
**Guest Editor's Introduction:
Ecstatic Naturalism and Deep Pantheism**

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Several years ago in this journal I called for a 'deep pantheism' that would go beyond current pantheisms by honoring and highlighting the 'churning unconscious depths of nature' (Corrington 2007: 506), while still being faithful to the naturalist maxim that 'nature is all there is'. My conception of an ecstatic naturalism has been evolving since at least 1992 when I published my second book, *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism* (1992), in which I struggled to make sense of the idea that philosophy must think about nature in the broadest categories at its disposal, that is, that one must do metaphysics in the classical sense of probing into the 'generic traits of existence' as Dewey famously put it (1925: 50). A dialectic opened up for me between the utter vastness of nature and the momenta of our categories to stretch themselves to encompass this vastness, as per impossibility in the fullest sense. But it is in the shipwreck of our metaphysical categories that nature can manifest itself as the Encompassing (Jaspers 1955 [1935]). At the moment of conceptual and experiential foundering we face into the sublime, with nature at its most potent. As we will note, the aesthetic experience of the sublime will replace that of religious revelation within the philosophy of ecstatic naturalism and in the theology of deep pantheism.

There has been much discussion of naturalism in recent years, usually without a full self-consciousness about the provenance and fecundity of the term. In order to locate my ecstatic naturalism I find it helpful to compare and contrast it to three other forms that naturalism has taken and continues to take; namely, (1) the descriptive, (2) the honorific/

spiritual, and (3) the process forms. Each form assumes that it has captured the essence of nature in its regnant categories and that, once the basics are cared for, further metaphysical query is no longer required.

Descriptive naturalism is the most common form and is found in a materialism that privileges material and efficient causality over formal and final cause. Religious sensibility is muted if not expunged from the perspective, while science—natural and cultural—is given the nod in matters methodological. There is a certain kind of epistemological puritanism in descriptive (materialistic) naturalism that serves to police nature so that unusual, vagrant, or in some sense metaphysically vexing orders or complexes are purged from the system. Among descriptive naturalists in philosophy I would include Dewey, Santayana, and Buchler. Dewey and Santayana are subtle in their materialism, while Buchler just barely fits into this category. Among contemporary naturalists I would include Daniel C. Dennett and Richard Dawkins.

Honorific naturalists tend to see nature as in some sense deeply congenial to human needs and aspirations. The microcosm/macrocosm analogy holds true insofar as personal predicates are the crowning achievement of cosmic/natural evolution. Formal and final causes are privileged here, and a monistic sense of spirit usually plays itself out and through the orders of nature. Evolution is understood to have an upward trajectory, and human history is seen teleologically to manifest the eventual triumph of good over evil. Among honorific naturalists I would include Peirce (Corrington 1993), Josiah Royce, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Teilhard de Chardin, and G.W.F. Hegel.

The third type of naturalism is the process form, a close cousin of the honorific form, with its key difference being that it posits a deep plurality of orders in and as nature, governed, to be sure, by universals that are held to unify the pluriverse into the universe as known and partly shaped by a deity. Theologically, process naturalists tend to embrace panentheism because it gives them some rich maneuvering room within which to flesh out the ways in which God is both within the innumerable orders of the world and the ways in which God is (slightly) independent of those same orders. Whitehead, Hartshorne, Neville, and a host of others embody, express, and defend this form of naturalism.

Ecstatic naturalism emerged out of a sustained dialogue with all three antecedent forms of contemporary naturalism. Among the shared features of the four forms are: (1) the belief that nature is all that there is, (2) that there is no supernatural realm, (3) that science is important for philosophy and above all metaphysics, (4) that the human process is fully in and of nature, (5) that no one trait (or traits) can exhaust the utter complexity and fecundity of nature, and (6) that naturalists must always

be careful to distinguish descriptive from honorific categories and not ride their (honorific) hobby horse over more appropriate descriptive uses of the category. An important historical example can be seen in Plato's struggle to see if there could be Forms of the ugly.

What, then, makes a form of naturalism ecstatic? We start with the assertion that there are two modes of ecstasy implied here; namely, (1) the Heideggerian notion of 'standing out of the self' in a transcending act that empowers one's being-in-the-world (2010 [1927]: 337-41), and (2) the mood or moment of the experience of ecstasy in Julia Kristeva's sense of *jouissance* (Kristeva 1984 [1974]). Without ecstasy in the former sense, the human process would be bereft of any primal contact with world, or the 'worldhood' of the world. The latter sense of ecstasy is keyed to the primal mood that envelops the self-in-process when it breaks through its own armoring and allows the energy from the depths of nature to course through its psyche and soma. Together, these two modes of ecstasy recenter the self in its personal and social orders, thereby making authenticity possible.

The most important distinction within *ecstatic* naturalism is that between nature natured (*natura naturata*) and nature naturing (*natura naturans*). Although Spinoza made this distinction common coin in metaphysics, its provenance goes back to medieval usage. For some, nature naturing was simply equated with god. In my ecstatic naturalism, such an easy correlation will not work. I define 'nature naturing' as 'nature perennially creating itself out of itself alone'. Note that in this understanding there is no panentheistic deity and certainly no theistic form of the divine. Nor is there an imperial creation out of nothingness nor a dependency relationship of grounding involving a world of orders being held-into-being by a highest being, as in onto-theology, which refers to a system that posits a highest being as the generator and sustainer of all dependent beings. I use the word 'perennially' very carefully to avoid some sense of static eternity, whereas the notion of the perennial connotes unending renewal and refreshment for the innumerable orders of the world.

We are not left speechless, however, before the abyss of nature naturing. It functions as both ground and abyss (Schelling 2007 [1809]) and is heterogeneous self-othering; that is, it serves to eject its hidden contents into the worlds of nature natured. The momenta of nature naturing come from the potencies that represent a kind of restless and unruly ground/abyss for the 'manifest' worlds of nature in their modes of naturing. Images of ejection, spawning, emanating, birthing, and so forth are all valuable here, especially when the psychoanalytic dimension of ecstatic naturalism is emphasized.

The term 'nature natured' can be simply defined as 'the innumerable orders of the world'. But here things get quickly radical. It is almost universal that philosophers and theologians think of the world or nature as being governed by an order or orders or as, say, an organism of organisms. Ecstatic naturalism utterly rejects the idea that nature (or 'the' world) has or is *an* order. From this it follows that process panentheism in particular is rejected as resting on a faulty foundation. The ordinal/ecstatic perspective stipulates that nature cannot be an extensive continuum, an order, an order of orders, creativity, pure continuity, occasions in perspectival shining, or any other totalizing picture.

Just as there is no *the* nature, there is no one trait that all natural orders have in common. The history of metaphysics is littered with such attempts (Kant 1998 [1787]) to squeeze all of nature into one genus or super-genus. Candidates for this position have included, but are not limited to matter, energy, atoms, monads, actual occasions, spirit, spirits, substance, will, sense-data, forms, language (pure or ordinary), symbolic forms, and good old stuff (James). In fact, what we have are region-specific terms being stretched way beyond their appropriate scope and provenance and then bluntly imposed on 'whatever is in whatever way' (Buchler 1966 [1990]). It takes a strange kind of phenomenological opacity not to see just how regional in instantiation these ersatz categories are when they attempt to be the font of our metaphysical wisdom and capaciousness.

Strictly put, there is no such thing as 'Nature *as such*'. There is no grand order that can be our kindred metaphysical home in a Romantic sense. Of course, there are many congenial homes *within* the innumerable orders of the world, and that suffices. Further, nature cannot be as Aristotle defined it: something located in a genus with a specific difference, for example, to define the human being as an animal with the specific difference of being rational. What genus would nature be 'in' and what would its specific difference be? There is no way to define something that transcends all genera. Perhaps one should follow Heidegger's tactic of crossing out the key term to show that it is being used elliptically and under erasure. So from Heidegger one gets the old German term ~~Sein~~, and for ecstatic naturalism one gets ~~Nature~~. This little iconic trick in strikeout font at least conveys that the term 'nature' is of an entirely different quality than any other such term.

But ecstatic naturalism goes beyond Heidegger in a key way. Whereas Heidegger contrasts Being and Non-Being (*das Nichts*), not to mention the thing in Being (*das Seiende*), I argue that there is no contrast term to nature/~~nature~~. That is, there is no such thing as Non-Nature. Thus, Heidegger's 'ontological difference' between Being and thing in being

and his contrast of Being and Non-Being are not sufficiently generic to function in the metaphysics of ecstatic naturalism, in which the contrast between nature naturing and nature natured—what I call the ‘natural difference’, to contrast it with Heidegger’s notion of the ontological difference—is capacious enough to include any aspect of nature. This is of a piece with the above idea that nature is all that there is, and we can now add that Being and Non-Being are prevalences *within* the one nature that exists. Non-Being, especially in Heidegger’s sense of nothingness as event (*das Nicht nichtet*), prevails in nature in just the way that it does. The term ‘prevalence’ is broader in scope than the term ‘Being’. That is, the event of nothingness is as real as the Alps, only *differently* real. This awareness brings us directly to one of the pillars of ecstatic naturalism, which Justus Buchler labeled ‘ontological parity’, and is one of the most revolutionary philosophical ideas of the later part of the twentieth century.

It is seemingly native to the human process that we always feel compelled to make distinctions between things we consider to be more real than others, especially when we conflate normative with descriptive judgments and appraisals. We live in a world of constant evaluation and value commitments in which we hold some things to be more real, more foundational, more ultimate, or more consummatory than others. More often than not these judgments are fully or partially unconscious and are implanted in us without our awareness of the processes by which they do so, through the natural communities in which we find ourselves (Reich 1970 [1933]). We are creatures who build value and ‘reality’ hierarchies to reduce anxiety and to encapsulate ourselves in the armor rings of frozen categories of self-understanding and routinized interaction with other armored selves (Corrington 2003, 2013).

The doctrine of ontological priority, which is the ubiquitous form that our homespun or sophisticated metaphysics usually takes, seeks some ‘sufficient ground or reason’ for supporting everything else, whether in the guise of creation *ex nihilo* or in a more secular version of a metaphysical ground→consequent relation. Heidegger’s critique of this form of onto-theology has highlighted the issue if not provided the way past it. For postmodern thinkers and for ecstatic naturalism when focused on *this* issue, onto-theology posits a highest being and a totality of beings that are ordered and shaped by the highest being. The irony is that many of these thinkers have shed themselves of the first commitment, but they then reinstate their own form of a totality of beings into the vacuum left by the receding god. Process theologians are especially prone to this halfway measure, which seriously undermines their reformist measures.

The contrast between ontological priority and ontological parity is sharp and binding on any metaphysics that wishes to be open to the astonishing differences among all of the orders/complexes of the world (nature natured). Within the stance of ontological parity all distinctions are genuinely honored because the principle of parity affirms that there is no such thing as an unreal trait or order. Ghosts are as real as a supernova in outer space, only differently real. Hamlet is neither more nor less real than Shakespeare, only differently real. And my internal wish to eat ice cream is neither more nor less real than a political movement in China. The commitment to ontological parity is actually like a spiritual discipline that requires slowing down and using an ordinal phenomenology that lets phenomena appear at a measured pace from their respective ordinal locations.

Next to the principle of ontological parity stands the equally important principle of ordinality. The current perspective can also be called an ordinal naturalism, although that designation properly belongs to the work of Buchler (Singer 1983). The principle of ordinality affirms several key notions, some of which we have already seen: (1) nature is constituted by orders, (2) there are no simples as complexity goes all the way down and all the way up (i.e., God cannot be simple and nature cannot be atomized), (3) each order or complex is indefinitely complex, (4) there is no super order, (5) orders relate to other orders but cannot relate to *all* other orders (this concept makes a process form of ecstatic naturalism impossible), (6) a given order will have subaltern traits or orders but these 'internal' orders will not all be related to each other, (7) following Peirce there is no first order or first sign (Corrington 1993), and (8) because relations and relata are both orders and ordinally located, there cannot be two identical orders.

Once the principles of ordinality are adopted, then it follows that nature can be encountered in its full ordinal complexity. The previous quest for *the* foundation or ground of all that is morphs into a sensitivity to the many forms that groundings, always in the plural, can take. Ordinal precision replaces brute metaphysical force as the way of philosophy and theology. The stern requirements of the *a priori* are alleviated when a shift is made to what I call a 'pragmatic *a priori*' after the philosopher C.I. Lewis. Unlike a Kantian *a priori* that transcends our empirical experience and imposes necessity and universality onto experience, a pragmatic *a priori* functions *within* experience to give shape, contour, and context to the specific order that it governs. And being pragmatic, the *a priori* is subject to evolutionary pressures and is self-corrective through time. That is, it must pay its dues in an evolutionary landscape that has little patience for free-floating do-nothing categories.

Since the 1980s I have been calling for and using an ordinal phenomenology that would best serve the goals of ecstatic naturalism (Corrington 1987). Such a phenomenology must honor the twin commitments to ordinality and ontological parity. Analogous to Husserl's use of bracketing, which mutes metaphysical or everyday commitments, ordinal phenomenology immerses itself in the flowing stream of ontological parity that lets every order and every ordinal location emerge into its proper and appropriate forms of presence and absence, privileging neither over the other. The co-present is as real as the present, only differently available. Further, the commitment to parity and ordinality empowers the phenomenologist to probe into and in turn be probed by the complexes that have been pragmatically selected for description. The craft of phenomenology is one requiring patience and a certain generosity of temperament, a sensibility that can wait on those orders that may not be of easy access to even the most robust phenomenological investigation.

When Husserl gives voice to his battle cry, 'to the things themselves', he rather bluntly positions phenomenology as a kind of 'first philosophy' that rescues the 'things' from being eclipsed by our almost manic categorical schemes. There is nothing especially wrong with having this as one's mantra as long as the notion of 'thing' is capacious enough to include many 'unthingly' things, such as possibilities or modes of awareness. Ordinal phenomenology simply has a more sophisticated ontology at its disposal than did Husserl or even Heidegger.

Simply put, an ordinal phenomenology would rotate its chosen phenomenon (natural complex or order) through as many ordinal locations as pragmatically possible or pertinent for a given pragmatic purpose, whether short or long term in its prospects. It would not seek the grounding ordinal location, nor the one consummatory order, because such does not prevail within the one nature (innumerable orders) that there is. An example should make this clearer. In earlier times analytic philosophers often used the example of the 'cat on the mat' as the place to start doing work in epistemology and metaphysics. This rather spartan and austere starting and ending place hampered any genuine metaphysical work and grossly magnified epistemology to almost monstrous proportions. In short, nature was put into eclipse, and the world of innumerable orders (nature natured) was reduced to a pathetic caricature of itself. Worse, philosophy was threatened with irrelevancy.

Compare this to a very different way of dealing with cats. In my version of the 'cat on the mat' example, I am using two cats named Darwin and Plotinus, male littermates who are jet black and now about two and a half years old. They tend to find themselves on mats, chairs,

towels, couches, heating ducts, desk tops (especially on or next to computers), and any number of places other than the traditional mat. They have a complex relationship to their own spaces and to the spaces they share with humans. Each space is an ordinal spatial location with order specific traits. Collectively these inhabited spaces produce a 'contour' (Buchler 1966 [1990]) that is the mobile 'sum' of each given ordinal location. Now, this is where pre-ordinal phenomenologies stop their probes and descriptions, especially because of an ontological bias toward physical objects in public space/time. But for ordinal phenomenology, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Darwin and Plotinus also exist in different kinds of 'space', or what could be called, following Husserl, the 'co-present'. They exist in the order of indoor cats, which impacts on their longevity if nothing else. They belong to the order of cats that have had rabies shots; that is, the 'scope' of the rabies vaccine has now increased. They belong to the order of neutered cats, two more instances of a general practice. They also belong to the economic order of their veterinarian, making it possible for her to continue her practice. Now the two cats prevail in the order of pedagogical examples of the principle of ordinality within phenomenology. The point I wish to stress is that these various ordinal locations are every bit as real as their black fur and their physical presence. The reactionary commitment, again often unconscious, to ontological priority would severely hamper one's ability to see the cats in all of their metaphysical complexity. There is no end to ordinal phenomenology's prospects. One stops for pragmatic or short-term tactical reasons, but always with the realization that the rich task of phenomenology can be quickened anew and its treasures brought to the community of interpreters for deep assimilation and wise manipulation.

Now that we have seen how the method of ordinal phenomenology works within ecstatic naturalism, we can shift our focus to the analysis and description of the human process, as it is especially manifest in the phenomenon of 'selving' (Corrington 1996, 2013). The tonality of an ecstatic naturalist account of selving is strikingly different from that found in many so-called postmodern accounts with their tendency toward narcissism and self-congratulatory positioning on the other side of an alleged substantive modernist self. For one thing, subtle accounts of the human process are almost willfully misread as if they entailed a static essence that froze the self into an almost atemporal 'thing' that was incapable of relationality or depth communications. In setting up a straw person, they were compelled to swing into a stark opposite position that denied any notion of a human nature. These extreme conceptual gyrations have severely hampered the work of philosophical anthropology.

We are left with absurd and polemically driven choices: either the dead substance of an ontologically boxed-in self or a wide open world of semiotic play in which random sign series flow through the empty space called the human self. This dyad has a strong appeal to our narcissism because it frees us from any responsibility for locating meaning in and of a nature that we did not make. The *jouissance* of the self is found only insofar as one is detached from nature's demands and goads.

To talk of selving, in contradistinction, is to describe the highly complex ways in which the nascent self unfolds its many ordinal locations within nature, especially as it negotiates the perennial fissuring of the natural difference between nature naturing and nature natured. The human process appears to be unique in having a potential awareness of the natural difference, even while using the methods and tools of its natural communities to deaden this awareness. As will be pointed out, natural communities are the ubiquitous basic communities that dictate the use of signs and symbols, always for conserving the status quo and maintaining control of power relations.

The dangerous irony is that postmodern accounts of the self appear to be liberating, but actually these accounts run the risk of stripping the self of its theonomous roots in the powers and potencies of nature in which energies can be found and utilized that break through the patriarchal codes and structures of the natural communities that surround and penetrate the self-in-process. For the selving process to flower and to attain its excellence in Aristotle's sense, it must have enough free space held open by the depth energies of nature naturing via the potencies.

Otto Rank (1993 [1924]) argued that the birth trauma is the empirical and ontological event that most deeply shaped the nascent self as it left the world of dreaming innocence in the womb for the booming, buzzing, noisy, bright world of public space and time. I find Rank's argument compelling, and from such a perspective, the ontological aspect of the birth trauma is the deep-phase transition from an enveloping world of no wants to an infinite world of wants and desires, the chief being the desire to return to a womb-world that is actually a return to a cosmic womb in the *not yet*. That is, the deepest human hunger is for a world that envelops but does not reject the empirical worlds of everydayness. One cannot simply return to the lost object or the 'oceanic feeling' (Freud 1961: 11) but must circle around from out of *the not yet being* (Bloch 1986 [1959]: 336) and thereby find a welcoming access to the womb/*chora* itself. The 'object' that compels this return to (reconfigured) origin can be named in several ways: the lost object, the material maternal, the *chora* (womb), the no longer, and nature naturing. The context will determine

which category or metaphor is best suited for the current phenomenological description.

Thus, the selving process is in and of nature and its modes of transcendence are by definition in and of the one nature that there is. The self has its own integrity, ethically and metaphysically, even if it does not have an atemporal essence. Does the self have a nature, or is it little more than a matrix of pan-relationalism? When we move to ordinal psychoanalysis we can shed some light on this problem and can find a way to say that there is such a thing as human nature that perdures throughout the trajectory of the selving process.

What makes a psychoanalysis ordinal? An ordinal psychoanalysis will focus on the broad and multi-form structures and events that link the selving process to the larger forces and potencies of nature naturing. Traditional forms of psychoanalysis will be stretched where possible or pertinent so that they can continue to contribute to enriching the psychoanalytic account of the psyche. Equal stress will be placed on relations and relata (things *in* relations). Ordinal psychoanalysis will insist that no account of the self is complete that doesn't treat the immediate and long-term structures and powers of community. This emancipatory form of psychoanalysis will have as its capstone an analysis of the relationship between selving, in all of its modes, and the prospects of non-violence.

The selving process exists within and through human communities that have great, almost totalizing power, that is, such communities defend their semiotic treasures and systems against potential threats from usurpers. There are three layers of community that can be described by ecstatic naturalism: (1) natural communities, (2) communities of interpreters, and (3) emancipatory communities. Natural communities have the lion's share of our semiotic life and materials, while the more fragile communities of interpretation have a much deeper grasp of the realities of self and nature. The power of emancipatory communities comes most directly from the arts broadly defined. One of the very few places where ecstatic naturalism invokes the principle of teleology is in the momentum whereby the self makes the purposive transition from its natural to interpretive, to emancipatory communities. An interpretive community is freer in its use of signs and symbols than the natural community from which it emerges, while an emancipatory community will deepen those symbols that speak from out of the depths of justice and the quest for genuine democracy. In essence, the democratic emancipatory community is the slumbering heart of the community of interpreters, waiting to be awakened by the interpretive community when the conditions are right for its flowering. The ultimate goal of selving is to encounter and be shriven by the aesthetic works of genius (Corrington

2013). Natural communities can and will use the arts for heteronomous purposes and thus destroy what is genuine in the arts and encourage the making of bad art.

A natural community is one that functions by relatively inert and hidden mechanisms to flatten out and control the important signs and symbols at its disposal. By 'natural' I do not mean 'ecological' but, rather, inert and inflexible or driven in a static and unthinking direction. It is not simply the status quo but a policing agency that always looms as a threat to any sign user who has a vagrant, novel, or creative sign or symbol to bring to the community. Novelty itself is considered suspect insofar as it breaks up a habit that has served as a reliable controlling device in the past. Using the language of Charles Sanders Peirce, the creator of pragmatism and the triadic model of semiotics, the relationships among sign→object→interpretant are tightly controlled so that any interpretant that emerges is tightly bound to established interpretants, thus actually compromising Peirce's idea that any sign interpreted is a sign changed; that is, the sign becomes a new sign, *qua* interpretant (Corrington 1993). The natural community rejects Peirce's notion of democratic inquiry by having a stranglehold on any and all interpretants. This type of community is all enveloping and works with a silent cunning that is the more uncanny as it is the more quietly successful.

The difference between the natural and interpretive community could not be starker. Interpretive communities are rare and they can only exist within the larger natural community that envelops them in scope. Such a community emerges whenever there is a crisis in the categories of the natural community, such as the discovery and publication of the principles of evolution in Darwin's 1859 *Origin of Species*, published interestingly on the year of the birth of its greatest philosopher-champion, John Dewey. Or when there is, more gently, an excess of semiotic energy left over from its instantiation in everyday forms of semiosis. This surplus value can be channeled when the conditions are right into the quest for novel and compelling interpretants on the edges of the standard forms of semiosis.

How goes it with eschatology? In a natural community, the sense of eschatology can be controlled by limiting it to a specific utopian expectation that is filled with concrete tribal material. By doing so, the natural community can insure that its members do not deviate from the norm, because the cosmic reward system is a mirror image of their highly circumscribed social and personal orders. All interpretants are bent backward to re-empower the original signs in the sign→object→interpretant triad. In this scenario the novelty is drained out of any interpretant that would have the audacity to leap into a radically new interpretation.

The utopian structures in the interpretive community are radically different. In the world of open-ended interpretation each interpretant is creatively examined to see how it might have potencies and energies that can pry more embedded and ossified interpretants loose from the antecedent forms of connection. There is a strong sense of hope, and that sense is grounded in the depth dimensions of nature's unconscious. Note that a natural community will forcefully repress any sense of the unconscious of nature because such an admission would show that there is a vast aspect of nature that cannot be brought under conscious control. But while the natural community abjects and even flees the unconscious, say through being saturated with mass media culture, the interpretive community takes the risk of seeking and honoring the 'unruly ground of nature' (Schelling 2007 [1809]: 34).

The key difference is that the natural community has a highly regulated and tightly controlled tribal utopia that is a mere carbon copy of itself that is projected onto the orders of nature and the world. By making utopia and its eschatological energies tribe-specific, the natural community both imposes a narrow utopia on itself and guarantees that there will be violence when another natural community collides with it. Tribe-specific utopias are at heart violent. At the other side of the equation, the community of interpreters is especially keen on not filling in a *specific* tribal content to its utopian longings. The *not yet* is a force in the world that actively resists particularization and the freezing of the open and raw energies of nature's unconscious. Some religious communities have overcome their tribalism to enter into these emancipatory energies. One thinks of the religious socialism of the 1930s in Germany, however short-lived. Of course, heteronomous and natural communities can use art for non-liberating ends as part of a general propaganda machine that coerces the arts and artists to generate works that glorify the static myths of blood and soil, but this is a betrayal of the deeper potencies of art to emancipate the Eros of art within the individual and the social order.

Beyond the more free-floating communities of interpretation are the emancipatory communities that are deeply responsive to the potencies of nature naturing, especially as manifest where religious experience gives itself over to the aesthetic experience of the sublime. While communities of interpretation are tied to notions of bourgeois autonomy (Tillich 1933), emancipatory communities deepen autonomy to become theonomous and, because of this rooted theonomy, have more internal power to resist the blunt heteronomy of the enveloping natural community. The question emerges: what is the relationship between interpretive and emancipatory communities? Put simply, the emancipatory community is constituted by artists and other culture creators who make the new and

radically challenging objects and interpretants that collectively enhance human cultural and social evolution. Collectively they bring the *not yet being* into closer proximity. The community of interpreters has as one of its functions the translation of the products of the emancipatory community into more available interpretants. Interpreters both assimilate and manipulate these great works and ramify a steady stream of creative interpretants that serve to make given works of art and contrivance compelling and quasi-immortal under the conditions of finitude.

The creative genius wrestling with Platonic Forms (Schopenhauer 2008 [1819]) needs seasoned interpreters to carry the work outward into the community of interpreters. But we should not too stridently separate these functions. A creative artist is interpreting a mobile cluster of interpretants whenever he or she is rendering material into public forms of semiosis. To paint a portrait is to interpret with every brush stroke and reinterpret again with other brush strokes that modify the meaning of the earlier stroke. And the act of interpreting—of finding transcendent but still 'natural' meaning and conveying that meaning to another interpreter—can itself be an act of creativity. Both artists and hermeneutic agents are creating works of rich interpretants, and they work best when under the gentle pressure/lure of the great *not yet being* that lights up the sky with all great and not so great works of art.

Clearly, art has a very high status in ecstatic naturalism. The title of my most recent book, for example, signals the importance I now give to art: *Nature's Sublime: An Essay in Aesthetic Naturalism* (Corrington 2013). My growing emphasis on the supremacy of art also coincides with a shift away from what I called an ordinal monotheism in 1992 to a theology that is post-panentheistic. The way I now envision it is that ecstatic naturalism is the most generic categorical clearing within which one can work as a philosopher, while *aesthetic* naturalism is a depth moment within ecstatic naturalism in which encountering the power of the sublime is the final goal of the human process. For the theologian, then, the final position is that of a deep pantheism, which is nestled within both ecstatic and aesthetic naturalism.

Deep pantheism is a perspective that remains fully naturalistic but does so in a more radical way than even the most robust panentheism. One has to be careful here as panentheistic systems take many shapes, and there is much that is admirable in constructive process theology. The question for an ecstatic naturalist philosopher who is also a deep pantheist theologian is what are the ordinal locations of God or, put differently, the sacred? The *deep* part of the equation seeks God in the unruly depths of nature naturing—namely, as an emergent from nature's unconscious. As an emergent order God simply cannot be a cosmic creator nor can

God be self-caused (as in Neville 1992). Strictly, God is located in multiple ways within the orders of the world (nature natured). Nature turns out to be greater in scope than God and lives as the cosmic seed bed for all natural complexes, and as a natural complex, God must be related to other complexes but not to all complexes. This last implication is quite hard for most to accept, but it is a logical entailment of the ordinal perspective.

The *pantheist* part of the equation signals that the divine cannot be in any sense transcendent to the All (Schleiermacher 1988 [1799]). If nature is all that there is, then the divine is fully and in all respects in and of nature. It is philosophically clumsy and even lazy simply to equate God and Nature (Schopenhauer 1819), but the terms are roughly commensurate. One can say that God is Nature in one perspective and Nature is God in another perspective. Or, one could create a negative theology that has its own version of erasure that would give you ~~God~~ = Nature.

A deep pantheist is especially sensitive to the transforming potencies that come from human creative products and is one who learns to articulate rich and compelling interpretants on the boundary where religion withdraws to give pride of place to art. Why is this so? The creative and destructive relationship between religion and art has been tragic insofar as many religionists have envisioned art as an inferior and sexually tinged form of self/world interaction. In this way of thinking, art must be suppressed to save the religious order from being eclipsed by the sensuous and private, the idiosyncratic and the perverse. The tribe requires adherence to its natural signs and symbols and insists that it is not universal but is only for the chosen community that has special access to the deity or the 'powers'.

On the other hand and generally speaking, art is profoundly anti-tribal in the sense that it struggles to portray the worlds of nature in universal terms. This is not to say that art does not have tribal content, but to affirm that its goal is the sublation of all tribal material into the true universality of the open future of the *not yet being*. The primal restlessness of the selving process can be stilled and transfigured through the many arts that surround and inter-penetrate the selving process in both communal and personal forms. Most strongly put: art and freedom often go together. The Viennese Secessionist Movement had a slogan in 1898 that stated: 'Der Zeit ihre Kunst, Der Kunst ihre Freiheit' ('Art for the Times, Freedom for Art'). This dual affirmation positioned art at the center of a self-governing and deeply rooted aesthetic of radical freedom within the culture of Central Europe. Art, in this conception, demands an open and tolerant social order that provides the freedom without which art dies and becomes the insipid play thing of the heteronomous

powers of the unlawful State. Without freedom, only the arts of propaganda can be produced, which are not art at all. The fascist State is quite right to be afraid of genuine artists.

The encounter with a great or otherwise significant work of art can empower the self (and its communities) to shake itself free from demonic or simply insipid forms of interaction that only serve to entrench the power of the natural community. Through art the self finds its way toward a consummation within time and finitude that realigns the selving process toward nature's deepest potencies. The genius replaces the saint as the paradigmatic individual who embodies and enacts the most primal and richly transforming traits of the selving process. Ecstatic naturalism and deep pantheism exist to honor and serve nature's ways, for outside nature there is only silence.

What then, do an ecstatic naturalist philosopher and a deep pantheist theologian have most in common besides their general ordinal metaphysics? The answer has been flickering around the edges of our phenomenological descriptions and our probes into the aesthetic core of the selving process. Both the philosopher and the theologian become who and what they are by an overwhelming encounter with the Sublime. Traditionally, the Sublime has been held to be a raw and overpowering force of nature itself—operating on the far side of the more circumspect and 'tamed' power of beauty. We encounter the Sublime in extreme events of nature, such as earthquakes, tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, deep canyons, thundering waterfalls, and similar physical phenomena. Yet we can also experience less dramatic forms of the Sublime, such as especially potent works of art, or charismatic personalities, or powerful social and cultural events, or in a decisive encounter with dream material, or in any encounter with an archetype. The Sublime grasps us in the center of our being and we are shriven by its uncanny presence and potency.

Art becomes great insofar as it wrestles with the archetypes of the collective unconscious, which is rooted in the unconscious of nature. In fact, art straddles the natural difference between nature naturing and nature natured, keeping both dimensions of nature open and attuned to each other. The artist is cousin to the philosopher and theologian because all three receive their measure—their ultimate contour—from the perennial dialectic between nature's potencies and nature's products. But the greatest product of all is the liberated self that fulfills the telos of the selving process by serving the lure of the *not yet* that calls all of us toward the Sublime, the one sure goal that also takes us back to our origins but in a now-transformed way.

If the religionist seeks to control the Sublime for tribal purposes, the artist lets the Sublime use him or her for its expression under the conditions of finitude. The result is a transformed community and an enrichment of the prospects of experience and query. For query, as the momentum of inventive wonder, is the mode of being of the true artist, philosopher, and theologian, not to mention any emancipated self. In query we probe into the ecstasies of nature and allow nature to probe into us. The result is an astonishing world of fresh interpretants and symbols, all serving to keep the sense of the Sublime alive and well in our complex and often fragmented communities. In the end, nature gets the last vote as we struggle with our many abjections that distort our understanding of nature. Beyond abjection and its ontological priorities lies the community of ontological parity wherein all orders will have their proper place in the infinity of nature.

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