A new evaluative discourse will not only need to be dialectically open to the ‘new reflectiveness’ of the past twenty years. It will also need to be able to sustain an adequate theoretical account of itself. By far the most useful starting-point is current anti-foundational ethics. Martha Nussbaum’s invaluable return to Aristotle’s own starting-points has undoubtedly been a major enabling development for a new ethical criticism in literary studies. But there are others too, including the pioneering work of Iris Murdoch which so subtly extends the sphere of the ethical. Her notion that one’s whole ‘texture of being’ has an ethical dimension has been important for literary pioneers such as the late S. L. Goldberg and Wayne C. Booth, who have extended it to talk about the ethos or texture of being implied by the whole literary work. The philosopher who offers the broadest illumination on the question of why one sort of ethos might seem more impressive than another is Charles Taylor. His history of the modern self suggests why, in the end, literary works that imply cramped or partial accounts of the good will give way in our canons to more inclusive ones, those which help us to recognise the full range of goods we live by” (D. Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 198).

Having studied organisational and accounting reports for some considerable time I became disenchanted with those reports which appeared shallow and uninteresting; and it became clear to me that a broad philosophical investigation was required. I turned to what has become known as the liberal-communitarian debate after inspiration from David Parker’s (1994) Ethics, Theory and the Novel. He uses Taylor’s communitarian arguments which offer a powerful challenge to ethical criticism and Neo-Nietzschean literary theory to interpret differences. These arguments extend to accounting itself an instrumental discourse based on economic means to calculation and control. David Parker’s work is important

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Received 30 August 1999; accepted 30 August 1999
because it offers, through communitarian theory, an alternate means to think about the construction of a text\textsuperscript{1}.

Furthermore, having read Charles Taylor's (1989) *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*—itself a source for Parker's means to interpret texts—I became convinced that a satisfactory discussion of humanity's constitutive relationships required examination of conceptions of rationality deriving from the eighteenth century Enlightenment. This argument owes much to Taylor's discussion of communitarianism and his attempt to overcome the alienation of modern life\textsuperscript{2}. Taylor argues that modern discourses offer only a fragmented understanding of what it means to be a person.

Communitarianism relates considerations of the quality of life to general cultural and social relationships. He draws upon the hermeneutic\textsuperscript{3} method to explore the Enlightenment's conception of rationality, its commitment to autonomy and the way it offers only an instrumental mode of deliberation. Taylor examines the Enlightenment's stress on autonomy and the way it submerges political and ecological values. He argues that both modern and post-modern narratives offer only a partial account of what it means to be a person. Taylor offers an approach to interpret texts through what he calls *authenticity*—extending our understanding of autonomy to consider processes of human self-realisation through exploring humanity's “being in the world” (Ferrara, 1998). Autonomy refers to human freedom and the ability to be impartial but authenticity demands contextualisation of that autonomy. The notion of authenticity helps us consider how Aristotle's “practical reason” can illuminate values other than those which reflect instrumental considerations.

More broadly the interpretive perspective developed here owes much to Taylor's interpretation of Martin Heidegger's argument that people are “thrown into the world” (Dreyfus, 1994, pp. 173–174, 242–244). People's identities are formed within cultural and linguistic traditions which frame the factors which have significance in their lives. Clearly one crucially significant factor is the way people relate to nature. Heideggerian thought, moreover, is relevant to considerations of what it means to be a person living a hectic life as if the processes of time are accelerating. Accounting assumes away these considerations and assumes that differences between communities, discourses and ideologies can be factored out of our interpretative deliberations.

In particular, Taylor's work on authenticity informs the argument—that the most convincing mode of interpretive argument must be built on communitarian premises. By way of introduction, Taylor canvasses liberal frameworks of modernity and their inadequate means of political deliberation while explaining the fragmented trajectory post-modernism takes us. He examines those liberal frameworks and counterposes authenticity to liberal proceduralism as a means to factor in the ethical dimensions in his interpretive framework. Taylor draws our attention to the poetic expressive tradition which works towards an exploration of humanity's being in the world and its relationships with nature.
Sources of Value and the Self

Since the apparent post-modern turn in evaluative discourse the realisation that all human agents are “self-interpreting” animals that define themselves against an evaluative “background of distinctions of worth” has been lost. Taylor asks us to consider and interpret “being” as a reflection of different evaluative sources as they impact on the self which pivot around, and are oriented by, and through moral space. As an instrumental discourse accounting severs its mode of deliberation from the background as if it is possible to be a neutral arbiter for communities writ large.

He takes us back to the Eighteenth century Enlightenment thinkers who tended to liken the processes of nature to the workings of a machine. Central to Taylor’s interpretive discourse is a series of arguments refuting naturalism where the human agent is oriented in moral space. To be without any evaluative framework at all would involve “a profound psychic disorientation”—to live without access to the good—the moral space—is to lead a shallow and empty life. This is the picture he paints of Enlightenment thinkers where it is assumed that humanity has the technological capacity to solve the problems confronting it. Human beings were at the centre of the world as was clearly reflected in Collingwood’s Hegel-inspired Idea of Nature, which held “mind makes nature; nature is... a by-product of the autonomous and self-existing activity of mind” (Collingwood, 1945, p. 7). Moreover, instrumentalism was evident in John Stuart Mill’s 1854 essay “Nature” (Mill, 1824, pp. 3–69)4. For Collingwood and Mill the maxim to “follow nature” sounded like a return to an animistic ethic. For Mill, the injunction to follow nature is ambiguous since humanity had the capacity to master it:

Everybody professes to approve and admire many great triumphs of Art over Nature: the junction by bridges of shores which Nature had made separate, the draining of Nature’s marshes, the excavation of her wells, the dragging to light of what she has buried at immense depths in the earth; the turning away of thunderbolts by lightning rods, of her inundations by embankments, of her ocean by breakwaters. But to commend these and similar feats, is to acknowledge that the ways of Nature are to be conquered, not obeyed: that her powers are often towards men in the position of enemies, from whom he must wrest, by force and ingenuity, what little he can for his own use, and deserves to be applauded when that little is rather more than might be expected from his physical weakness in comparison to those gigantic powers” (Mill, 1824, pp. 20–21).

According to the above argument, nature was not only a barrier but actually humanity’s antagonist5. To say the least, modern environmental theorists are more aware of the dangers of instrumentalism and anthropocentrism. But one can still find echoes of Mill’s views among modern “shallow green” theorists who are sceptical of radical and deep-green ecology. Here we are far from traditional instrumental discourses those which dominate modernity and implicitly suppress the
pivotal role of moral space (this seems to be the implication of the dominant forms of accounting which fuses bald naturalism and neo-classical economics).

Taylor asks us what then are we to make of the injunction to “follow nature”? Twentieth century analytical philosophers might consign the notion that nature possesses value to the category of ought statements concerning what people should do rather than a statement of fact. Others might say that simply to follow nature is hardly realistic in the modern world. But even if it is unrealistic, one does not have to jump to the conclusion that it is always better to impose humanity’s imprint on nature. Aldo Leopold echoes Romantic poets in his famous “land ethic” which has been celebrated by many deep ecologists. Leopold insisted that “[a]l thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1970, p. 67). Was this a radical rejection of Enlightenment anthropocentrism, as J. Baird Callicott and other deep ecologists maintain, or was it just a warning against its instrumentalism? On that question ecologists are divided. Though as Taylor reminds us the supposition that nature is a source of the self reflects Shelley’s ideas that it is through poetry that the otherness of being is given reflection and:

“the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature... it creates anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration” (Taylor, 1989, p. 389).

For Shelly, the poet “strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its forms”6. Taylor continues to offer different ways to counteract bald naturalism. He quotes approvingly of Shelley:

How exquisitely the individual Mind
...to the external World
is fitted:—and how exquisitely too
...
The external World is fitted to the Mind;

And the creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish
( Wordsworth, Preface to the Execution, II.63–71)

Taylor though does not reject modernity wholesale, nor does he offer an anarchist return to small-scale sustainable ecological communities who insist that the search for intrinsic value in nature is futile since all value depends on a valuing subject. He urges the development of a dialectical understanding of the relationship between freedom and hierarchy to work out how humanity can realign its practices with nature’. The major problem lies in social hierarchy which exacerbates capitalism’s
consumerism and wasteful duplication. Social hierarchy reflects domination which for the anarchist environmentalist Murray Bookchin:

“must be viewed as institutionalized relationships, relationships that living things literally institute or create but which are neither ruthlessly fixed by instinct on the one hand nor idiosyncratic on the other. By this, I mean that they must comprise a clearly social structure of coercive and privileged ranks that exist apart from the idiosyncratic individuals who seem to be dominant within a given community, a hierarchy that is guided by a social logic that goes beyond individual interactions or inborn patterns of behavior”8.

The opposite of domination is freedom9. For Bookchin, since modernity has created an insensitive culture which dominates nature and leads ultimately to its destruction, the only way to escape immanent ecological destruction is to return to small scale, decentralised communities and forms of governance which are in harmony with nature’s spontaneous processes.

Since the focus is on domination, Bookchin criticises Marxism and other grand narratives which overlook the threat modes of domination pose to all life on the planet10. That is the problem—not alienation as Marx conceived it. One wonders here whether he is fair to Marx. Marx, after all, developed a dialectical method demonstrating how humanity’s creative labour power is constrained by social processes which limit progressive and emancipatory political proposals. Marx could well be interpreted as developing a method to explore social arrangements where workers might reach their full potential and that involves understanding the importance nature has for people’s lives. One wonders whether Bookchin has adequately considered the social dilemmas nature poses for humanity. The argument that small-scale communities will create less damage to nature needs fuller elaboration. There is a need to explore further the resilient characteristics of capitalism which persist in causing wasteful consumption11.

But more is needed. Marx and large numbers of political economists have explored the tendencies in economic systems towards disequilibrium. Some modern thinking, however, has noted those same tendencies in biological and other systems. Consider the arguments of Noble Prize-winning physicist Ilya Prigogine and his collaborator Isabella Stengers (1984). Contrary to the machine analogy of the Enlightenment, they see ecosystems as exhibiting dynamic, non-equilibrium characteristics and not conforming to classical laws of thermodynamics. Ecosystems are “dissipative structures”12 “maintained by the matter and energy flowing through them”. “Once formed, these structures, in order to keep their shape, need to dissipate entropy so that it will not build up within the system and kill it (or return it to equilibrium). Because they produce high levels of entropy, they require high inputs of matter and energy”13. The structures, moreover, are prone to random fluctuations which might result in what is known as a “bifurcation point”, where the structure
reorganises itself at a higher or lower level of complexity (a possibility which cannot be predicted).

If it is the case that nature is a “far-from-equilibrium” system, it is particularly urgent to investigate humanity's impact on nature and design ways of living and being in a world prone to disequilibrium. We are far from the Enlightenment view which stressed the stable, repetitive and universal and missed the dynamic, indeterminate implications of the relationships between humanity and nature.

Of course one might argue that considerations of randomness and indeﬁminacy might render us powerless. On the other hand there is sufﬁcient literature on “structured chaos” for us to fashion ways of responding to it; perhaps in a modern equivalent of the old republican manner of handling Fortuna. At the very least considerations of far-from-equilibrium states challenge political and interpretative theory to reconsider the way it considers nature’s value, the relationship between scientiﬁc reason and instrumental rationality and indeed the philosophical structures of modernity. All of which impact on how we think and act about modernity and its mechanisms to record and transmit data to communities.

Considerations of indeterminacy as outlined by Prigogine might lead to post-modern considerations. Post-modernists tend to be critical of Enlightenment reason. Indeed in Jean-François Lyotard’s words they express incredulity towards all meta-narratives such as communitarianism, liberalism and socialism (Lyotard, 1989). Post-modern political theorists work toward decentring the subject and deconstructing all stable forms of social structure. They emphasise subjectivity, fragmentation and a need to deconstruct traditional metaphysical assumptions. Stressing the power of discourse, they argue that language does not reﬂect any objective conception of the good because all dialogue is a reﬂection of the subjective preferences of the speaker. Thus, the possibilities for interpretation are said to be limited because there is no meta-truth.

Post-modern theorising been subject to trenchant attacks by discourse theorists committed to interpretation. For example, post-modernism is denounced for a performative contradiction in making the universal statement that no universal truth claims exist (Habermas, 1987, pp. 185–210). The distinction between the local, partial and fragmentary as against the universal, representative and harmonious, moreover, can only “be such if they are outside an awareness of their position as post-modern discourses”. At a practical level, some claim, post-modernism offers us few political alternatives save resistance to domination. By resistance political space may be created for different values but who is to say what are good values?

Have such theorists anything to say about discourses such as humanity and the environment? Some of them have tried to say something. There may be value in developing a post-modern critique of modernity and constructing sites of resistance to temper the excesses of modernity. Post-modernists might develop critical and imaginative responses to the ongoing problems of technological modernisation. They might aid
thinking about the relationships between humanity and nature and develop relationships between states which are currently competing to increase their citizens’ well-being. Advocacy of respect for “otherness”, sensitivity to the resistance of local narratives to misleading grand narratives and the invocation to “live playfully in the world” and “let things be” could superficially support an ecological ethic. But playfulness might destroy nature. More generally, post-modernism might enhance an individualist instrumentalist outlook. A post-structural emphasis on discourse could lead to neglect of considerations of structural power wielded by trans-national corporations. A post-modern “new age”, moreover, at worst, could be very destructive or perhaps simply a distracting attempt to create the “hyper-real”. What, moreover, may one do with an open-ended politics which defies theorisation? Most seriously a contempt for ontology does not suggest good prospects for a post-modern environmental ethic. The issue of nature’s intrinsic value will tend to be dismissed as nonsense. As will non-naturalistic values such as the art of interpretation (phronesis) which is captured in the spirit of poetry.

Taylor’s Contribution

“One way of putting this objection to MacIntyre’s project is to say that he is trying to rule out of account one whole historical strand of which the modern self is constituted, what Charles Taylor calls the ‘expressive’ demand for self-realisation that was born in the Romantic movement. Taylor’s monumental and compelling historical account of the making of the modern identity argues that we are made up of at least three mutually conflicting strands in which are intertwined all the important Western formative threads from classical antiquity to the present day. The three are: an other-regarding Kantian moral one that derives ultimately from the Judeo-Christian religious tradition; one that privileges disengaged rationality, autonomy freedom, human equality, and universality, which comes from the Enlightenment; and the Romantic one which emphasises the demands of nature, human fulfilment, and expressive integrity” (Parker, 1994, p. 20).

Like post-modernists, Taylor is critical of the Enlightenment but comes to very different conclusions. Taylor helps us unite considerations of the social and the ecological in a manner more fruitful than the deep and social ecological approaches and the post-modern approach sketched above. Like many of the above theorists, he is critical of the Enlightenment’s instrumental reason and more particularly the focus on a procedural modus vivendi which characterises contemporary liberalism. Above all he bemoans the fact that the modern citizen “is a citizen of nowhere, an internal exile wherever he lives... modern liberal society can appear only as a collection of citizens of nowhere who have banded together for their common protection” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 156). Rootless associations are hardly likely to be constitutive, ecological or socially aware.

According to Taylor, the Enlightenment emphasised a punctual under-
standing of the human subject, defined in abstraction from any constitutive concerns—in isolation from its community and significant attachments. It endorsed disengagement, seeing people as free if they are independent from external interference. It looked inward rather than to external things—to the polis or republic and even less the environment. Morality, therefore became seen in terms of self-interest or in terms of de-contextualised “right” (the most stark manifestation of which is instrumentational accounting). In eighteenth century terms, which many philosophers have now forgotten, the Enlightenment collapsed ethics into morality (see Francis, 1991). Morality (moralis)—being true to a role—is personal whereas ethics is about objective value structures (as in Hegel’s Sittlichkeit). Enlightenment thinkers such as Immanuel Kant reduced ethics (ethicus) where the focus is on what I should do to morality where the focus is what should I be. Considerations of good structures (which might be environmentally embedded) were displaced by considerations of principles of right behaviour.

The Enlightenment celebrated autonomy rather than authenticity, which affirm self-determination but not in isolation. Autonomy centred on a negative conception of freedom which is based on an atomistic conception of human nature. Expressive writers are committed to exploring these other sources of the self. People, therefore, were free when they stood apart from nature. That separation could easily turn into an affirmation of domination. Communitarians, Taylor feels, must back-track a little, consider how people reflect on the good and appreciate the extent to which nature may be seen as a source of the self, submerged by atomistic, pre-social and ahistorical conceptions of humanity. The aim is to show that nature is not just a constraint on freedom but helps to structure freedom.

The argument presented herein offers a contrary to interpretation to the old argument that classical liberalism is in harmony with free-market arguments which assume that, through incentive structures, humanity can rectify ecological and social damage. A communitarian-environmental ethic, on the other hand, must go further in charting the way that collective institutions may show how an appreciation of the “other” is necessary for the attainment of the good life. But can a communitarian approach embrace the idea of intrinsic value? Taylor explicitly charts Romantic thought to explore how modernity suppresses non-instrumental values such as the supposition that humanity and nature are entwined where nature is a source of the self Taylor evokes memories of Rousseau, noting that humanity’s “conscience is the voice of nature as it emerges in a being who has entered society and is endowed with language and hence reason” (Taylor, 1989, p. 359). Surely a sense of intrinsic value occurs when people confront the natural environment. That sense, moreover, is unique, particular and historically-located—a fact not easily addressed by many hard and soft
ecologists unfamiliar with the romantic Counter-Enlightenment ideas associated with the work of Hamann, Herder and Humboldt.

It is easy to see why that is the case. John Rawls notwithstanding, it is unfashionable nowadays to attempt to construct a philosophical position out of an intuitive sense. But that approach was once common. Many eighteenth century thinkers were concerned to show that humans were endowed with a moral sense, “an intuitive feeling of right and wrong”:

“The original point of the doctrine was to combat a rival view, that knowing right and wrong was a matter of calculating consequences, in particular those concerned with divine reward and punishment. The notion was that understanding right and wrong was not a matter of dry calculation, but was anchored in our feelings. Morality has, in a sense, a voice within us” (Taylor, 1992, p. 26).

Nor is romanticism all that fashionable. But romantic rebellion continually recurs:

“For the two powerful aspirations—to expressive unity and to radical autonomy—have remained central to preoccupations of modern man; and hope to combine them cannot but recur in one form or another, be it in Marxism or integral to anarchism, technological Utopianism or the return to nature. The Romantic rebellion continues undiminished, returning ever in unpredictable new forms—Dadaism, Surrealism, the yearning of the 'hippy', the contemporary cult of unpressed consciousness. With all this surrounding us we cannot avoid being referred back to the first great synthesis which was meant to resolve our central dilemma: which failed but which remains somehow unsurpassed” (Taylor, 1975, pp. 49–50).

To affirm morality’s voice within us and to sympathise with romanticism, however, is not the same as affirming nature’s intrinsic value independent of human beings—a step Taylor is unwilling to take. For him “intrinsic” value is a human-centred concept which reflects the values of the language bearer for whom nature possesses such value. We have to approach the value of nature through practical reasoning about freedom and how nature structures the possibilities of freedom, chart democratic-republican processes which may recover them and show self-interpreting humans other ways of being in the world.

Taylor never presents us with a philosophical defence of intrinsic value but, through his critique, he does offer us ways of thinking about the relationship between societies and a sense of value. Of importance here is the idea of “insight” into the values of different communities—which might highlight elements of a common appreciation of intrinsic value. He is concerned with what he calls “strong-evaluations” such as cultural and environmental relationships which shape people’s identities and which can not be captured by philosophical perspectives which aim to be universal in scope (traditional accounting, neo-classical economics and free-market liberalism). By recognising the importance of ethical
frameworks, Taylor’s expressivism shows how humanity may re-align its understanding of what nature means and, through modern communicative structures, may take some steps towards moderating its impact on nature.

At a very practical level, given the probability that limits to growth are real, Taylor’s work is useful in exploring the possible shape of steady-state communities (Taylor, 1978). Accounting’s role would be to monitor the steady-state use of resources. In attempting this task through practical reasoning he avoids the pitfalls of shallow ecology (which absolves citizens from personal responsibility) and deep ecology (which devalues humanity). As he put it:

“It seems to me that every anthropocentrism pays a terrible price in impoverishment in this regard. Deep ecologists tend to concur from one point of view, theists from another. And I am driven to this position from both” (Taylor, 1994, p. 13).

In summary, Taylor’s work provides a means to explore the environmental implications of the liberal-communitarian debate and to retrieve an awareness of the different sources of the self as they impact on the formation of the modern identity. Taylor’s work acts like a rudder in the formulation of a critical-ecological accounting model. Central to his position are criticisms of classical and procedural liberalism which offer only a narrow conception of practical reasoning limiting the means through which humanity may consider its relationships with nature. While never attributing an independent intrinsic value to nature, he remains sufficiently romantic to consider the “voice of nature” within us16. A communitarian-environmental ethic, therefore, involves identifying political relationships that will enable communities to approach the value in nature and to hear its voice while remaining both liberal and democratic.

Conclusion

The above discussion has sketched the weaknesses of Enlightenment rationality as a means to the management of human affairs—something which poets have continually strived to overcome. Noting objections from deep ecologists, social ecologists, some system theorists and, of course, communitarians this essay has criticised liberal instrumentalism. It has canvassed the ecological consequences of the liberal maxim of taking principles of right as prior to, and independent of, the good, noting that, within its modus operandi, procedural liberalism has a tendency to displace investigation into more substantive relationships between humanity and nature. Accounting as a communicative medium has a role to play in this regard and overcome the instrumental discourse which alienates humanity.

The discussion has established the importance of Taylor for such an investigation. Taylor’s best known ideas, expressed in his Hegel and
Sources of the Self, are not concerned explicitly with the environment but they may be extended. He has, moreover, developed ecological arguments in a number of other works. The comments above have noted Taylor’s objections to the limitations of neo-liberal and post-modern political frameworks. No longer can nature be viewed as a malleable input into production as traditional economic methodologies assume.事实上，远非均衡系统理论家和许多人告诉我们，怀疑人类是否有控制和掌握自然过程的技术能力是合理的。即使有，考虑到其他价值观，如人类与自然的关系是重要的。泰勒从不为自然的独立“内在价值”做案例，也许这不可能。但是至少对自然的“内在声音”不应该被当作过时的浪漫主义而被摒弃，而应被视为与实用理性相矛盾。

更广泛地说，会计作为一种交流技术提供了讨论和传播各种现代身份来源的途径。社区理论似乎在这方面给予了希望。它邀请我们去思考哪些手段可以令公民直接接触政府的决策。它也邀请我们去思考自由市场经济对社区和社区来源的自我——这其中包括了生态和社会的考虑。从另一个角度来说，泰勒的框架直接性地回答了关于身份的问题，这必须有生态、文化和社会决定因素。更广泛地说，社区主义足够包容，可以融入其他政治理论的洞察，无论是后海德格尔主义者、地球先驱者和反文化的主张者，谁主张保存地球上生命多样性的保存，质疑现代性的基本前提。自由主义也可以融入其他框架的洞察，但它总是被实用理性和程序取向所困扰。会计，作为经济学的姐妹学科，其解释和辩论也是有缺陷的。

Notes

1. The notion of interpreting a text has clear and unambiguous implications for accounting thought. This essay, then, should be interpreted in a spirit of critical commentary on what is accounting, what is a text and what does interpreting a text mean.

2. Alasdair MacIntyre explains that the adjectives “community”, “communitive” and “communist” were used interchangeably, and that the term “communist” incorporated many diverse strands of thought until the early part of the 1920s; some deep ecologists use the term communitarian in a different sense, referring to a “biotic community”.

3. Many hermeneutic positions exist and can be classified in the following way: (a) weak-hermeneutics (Rorty), Depth Hermeneutic (Habermas) and Strong Hermeneutic (Dreyfus, Gadamer, Heidegger, Taylor). Rorty defines the weak hermeneutic discourse as a non-realist philosophy and urges a complete withdrawal from ontological theorising. While Habermas argues against Gadamer’s fusion of horizons because of its idealistic account of self understanding, Habermas’ initial theory relied on a reading of
Freud where the patient is able to emancipate herself from systematically distorted communication. Although Habermas has jettisoned his Freudian aspirations, he still maintains that the problem within modernity is that the philosophy of consciousness has been replaced by that of language. This has had the effect of transforming social change and understanding from the individual to the decisionistic and technocratic structures of communities. Habermas argues that his emancipatory goals can only be achieved through communicative action. Habermas maintains that the strong hermeneutics of Gadamer and Taylor lacks critical distance.

4. Mill’s instrumental perspective seemed to support unlimited economic growth though in his Principles of Political Economy (Mill, 1929) he deplored conspicuous consumption and interestingly championed a stationary-state.

5. Though there is a lot of Mill’s work that actually had a romantic view of nature.

6. Shelley, P. B., In Defence of Poetry, in Complete Works (New York, Guardian Press, 1965), VII, p. 137. As Taylor notes “Novalis also sees himself as lifting the veil on the world of the spirit, but he also stresses that the poet remakes, transforms, transfigures this world through imagination” (Taylor, Sources, op. cit., p. 573).

7. In Hegel’s Philosophy of Right the state embodies society’s general interest and stands above particular interests: it is, therefore, the final arbiter over divisions in civil society. Marx rejected these views in his “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” because he believed that the state acted for the interests of property and capital as well as itself. However, if Marx’s Capital is read as a dialectical work it is possible to understand better the causes of any environmental crisis. See Avineri, S., Hegel’s Theory of the State, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972.


9. Bookchin’s position can be classified as either a libertarian-socialist position or, an anarcho-communitarian position. The classification depends on how one perceives the social arrangements which he advocates.

10. Bookchin, M., The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy, op. cit., p. ix. He interprets Capital as offering a vision of community life where humanity masters nature’s processes. Marx apparently was insensitive to the fact that domination pervades all existing social formations. Socialism and communism are simply different manifestations of the same Enlightenment rationality based on domination.

11. Later it will be argued that a critical-environmental ethic overlaps with a post-communitarian ethic concerned with the relationship between language and critical social theory.

12. Prigogine notes: We have given the name dissipative structure to these spatiotemporal organizations. Thermodynamics leads us to the formulation of two conditions for the occurrence of dissipative structures in chemistry: (1) far-from-equilibrium situations defined by a critical distance; and (2) catalytic steps, such as the production of the intermediate compound Y from compound X together with the production of X and Y. See Brugger and Kelly (1990).

13. Ibid., pp. 56–57.

14. The “good” is a phrase used in political theory to explain the factors that impact on what it means to be a human agent, self or individual. Taylor explains that “the good” has been submerged in modern political discussions because moral philosophy has focused on what it is right to do rather than what it is good to be (Taylor, 1989, p. 3). For Rawls the “good” is an ordered scheme of final ends which includes among other things the connection with the priority of the right which incorporates: (a) the idea of goodness as rationality, (b) the idea of primary goods, (c) the idea of permissible comprehensive conceptions of the good, (d) the idea of political virtues and (e) the idea of the good of a well-ordered (political) society.

15. Rawls distances himself from Ronald Dworkin’s interpretation of his theory as a version of natural right by stressing the role of intuition: see Rawls, 1985, p. 236n).

16. It is interesting here to compare Taylor’s position with that of Sir Isaiah Berlin. Berlin believed that purposes are imposed on the world by human beings. Taylor, on the other hand, while never endorsing nature’s independent intrinsic value argues that to understand nature involves exploring the “voice of nature” that emerges through the capacity of language; Berlin, I. and Williams, B., “Pluralism and Liberalism: A Reply”, Political Studies, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1994, pp. 303-306. Taylor does not deny the importance of Berlin’s claims, but argues that this is not the end of the story and prefers to struggle toward what Nietzsche would call a “transvaluation of values” where we move ever closer toward better interpretations.
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