to that national community the highest virtues. Selfless service within

groupings, such as the community propagated by National Socialism, is often reprehensible to the highest degree. This example shows how necessary the capability of developing an individual self-interest is for the education of humanity. A sensible interest in the community demands voluntary and conscious service within the community by self-confident individuals, not the dulled sacrifice of an as yet not properly developed personality.

Interest in the state

Two forms of interest in the community are of particular significance: interest in the state and interest in the entirety of humanity.

We differentiate the state from other communities for several reasons:

1. Today, it is almost impossible for a person not to be a member of a state. In the case of most other communities, one can choose whether or not one wishes to belong. One can join a sporting club and leave it again. If one relinquishes membership in a state, one must at the same time become a citizen of another state or enter into the highly problematic situation of statelessness.
2. The rules of a state have a different form of obligation for its citizens than the statutes of a club or association do for its members. The worst consequences of violating an association's statutes consist of being expelled and possibly losing the money one has invested. The consequences of violating regulations laid down by the state extend to a prison sentence of many years, in many states the result could even be death.
3. The state is that space in which interests principally gain an obligating legal or political form, making them effective in society. In a state governed by the democratic rule of law, a will can develop that is sustained by the majority of its citizens. On this basis such a will can attain the power of law.
4. This last aspect has special significance. The interest in the preservation and the development of the biocoenosis Earth [BASICS OF LIFE, Chapter 2, Section 3.1] does extend beyond the interest in the state, but it must be taken into consideration that such an interest remains a purely private affair if it is not given a political form in public. If the state is the space in which interests can become a will that is binding for all, it is only from this space that a nomos (Greek: law; normal rules and forms people take for granted) concerning nature can be fixed in binding rules. Strictly speaking, the state is the only institution that makes it possible to commit a community on a long-term basis to an interest in ecology with all the consequences this entails. The framework of the state is equally indispensable for those who criticize the ecological policies of current states. If they relinquish this

framework, then their criticism becomes either impotent or destructive [HOMO OECONOMICUS & HOMO POLITICUS].

The state and supranational obligations

During the 20th century, attempts to raise obligations of national state institutions to the level of supranational obligations multiplied. One need but think of the League of Nations after World War I and its successor the United Nations or the World Bank and the environmental conferences in Rio and Kyoto. Such attempts are of the greatest significance in light of the global nature of environmental problems.

Interest in humanity and ethics

‘The dignity of a human being is inviolate.’ The constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany begins with this sentence. The subsequent articles contain what is known as the fundamental rights – rights every human being possesses, solely for the reason that he or she is a human being. From the existence of *human rights*, of which many are globally acknowledged (at least in theory), flow obligations that are addressed to both states and individuals: When dealing with human individuals, all other individuals, but also and especially the state, must refrain from all actions that would hinder or make impossible the exercise of these rights.

The idea of human rights envisages all of humanity as one community – a community in which all other members mutually respect each other’s rights. This by no means requires that all members of the community like each other – they need not even know each other – yet there is a particular interest in one another that they must display: They must intercede for one another wherever they perceive a threat to human rights. If they fail to do this, it is only a question of time until the validity of human rights fails worldwide.

A precondition of the concept of all humans possessing certain rights is the idea of a humanity in which every human being has a part. Such an idea is by no means matter of course. In ancient Greece at the time of Aristotle (4th century BC), no concept of *humanity* existed in the sense of bearers of inviolate dignity– there were only Greeks and barbarians. Greek entitlements did not necessarily extend to barbarians. In the eyes of the Greeks, many barbarians were destined by nature to be slaves. Greeks, on the other hand, were by nature free citizens. In this respect the Greeks moved within customs of thought, of which remnants can still be observed in many people today: In most communities it is customary to feel and think in terms of a contrast between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It is this very contrast which allows a communal spirit to develop, that lends both support to the individual

members as well as stability to the community as an entirety. The price, however, is a devaluation or even contempt of the others, simply because they are 'different', because they don't belong to 'us'. In this sense communities are narrow-minded; they can adopt an aggressive and vicious character according to how they treat 'the others' who are not 'like us'.

This interest in humanity lies at the foundations of all the great ethical designs of the previous centuries. Thus, Kant formulated the following categorical (i.e. absolute and without exception) imperative: 'Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, never as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end' (Kant 1785/1990:46). This demands relinquishing the separation between 'us' and 'them'. From the perspective of humanity, all others are no longer others, but are included in 'we humans'.

Interest in the long-term survival of humanity and the idea of sustainability

One particular significance of the interest in humanity for environmental education lies in the fact that, as Hans Jonas (1979) demonstrated, no concept of environmental education can be formulated without including an interest in the long-term survival of humanity [SUSTAINABILITY & JUSTICE]. Accordingly, Jonas formulates the following categorical imperative: 'Act in such a way that the consequences of your actions are compatible with the permanence of true human life on Earth'. In other words, this interest includes the dimension of sustainability. The struggle for human rights and the commitment to a sustainable economy are two inseparable sides of an interest in humanity. Sustainability and Justice would be the two criteria by which the measure for all that lives in the sense of all humanity must be established. It is, however, a difficult task (one which can only be mentioned within the framework of this analysis) to concretise the contents of the two terms *sustainability* and *justice* to such an extent that concrete political recommendations could follow from them" (Faber and Manstetten 2010: 145-149, see also Jöst, Manstetten (1996); Faber, Manstetten, Proops (1996: 75 ff.); Manstetten (2001), Baumgärtner, Faber, Schiller (2006, Part 3, Klauer et al. 2017) and in particular SUSTAINABILITY & JUSTICE).

2.3 Interest in the entirety

Interest in the entirety and the idea of sustainability

“It is evident that living things generally do not have the goal of serving other living things. Nonetheless, the third telos is also part of their being. This is equally true for humans in that they, too, are living things: As natural funds, human beings provide services to the Earth as the sum of all biocoenoses [BASICS OF LIFE, Chapter 2, Section 2.1]. The human body is the living space of multiple micro-organisms which, symbiotically or parasitically, find their foundations of life here [TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NATURE]. Human respiration is part of the cycle of oxygen and carbon dioxide which encompasses all of life. Even human excretion enters the processes of nonhuman nature wherever it directly enters into the environment.

In its truest sense, however, human beings do not perform their third telos through their natural being, but rather provide services as cultural creatures, as founders and shapers of their own world within the framework of self-interest and interest in the community. However, the consequences of this world-founding and world-shaping do have the greatest effect on nonhuman nature as well. What kind of services are these? If we look back at primarily agrarian epochs, we see that humankind created artificial landscapes with meadows, fields, irrigation plants, terraced slopes and mountainsides, hedges, strips of bush and woodland, gardens, buildings, streets and walking paths. It is to human activity that we owe living spaces such as the Lüneburg Heath in Germany or the secondary forests of the low and high mountain ranges in Europe. Humankind has bred new species of animals and further developed older ones. Furthermore, humans have taken many plants and animals to places they never would have reached on their own. Thus, the conditions in biocoenoses have often been fundamentally changed [EVOLUTION; BASICS OF TIME.] Wild species have found new habitats within the cultivated areas of human beings – as invited guests (like the swallows in many parts of Europe) or as disreputable pests and vermin (like mice and cockroaches). Although original habitats such as forests and savannas were destroyed in the course of these processes and species were driven out or completely eradicated, new possibilities for life also developed at the same time. Hence, the diversity of animal and plant species was greater in agrarian Germany of the 18th century than ever before [IGNORANCE]. Today, however, it is difficult to shake the impression that (in regard to nature in its entirety) the scientific-technological-economic world of humanity represents a giant fund of disservices for many nonhuman life forms, and in certain respects even for humans themselves.

Human beings as the only creature not in harmony with nature

The human being is the only creature that can behave in such a way that its actions are not in harmony (see Faber and Manstetten 2010: 120-121 and Faber and Manstetten 2007) with the biocoenosis in which it lives: During the lifespan of human beings, the third telos [TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NATURE, Chapter 2, Section 2.3] is not an inescapable fate for them, even if they cannot escape suffering, sickness and, ultimately, death. As a perceptive, self-determined creature, a human being can enter into a free relationship with nature. Humans have the possibility of using their gifts to serve the life they find there. As Albert Schweitzer put it: to show reverence for life in attitude and action [RESPONSIBILITY]. Reverence for life requires freedom from the determinations of nature, for in nonhuman nature one can find few, if any indications that living things encounter the life of other living things with reverence (see Schweitzer 2000). On the other hand, the perception of nature and the freedom to creatively reshape it also enable human beings to treat nature, once it is subject to them, without any respect for the things that be and live, as mere material for their needs and interests. Such a disregard for nature is not only expressed in a way of life based on private self-interest or the interests of particular separate communities [HOMO OECONOMICUS & HOMO POLITICUS] – even an attitude which aims for sustainability [SUSTAINABILITY & JUSTICE] can fail to regard nature as the comprehensive House of all that Lives.

Even the core of the idea of sustainability contains an anthropocentric interest

Even the core of the idea of sustainability holds an anthropocentric interest referring solely to humankind (see Faber and Manstetten 2010: Chapter 3). Nature itself appears only insofar as it serves this interest. This in turn has implications for the way of life of a sustainable human world. If, for example, huge expanses of Germany were to be covered with wind turbines, or previously untouched valleys and glaciers in Switzerland were to be turned into giant catchments, both in the interests of creating energy, this could be in accordance with such a way of life. In the same way, one could approve of enormous genetic modifications to animals and plants if it were assured that the modifications would improve food provision and the health of future generations. Nature, accordingly, would be regarded '[...] primarily as an input-provider, and thus the ecosystem [...] as a subsection of the economy' (Nutzinger 1996: 187 f.; our translation). This does not speak against the pursuit of the idea of sustainability, but does demonstrate that it lacks an essential dimension.

Space for interest in the entirety

It is not easy to say what precisely an interest in the entirety or the whole is to mean. If it were an interest for the entirety, then this would mean that the bearer of this interest would not himself belong to the entirety. If, however, the interest in the entirety is to be formulated by a creature which is itself part of the entirety, one can ask: Is this interest identical to the interest of the entirety itself? If we answer this question in the affirmative, we seem to be designing a somewhat arrogant image of humankind: As human beings,

- do we know, *can* we know, what the entirety that we belong to is?
- How can we know what the interest is of the entirety to which human beings belong?
- What should the entirety be interested in apart from itself?
- How is it to differentiate within itself?
- What are the limits of its interest?
- Or is humanity not called upon, after all, to define the interest in the entirety (with all the possibilities of error)?

The order of humanity and order of the Earth

The fact that humankind as a population is part of the biocoenosis means that Earth is relevant for the order of humanity [TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NATURE]. If we limit what we regard as 'the entirety' to this biocoenosis, we can say that from the viewpoint of the interest in the entirety, the order of the Earth and the order of humanity should be one. However, this unity is no longer a 'natural' given (ever since human beings have stepped out of an unconscious state of being in regard to the third telos of living things). On the contrary, such unity must be in part discovered, in part invented. This discovering and inventing cannot be achieved by either science or the wisdom of everyday life (Faber and Manstetten 2010: Chapters 4 and 6), although both can contribute. It leads human beings into the dimension of the wisdom of the sage (Faber and Manstetten 2010: Chapter 5) – with all its associated problems. Just as the third telos of living things cannot simply be placed in sequence with the first and second tele, the interest in the entirety cannot be viewed simply as the next step in the progression that led from self-interest to an interest in the community.

Some indications as to how interest in the entirety can be meaningfully understood

Despite such difficulties, some indications can be made as to how an interest in the entirety can be meaningfully understood in such a way that it becomes significant for the order of the entirety Earth. Here it must be taken into consideration that human beings are a part of life which can only provide services within nature and for nature in their own particular way. A concept one occasionally encounters, namely that humans can best serve nature by removing themselves entirely from it, therefore makes no sense. Human beings cannot serve the biocoenosis Earth in any other way than by being wholly human.

If the human pursuit of happiness is in some way at work in all forms of interest, then this must be equally true for the interest in the entirety – perhaps even especially so, for whatever is ‘entirety’ lacks nothing; whatever is not entirety (is incomplete, divided, isolated, mutilated, injured, broken) lacks something. Perhaps all human longings ultimately aim at being entirety, i.e. being in a state where nothing is lacking.

What does it mean to be ‘wholly human’?

To be ‘wholly human’ means that all dimensions of being human, the body, the soul and the intellect, are integrated into a unity in the sense of accord or harmony (see Faber and Manstetten 2010: 120-121 and Faber and Manstetten 2007). Such harmony, if it is to be perfect, must not be limited to the body-soul-intellect of a single individual, but must rather comprise all our fellow human beings as well as our nonhuman fellow creatures. Much speaks against the notion that such a unity is possible in its perfect form in the span of life between birth and death: Ideals of perfection seem to lead away from such unity rather than toward it. At best, as Plato points out in his *7th letter*, it becomes suddenly real for a single moment in the flash of an experience that transcends the commonplace. Nonetheless, the idea of such a unity has meaning for the lifespan between birth and death. If being human represents an openness for all that lives – indeed all that is – then being ‘wholly human’ means transcending all dimensions that exclude and separate, including those of one’s own person, those of specific communities and even those of the entirety of humanity (insofar as nature is excluded). An interest in the entirety which is appropriate to the essence of the human being initially shows itself in the transcending of all that is not entirety.

Religious aspects of the interest in the entirety

As noted above (Chapter 1) John of the Cross (Juan de la Cruz, 1542-1591), one of the great Christian mystics, writes in his book *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, ‘If you cling to anything,

you refrain from casting yourself into the entirety, for to come wholly to the entirety, you must let go of yourself completely. And when you reach the point of holding the entirety, then hold it without desires' (Juan de la Cruz 1981: 82; our translation).

For John of the Cross, a properly understood interest in the entirety is a continual process of opening oneself up and letting go. It is expressed when human beings do not cling to their own needs and interests, nor allow themselves to be directed by the particular demands of their community, but rather develop their listening and hearing potential beyond all that seeks to lay claim to them. This potential to listen and hear gives its (German) name to the highest human faculty of perception: The German expression for reason *Vernunft* is derived from the verb *vernehmen* which means: 'to listen', 'to hear'. Reason, understood as *Vernunft* in this way, can be conceived of as the organ of limitless hearing. What must be heard is the order of the house, the *oikos*, whose inhabitants we human beings are – along with all else that lives. The particular reason why we pursued the question of such an order is this: In the search for this order, the interest in the entirety is expressed in its truest manner. Whoever hears the voice of nature in this order recognises in it a 'you', a counterpart to the human being engaged with us in a constant dialogue.

Comments on the interest in entirety by the writer and poet Novalis

Novalis writes, 'Does the cliff not become a unique [you] whenever I speak to it? And what am I but the stream when I look sadly down into its waters and lose myself in its flow?' (Novalis 1949: 89; see also: Becker and Manstetten 2004). This insight, which precedes all humanity and yet is secretly and perhaps even most especially expressed in all humanity, seems (in a way that is difficult to grasp) open and disguised at the same time. It is open in every moment as long as we are able to open ourselves to the nature around and within us. It can be felt in every breath – our breathing which bears us along before we become conscious of it and precedes all forms of interest; indeed, we hardly ever become conscious of it as a need at all. Our breathing is a pure expression of the first telos, but in a form which simultaneously links us to all breathing creatures as a third telos [TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF NATURE, Chapter 2, Sections 2.1 and 2.3], even with the clouds and the wind as they represent the breathing of the Earth and particularly with the green plants that integrate the air human beings exhale into their cycle.

Comments on the interest in entirety by the poet Hölderlin

Yet the nature that surrounds us, the natural community of the Earth, nourished as it is by sun, air and water, accompanied by the moon, planets and stars – nature, which sustains

us before we become conscious of it – only opens itself to us with difficulties and after long practice. For the language of nature, its order is far too heavily drowned out by the clamour of human activity. And so, the poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770 – 1842) writes in his poem *The Archipelago*:

‘But alas this race of ours inhabits the night, it lives
 In an Orcus, godless, every man nailed
 Alone to his own affairs, in the din of work
 Hearing only himself, in a crazy labour
 With violent hands, unresisting, pitiable, and all
 Their trying, like that of the Furies, brings nothing forth.’

(Hölderlin 1996: 34. See also: Manstetten 2001: 184)

When people, caught up in their self-interest, are nailed to their own affairs, their apprehending ear, the gift that allows us to be addressed by others, withers. Someone who, as Hölderlin puts it, ‘hears only himself’, ‘inhabits the night’ and ‘lives’ in a world of artificial funds created for his benefit as if in a realm of shadows – something similar to the term ‘Orcus’ (the Roman realm of the dead).

If we are to become earnestly interested in the entirety, we must first recognise that we are separated from it by a multitude of barriers. Its order cannot reach us because we find ourselves, as Hölderlin puts it, in ‘a din of work’. This expression addresses the almost baffling network of the many intertwined structures we have erected as artificial funds (such as machines, cars, telephones, weapons etc.; see Faber and Manstetten 2010: 129ff; BASICS OF LIFE, Chapter 2, Section 2.3), as service-providers for human needs. If we wish to listen to what is on the other side of these, we must first admit that they have made us almost deaf. When we become quiet, they initially only cast the echo of innumerable human interests and needs. These needs and interests are, however, perhaps not truly our own. When we take a closer look at the network of all human artificial funds within the freedom an interest in the entirety affords us, we recognise that all artificial funds of the present are nothing but the precipitation of past needs and interests.

The consequences of past interests define the present

Artificial funds, such as factories, supermarkets, brown coal mines, power stations, roads, airports, cars, aero planes, schools, administration offices and courts of law, all these things as they are presently before our eyes are a condensation of the interests of people who have gone before us. Some of these interests were current shortly before our time,

but others are the interests of people living decades and centuries ago. In the light of self-interest, we look at these structures only from the perspective of whether they are useful or harmful for us. In the light of an interest in the community, we ask how they serve the community. In the light of an interest in the entirety, however, we see them simply as they are in our lives and in how they define essential contours of our lives.

The first thing we notice is to what extent the consequences of past interests define the present: What was built up or constructed long ago largely defines and delimits the space of the interests of today (see particularly: Schiller 2002: Chapter 4 and Faber, Frank, Klauer, Manstetten, Schiller, Wissel 2006). The way this space is configured today, it allows no other order than that of humanity, for it is permeated by next to nothing of the order of natural biocoenoses [BASICS OF LIFE, Chapter 2, Section 2.1]. This space can only be changed in the future – in some cases after a short period of time but more often after a long one [see element *Basics of Time*]. However, instead of opening it up, we leave future people with new such structures, generally ones that are even more complex than the ones before them.

Limitations of human freedom in the future

Such structures in turn limit human freedom to form and pursue new interests. They do not simply form a static part of our lives, but also absorb a large part of our energy. Artificial funds exist and provide services only as long as they are operated by human beings – that is to say, kept running, cared for and renewed. In addition, the further we progress, the more they begin to demand our services for reason of the environmental damage they cause, the pollutants they deposit [JOINT PRODUCTION], and the raw materials they deplete. As such damage is often of a long-term nature, our concerns extend ever further into the future. The more complex the network of artificial funds becomes, the more these funds themselves as well as the effects they cause place demands on those who operate them. The richer we are in such funds, the more concern they cause us. For this reason, we can say, human beings tend to be too busy with the world they themselves have created for anything to be heard that might be speaking to them from beyond this world.

Two tasks of environmental education

Within the framework of an interest in the entirety understood in this manner, environmental education has two tasks:

(i) To call people's attention to all those structures –both within themselves and the world that surrounds them – that are hindering them from the perception of this interest. These

structures do not consist merely of their own self-interest and their limited interests in the community, but equally of deposits from the past that still exist; i.e. they are stocks [BASICS OF LIFE, Chapter 2, Section 2.2].).

(ii) To introduce practices to people which can lead them to open themselves to the order of the house of all that lives.

Only once these two tasks (which we can do no more than identify here) have been tackled, can we begin to seriously search for a concrete human way of life (nomos) of a kind which is appropriate for the house of all that lives” (Faber/Manstetten 2010: 141-155).

3. Practice

In this chapter we argue that a certain detachment is a necessary prerequisite for truly understanding complex environmental problems. Then we turn to the circumstance that the interest is rather hard to grasp. For this reason, we address ourselves to attitudes which have their origins in an interest in entirety. One is the attitude of gratitude. Finally, we turn to the question of how interest in the entirety is related to power and powerlessness.

A certain detachment as a necessary precondition for proper understanding

- At first sight the readers may ask:
- Do these considerations, in particular the rather lengthy ones on interest in the entirety, help us to solve environmental problems?
- Are they not much too aloof?
- Is time not running out so fast that we cannot afford to consider such thoughts?

In contrast to these rather sceptical enquiries which call for immediate action, we maintain that an appropriate reflection on these complex problems is a necessary step backward to be able to act appropriately. In other words, we believe that “an appropriate reflection on complex issues is scarcely possible. In contrast, we aim in this chapter to demonstrate that in today’s world – despite the dramatic anthropogenic environmental changes – a proper understanding of the relationship between humanity and the environment is absolutely necessary. This, in turn, requires a certain detachment. The pressing problems will only be fully understood and solved through painstaking, comprehensive and patient analysis. Accordingly, we have developed new perspectives on fundamental questions of biology, ecology, and the economy in various dimensions. To this end, we have developed our own, specially devised terminology, such as the tele, the funds, categories of ignorance, a fresh

view on evolution and nature, which enables us to work scientifically but does not restrict us by the unavoidable narrowness of scientific discourses. Our newly, coined termini, do not belong to any particular science, but they allow us to connect them to the basic notions of ecology and economy. In particular, they are devised in such a way that they enable us to integrate experiences of every-day life. This is important to check whether our scientific analysis is really relevant for the environmental problems to be solved” (Faber and Manstetten 2010: xi). It is in this vein that we offer the following considerations.

Interest in the entirety and corresponding appropriate attitudes

“The interest in the entirety is harder to grasp than the other two fundamental forms of human interest, self-interest and interest in community. This does not mean it is insignificant. Where it affects people, it does not do so by directly guiding their actions in a specific direction. But it does have an effect on the attitudes that are the basis for action, for activity in the context of an interest in the entirety loses some of that exclusively active element naturally associated with the term *to act*. The interest in the entirety reveals that beneath every right action lies an essentially receptive aspect. Actions are made responsible by interest in the entirety insofar as this interest represents the response of humankind to the logos which exists before all forms of self-determination.

Three attitudes in particular express human receptiveness in regard to nature:

- (i) attentiveness,
- (ii) the willingness to freely serve,
- (iii) gratitude.

These three virtues which express the activity of receptiveness (so to speak) generally do not receive their due in modern ethics; even Kant had no proper place for them in his philosophy of morals (Manstetten and Faber 1999: 94 ff.).

To (i): Attentiveness teaches us to openly recognise and accept what we have received before having achieved anything on our own and what we still continue to receive in every new moment. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the soil that produces our food, the living creatures that serve us by being consumed by us – all these things are the foundations not only for all of life, but also for the world of human beings. Yet all these things cannot be produced by us in our world. Attentiveness requires the ability to distance ourselves from our own concerns – indeed, even to a certain extent from our own ethical concepts insofar as these detract from the openness with which we approach nature. Although attentiveness is one of the original approaches of humankind to the world and to themselves, it is, however, not a matter of course, a natural given. Under present-day

conditions, attentiveness is an endangered attitude. Inattentiveness and lust for sensation make it all but impossible. Today, attentiveness cannot be assumed; it must be practised and nurtured.

To (ii) Attentiveness also teaches us to see the way we are disfiguring the face of this world, thus showing us what our service *could* look like. In contrast to attentiveness, service toward nature expresses a certain attitude of care. On the one hand, such care is directed toward the preservation of free nature, untouched by human beings. Places where nature is still capable of its own development, such as the tropical rainforests, require protection from intrusions that do not respect its own development capability. On the other hand, care is also about humans using nature in such a way that natural biocoenoses [BASICS OF LIFE, Chapter 2, Section 2.1] are allowed space for their own development. Cultivated landscapes in Germany during the 18th century displayed a far greater diversity of species than the original primary forests before their cultivation. Nature, shaped in this sense and sustainably cultivated, can express a harmony that can even seem superior to that of natural biocoenoses. Service toward nature has nothing to do with servility. On the contrary, it is owed to the insight that humans are receiving beings as long as they live. As humans receive services from so many other living things, the latter may expect to receive of human gifts as well. Our service is a form of freely giving of our own power to form and shape, knowing that we too are beneficiaries. Our service demonstrates a free binding of our human selves to the foundation that sustains us [SUSTAINABILITY & JUSTICE].

To (iii): Attentiveness and service are preparation for an attitude of gratitude. For far too long human beings have carelessly extracted whatever they thought they needed from nature as if from a store, without remembering that it was given to them. Our own nature, our physical bodies, have become so estranged from us that we attempt to subject the boundaries of our existence (procreation and death) to human control. Gratitude in its original sense means directing our attentive thought toward the source of what has been given to us and lovingly accepting what is given. Gratitude towards nature is rooted in attentiveness towards the source of every possibility of shaping life. Yet within gratitude such attentiveness gains a specific quality, a trait of loving attention and feeling obligated which goes beyond mere perception. In earlier times (in part also today), such gratitude was at the core of religious rituals: Thankfulness for our received existence was and is celebrated in the community – e.g. Thanksgiving Day. Gratitude has been incorporated practically into many religions within a *nomos* that limited the use and the subjugation of nature – one need but think of the Sabbath year, recurring every seven years in ancient Israel during which farming of fields was prohibited.

To rediscover such forms of gratitude and, where necessary, find new ones (forms which give nature space, yet are simultaneously forms of human life that can influence the life of

a community) seems to us to be one of the most important tasks of environmental education.

Final remark: interest in the entirety, power and powerlessness

The fact that we have just attributed virtues to the interest in the entirety which seem primarily passive tells us that interest in the entirety as such cannot become political [OECONOMICUS & HOMO POLITICUS; POWER OF JUDGEMENT; RESPONSIBILITY]. It cannot actively intervene in practical affairs. When it does become political, there is a danger of it becoming totalitarian: Totalitarianism is a fractional, often limited and truncated concept of the entirety of being, one that commissions people to fulfil it in historical missions – as was propagated, for example, in the ideologies of Marxism-Leninism or National Socialism. However, even the visions of an environmental state can become totalitarian (Hannon 1985). In light of extreme shortages of resources (a threat likely to arise in regard to water in many parts of the world over the next decades; see Jöst et al. 2006), it is to be feared that governmental institutions will demand extensive powers to allow them to implement solutions, ones that could result in a restriction or even disregard of human rights. In such situations, it is imperative to point out that the entirety which concerns us both as human beings and living things transcends the scope of any political activity and that, conversely, political activity must come to terms with the fact that it is limited – and must recognise the limits which it is set, the foremost of which are human rights.

Interest in the entirety, if it is to be a true interest in the entirety, must remain inconspicuous and unassuming, almost silent. Thus, it is, though not ineffectual, outwardly powerless. Individual aspects of this interest, if they are to become visibly and audibly effective, must become political, and enter the realm of interest in community. But in so doing, they must limit themselves, thereby relinquishing the entirety of the entirety. However, the quietness of the interest in the entirety and willing acceptance of its powerlessness lend us the necessary patience and perseverance to surrender neither what is human in its humanity nor our responsibility towards nonhuman nature, whenever – in the political sphere – all our strength fails in the face of its own frailty or the force of resistance” (Faber/Manstetten 2010: 155-157).

4. Literature

The content of MINE originates from scientific work published in books and peer-reviewed journals. Quotes are indicated by a special typographic style.

The project team would like to thank the publishers **Edward Elgar**, **Elsevier**, **Routledge**, **Springer** and **Taylor & Francis** for granting a reproduction permission.

Furthermore, we want to express our gratitude to Bernd Klauer, Reiner Manstetten, Thomas Petersen and Johannes Schiller for supporting the MINE Project and granting the permission to use parts of the content of their book “Sustainability and the Art of Long-Term Thinking.”

We are indebted to Prof. Joachim Funke, Ombudsman for Good Scientific Practice at Heidelberg University and the legal department at Heidelberg University, for their advice and support.

The main source of this concept is the following publication:

Faber, M. and R. Manstetten (2010) *Philosophical Basics of Ecology and Economy*. Routledge, London and New York. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher. The material is reproduced in MINE with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear (**Ref. No: 8528, licenced 03.01.2019**).

Key literature

Faber, M., Manstetten, R. (2010) *Philosophical Basics of Ecology and Economy*. Routledge, London and New York. [Chapter 12 is the basis for this concept.]

Recommended Literature

Becker, C. and Manstetten, R. (2004) Nature as a You: Novalis' philosophical thought and the modern ecological crisis. *Environmental values* 13: 101-118. [The paper gives a perspective on entirety from a literary point of view.]

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