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Amor Tellus? For a Material Culture of Care

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Introduction

"Nothing perhaps is more surprising in the world of ours", Hannah Arendt writes in her final, unfinished book *The Life of the Mind*, "than the almost infinite diversity of its appearances, the sheer entertainment value of its views, sounds, and smells, something that is hardly ever mentioned by the thinkers and philosophers." In other words: "Plurality is the law of the Earth".[1] Today, such plurality is diminishing fast. What is known as the sixth extinction event is eliminating species variety – plants and animals – with a speed much higher than the base rate of extinction. Millions of populations and thousands of species are going extinct each year. With each species vanishes a unique collection of genes, appearances, and behaviors.[2] In addition to threatening the vital "ecosystem services" (e.g. pollination) on which human communities rely, then, the extinction event means that an ongoing *irreversible loss of plurality* is currently occurring on earth due to human activities.

Needless to say, extinction is only one aspect of the planetary crisis we currently face. Climate change and various other ecological issues, including unsustainable use of natural resources, are rapidly undermining the political and economic presuppositions of contemporary industrial societies. These crises are increasingly understood as aspects of the Anthropocene. Expanding upon the technical geological definition, the term denotes the dominance of humankind over the key processes of the Earth system. In addition to being biological agents in our environments, which we have always been and will always be, human beings have also recently become planetary, *geological* agents.[3]

First and foremost, the Anthropocene names a political event. As such, it demands that we stop and think. Because a crisis "tears away façades and obliterates prejudices", it helps us to inquire more deeply into the very essence of the questions we face.[4] It calls us, in the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty, to "make conceptual space for thinking the human

1 Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind; One: Thinking* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1978), 19–20.

2 Gerardo Ceballos, Anne H. Ehrlich, and Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Annihilation of Nature: Human Extinction of Birds and Mammals* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015), 22.

3 T Toivanen et al., "The Many Anthropocenes: A Transdisciplinary Challenge for the Anthropocene Research," *The Anthropocene Review* 4, no. 3 (2017): 183–98; John S. Dryzek and Jonathan Pickering, *The Politics of the Anthropocene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 5; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021), 31. While there is some debate about the timing of the Anthropocene, most scholars locate its emergence sometime between the first Industrial Revolution and the mid-twentieth century "Great Acceleration", the latter also coinciding with the first radioactive waste produced by humans.

condition *before* committing to any practical or activist politics".[5] The questions the Anthropocene crisis invites us to ask concern primarily the relationships between the organization of human activities and earthly nature. The current crisis is located at the juncture of the world and the earth. It pertains to the consequences, for the earth, of how our world is organized. And boomeranging back to ourselves, the Anthropocene also forces us to face the consequences for the human world of the processes we have set off in nature. Nature no longer only "makes her presence felt in the man-made world through the constant threat of overgrowing or decaying it", as Arendt put it [6]. Its presence is also felt in the constant threat of ecosystems giving in, ceasing to support us and our efforts.

Contemporary planetary consciousness has been compared to the Cold War fears of nuclear war. The two issues are not analogical – climate change and other ecological catastrophes are the cumulative compound effects of relatively banal human activities, whereas nuclear war would have been more or less a one-off event set off by decisions by a handful of political leaders.[7] Yet, our experience of world politics resonates with the situation faced by thinkers in the early years of the Cold War, when the threat of nuclear destruction was real and the shock of totalitarianism still fresh. It was during that time, Arendt wrote in her essay on Karl Jaspers, that "all peoples on earth" started to inhabit a common present. And this present, made possible by modern technology, gained its substance from the "negative solidarity" of mankind, the global fear of all human life coming to an end. Arendt further elaborated this experience of negative solidarity in a way that seems to offer a good springboard for reflections on the global/planetary politics in the Anthropocene. First, there is a common interest in coming to an agreement that would prohibit the use of the weapons (or, mutatis mutandis, the pollutants) that are threatening our existence. Second, this negative solidarity is worth very little unless it is coupled with political responsibility.[8] This experience of global responsibility, it seems to me, is felt much more strongly today than it was ever before.

But how is such responsibility to be acted upon in the Anthropocene? The most obvious Arendtian answer is to highlight action. We need work and labor less, and act more, create more democratic spaces of participation. "The Arendtian hope would be that we are being freed *to act*", a recent essay notes.[9] However, it is exactly this conclusion that the present article seeks to complicate. This is not because public participation is not important. It is, and in fact, Arendt's thought can act as a corrective to many visions for a more sustainable future that focus on "hobbies and culture" as the potential activities substituting for decreased material consumption. Nevertheless, my wager is that approaching labor and work simply as something we need to do 'less' is too simplistic and fails to illuminate our necessary linkages to non-human nature. We must resist the

4 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (London: Penguin, 2006), 171.
5 Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History*, 19.
6 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018), 98.
7 Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History*, 45.
8 Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), 83.
9 Outi Kuittinen and Aleksi Neuvonen, "Fabrication," in *Designing in Dark Times: An Arendtian Lexicon.*, ed. Virginia Tassinari, Eduardo Staszowski, and Clive Dilnot (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021), 125.

tendency, exhibited by Judith Butler among others, to read Arendtian political action as something completely independent from "those living and interdependent relations upon which our lives depend".[10] If we pursue a path beyond this influential reading, Arendt can offer us a notion of care that is embedded in the material interdependencies in the "web of life". I elaborate notion of "material culture of care" as a principle that could guide all human activities – not just action – in the Anthropocene, as a mode of assuming planetary responsibility.

To set up the argument, the essay first juxtaposes contemporary discussions about the "death of nature" with related concerns in Arendt's time, paving way for the unraveling of the nature/culture division. The point, as Lucy Benjamin has shown in relation to the concept of natality, it is not so much applying Arendt to a completely new terrain (the Anthropocene), as it is about exposing her thought "as always already inclined towards those questions".[11] I then turn to the notion of care, which in Arendt scholarship is usually associated with the narrowly political activities of democratic participation. Drawing particularly on her two essays on culture, I suggest that care should also be applied to human relationship with nature. I epitomize the idea of care with the concept of "material culture", which I owe to Richard Sennett, a student of Arendt's – although I disagree with his bleak assessment of Arendt's ability to do justice to the "material things and concrete practices".[12] Instead of "materialism" in the Marxists or capitalist sense, the material part of the term refers – in my usage at least – to the material world of nature or the earth as such, and the complex human interactions with these materials. After a detour through the modern concept of nature, and its problems from the viewpoint of the material culture of care, I conclude by reflecting on concrete politics of material and social reconstruction that should secure good life within the limits of planetary boundaries, particularly in the context of cities.

The Death of Nature?

The Anthropocene is a new problem. Serious concerns about nature started to emerge, however, increasingly from the 1950s onwards, leaving their mark on Arendt's work as well. One of her worries at the time she was writing *The Human Condition* was what she saw as a "fateful repudiation" of the earth and earthly nature, the "very quintessence of the human condition". Cognizant of the uniqueness of our planet's capacity to support life, Arendt followed with concern the technological attempts to cut human ties to nature and even escape the planet itself, our wish to exchange life as it has been given, "a free gift from nowhere", to something we have made ourselves. At a time when the highest technological achievement was our newly acquired capacity to annihilate "all organic life

10 Judith Butler, *Towards A Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 44–45.

11 Lucy Benjamin, "Earthly Births: The Messianism of Natality in the Climate Crisis," *Approaching Religion* 10, no. 2 (2020): 75.

12 Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 6.

on earth", Arendt sought to highlight human relationship to nature as an important political question.[13]

Similar worries about human overreach are frequent today. For many, the Anthropocene has delivered a death blow to the distinction between nature and culture. For us, "there is no more nature that stands apart from human beings" and "the contrast between what is nature and what is not no longer makes sense".[14] This is so for both empirical and conceptual reasons. On the one hand, we are so involved in the processes of the Earth system that an "untouched" nature simply does not exist anymore. On the other hand, the increasingly prominent constructivist and genealogical sensitivities have highlighted the fact that the very meaning of "nature" is sociohistorically contingent.[15] Oftentimes, the two aspects of the end of nature are pursued in tandem. Carolyn Merchant's oft-cited book (predating the Anthropocene concept) *The Death of Nature*, for example, targets both the "removal of animistic, organic assumptions about the cosmos" and the "accelerating exploitation of both human and natural resources in the name of culture and progress".[16]

For the purposes of the present essay, it is interesting to note that similar discussions were already had in Arendt's time. In addition to the criticism of the repudiation of the earth and the gift of life in *The Human Condition*, these issues surfaced in her life, work, and relationships in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

"Listen now carefully and remember [...] Perhaps you have guessed it. Nature is dead, *mein Kind*." This message is delivered by none other than Immanuel Kant, albeit imaginary, to the protagonist of Mary McCarthy's 1971 novel, *Birds of America*.[17] As the Kant "quote" indicates, the novel – dedicated to Arendt – is about human relationship to nature, a theme McCarthy also discussed in the essay "One Touch of Nature", published in *The New Yorker* in 1970, which focuses on the disappearance of nature from the cast of characters in the modern novel.[18]

In Arendt's opinion, the essay was "absolutely splendid" and she read the first chapter of the novel (which was published separately) "with great delight".[19] The novel, she wrote,

13 Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 2–3.
14 Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 3, 15; Paul Wapner, "The Changing Nature of Nature: Environmental Politics in the Anthropocene," *Global Environmental Politics* 14, no. 4 (2014): 36.
15 Wapner, "The Changing Nature of Nature," 39.
16 Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: HarperOne, 1990), xxi–xxii, 193.
17 Mary McCarthy, *Birds of America* (New York: Penguin, 2018).
18 Mary McCarthy, "One Touch of Nature," *New Yorker*, January 16, 1970.
19 Mary McCarthy and Hannah Arendt, *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy 1949-1975*, ed. Carol Brightman (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1995), 253, 276–277.

> "strikes me as the most "relevant" piece of fiction one could possibly read, hitting this whole technological question of the time at its most human and most neglected point. Among your own books, it is [...] in tone, gesture, reflectiveness probably the one that will be closest to me."[20]

A few years later, just before her death, Arendt herself wrote that the "recent sudden awakening to the threats to our environment is the first ray of hope" suggesting a turning point in the constantly accelerating, world-and-earth-consuming capitalism.[21]

It is no coincidence that Arendt and McCarthy had these discussions in the late-1960s, early 1970s. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* had been published in 1962, and even the issue of global warming started to emerge to public consciousness at the time. In 1956, *The New York Times* published two articles reporting that industrial burning of carbon fuels will likely lead to a change in the climate.[22] A considerable number of similar articles, early warnings about a warming atmosphere and rising sea levels, continue to appear in the *Times* over the following decades. Accordingly, this was the time when a notion of a globally shared responsibility for the Earth started to emerge. Perhaps the most well-known instance of this is Adlai Stevenson's popularization of the "spaceship Earth" concept in his 1965 speech at the UN. Resonating with the Arendtian concern for care which is at the center of the present essay, he emphasized that our continued existence can be guaranteed "only by the care, the work, and, I will say, the love we give our fragile craft".[23]

Despite detecting sparks of hope, Arendt was – characteristically– not very optimistic about the prospects of such loving care gaining a prominent position. The problem, as she saw it, was that nobody "has yet found a means to stop this runaway economy without causing a really major breakdown".[24] Arguably, our situation is not considerably brighter. The rays of hope radiating from the environmental consciousness that was emerging in the 1960s and 1970s were soon dimmed under the clouds of neoliberal hegemony and the post-Cold War capitalist world order – a system premised on "going for growth", as the title of an OECD flagship publication has it. Now, as this hegemony crumbles under the weight of the planetary crisis, it is high time to return to the loving care mentioned by Stevenson. Arendt's thought, I suggest, offers one among many sources from which we can draw when sketching the principles of such care in our new political situation.

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20 McCarthy and Arendt, 276–277.
21 Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 262–263.
22 "Science Notes; Carbon Dioxide Due to Change Climate--Balloon Views," *The New York Times*, June 3, 1956; Waldemar Kaempffert, "Science In Review; Warmer Climate on the Earth May Be Due To More Carbon Dioxide in the Air" *The New York Times*, October 28, 1956.
23 Quoted in Jack Focht, "An Ecosystem Is A Partnership in Nature," *The New York Times*, February 25, 1968.
24 Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 263.

For Love of the What? Building a World, Cultivating Nature

Much important work has been done in recent years on the contributions to democratic theory of the Arendtian notions of "world-building", "care for the world", and *amor mundi*. This refers to a democratic ethos that centers around the world as an in-between space, not around, say, the subjects that constitute a people.[25] Ella Myers and Bonnie Honig have particularly called attention to the role of "worldly things" as the objects of care, regard, and "active tending to" in this democratic ethos.[26] Yet, there is much more to be said about the role of the things Arendt designates as "natural" and "given" in the activity of world-building. Myers, for example, faults Arendt for upholding too strict a distinction between the human world and nature.[27] I instead propose to read her in the light of contemporary authors – such as Donna Haraway and Samantha Frost – reflecting our material conditioning and interdependency as entangled set of questions retaining to 'natureculture' or 'bioculture'[28]. This is not to suggest that Arendt would agree with these authors. Rather, their ideas can be used to alert us to aspects of Arendt's work that we might otherwise miss, to tease forth the complex set of relations that exist between the world and the earth, nature and culture, especially in the contemporary situation. Up to a point, I want to suggest, the relationship between earthly nature and the human world can be understood as *symbiotic* rather than dualistically divisive.

Granted, we need to distinguish between the human world and earthly nature. Most scholars writing about the Anthropocene acknowledge as much, despite their disagreement on the exact ontology of the human/nature relationship.[29] This distinction, however, should not be taken as a separation. Human togetherness – the common world – is mediated by non-human materials, both living and non-living. Our activities are based on natural processes that take place regardless of ourselves, but our activities can also have a major impact on these processes. Nevertheless, most formulations of the "care for the world" – Myers's included – focus on activities considered specifically political – action, debate, deliberation, and such. This leaves us in the dark about the relationship of these activities to the earth. A politics of care as an appropriate response to the Anthropocene must necessarily also reckon with the parts of *vita activa* having to do with our relationship to the material world – work and labor.

25 E.g. Linda Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 16–31.

26 Ella Myers, *Worldly Ethics: Democratic Politics and Care for the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 86; Bonnie Honig, *Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

27 Myers, *Worldly Ethics*, 90; See also William E. Connolly, *Climate Machines, Fascist Drives, and Truth* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 3–5, 42.

28 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Samantha Frost, *Biocultural Creatures: Toward a New Theory of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2016). See also Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen, "The Value of the Surface: Reappreciating Embodiment, Labor, and Necessity in Arendt's Political Thought". *Critical Times: Interventions in Global Critical Theory* 4(2). These discussions are of course linked to a long line of feminist writings on the politics of care. See e.g. The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto* (London: Verson, 2020).

29 See e.g. Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (New York: Verso, 2015); Andreas Malm, *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (London: Verso, 2018); Kohei Saito, "Marx in the Anthropocene: Value, Metabolic Rift, and the Non-Cartesian Dualism," *Zeitschrift Für Kritische Sozialtheorie Und Philosophie* 4, no. 1–2 (2017): 276–95; Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

One of the clearest articulations Arendt offered on this matter is found in a letter she sent to McCarthy around the time *Birds of America* was published. Writing in a response to the novel and an interview with Jean-François Revel titled "Miss McCarthy Explains" (which accompanied a hostile review by Helen Vendler)[30], Arendt comments:

> "I want to quarrel with your opposition of culture and nature. Culture is always cultivated nature – nature being tended and being taken care of by one of nature's products called man. If nature is dead culture will die too, together with all the artifacts of our civilization."[31]

Here, Arendt clearly positions human beings as interdependent members of nature's household. She also picks up a theme she had discussed already in her two essays on the relationship between politics and culture, i.e. "Culture and Politics" and "Crisis in Culture". These essays trace back the meaning of culture to Roman antiquity, and the term *colere* – "to cultivate, to dwell, to take care, to tend and preserve". Instead of representing a chasm between the human world and the natural environment, the verb *colere* invites us to think of them in symbiotic terms resembling Stevenson's version of care and love we owe to "our fragile craft". It

> "relates primarily to the intercourse of man with nature in the sense of cultivating and tending nature until it becomes fit for human habitation. As such, it indicates an attitude of loving care and stands in sharp contrast to all efforts to subject nature to the domination of man."[32]

What is noteworthy here is that the tending, caring, and cultivating that we have come to associate with the care for the *world* are presented as relating *primarily* to the intercourse between human beings and the natural world – "as far as Roman usage is concerned, the chief point always was the connection of culture and nature".[33] Hence the close link to agriculture, from which the more metaphorical connotations of cultivating the mind and the spirit are derived. Culture, and particularly architecture, was a "second Nature, one that serves civic goals", as Goethe put it during his travels in Italy.[34]

The Greeks saw things in quite another light, according to Arendt. They gave more thought to the work of *homo faber*, human being as a maker of things. The Greeks acknowledged the thoroughgoing instrumentalism of *homo faber's* outlook and saw in it a potent threat to freedom. And of the three human activities Arendt distinguishes in *The*

30 "Miss McCarthy Explains," *The New York Times*, May 16, 1971. Vendler's was not the only negative review. The book's critical reception was overall rather unflattering and many readers felt it was too 'academic'.

31 Mary McCarthy and Hannah Arendt, *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy 1949-1975* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1995), 293. It is possible that this was McCarthy's point, too, as her biographer Carole Brightman points out, see Brightman, *Writing Dangerously* (San Diego: Harvest, 1994), 530. However, the idea of re-establishing "Nature in her natural place" clearly seems to hold its sway over McCarthy, even though she at the same time recognizes the impossibility of the thought.

32 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 208.

33 Ibid.

34 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Essential Goethe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 827; See also McCarthy, "One Touch of Nature."

Human Condition, work is the one essentially characterized by *violence* against nature. It works on materials produced by nature, obviously, but this material

> "is already a product of human hands which have removed it from its natural location, either killing a life process [...] or interrupting one of nature's slower processes [...] This element of violation and violence is present in all fabrication, and *homo faber*, the creator of the human artifice, has always been a destroyer of nature."[35]

Whereas for the Romans, art "should develop as naturally as the landscape", the Greeks considered even agriculture as violence towards the earth. Their cautiousness towards the influence of *homo faber*'s means/ends mentality also stretched to what Arendt acknowledges as "essentially political activities" such as urban planning and legislative work. Because these activities "had even the least bit to do with producing", they were conceived as pre-political conditions of politics by the Greeks.[36]

Getting a grip on Arendt's stance between these two positions is more difficult than would at first appear. The standard reading of her work suggests that she sided with the Greeks. And indeed, "Crisis in Culture" moves away from the Romans and focuses on the Greeks, noting for example that "it is hardly the mentality of gardeners which produces art".[37] However, her emphasis on the cultivation of nature in the letter to McCarthy suggests that things are not so simple. Also, when it comes to the cultivation of land, in *The Human Condition* Arendt explicitly rejects the notion that tilling the land would constitute an example of labor transforming itself into work in the process.[38] The statement can be criticized as an instant of Arendt patrolling the borders between her activities too alertly – a tendency that is certainly present in her work, although perhaps not quite as prominently we used to assume.[39] However, it also indicates that the Greeks were not exactly right to associate agriculture with work, and hence with violence.

Arendt's view, as I see it, is that the Greeks understood the outlook required to *produce* cultural artifacts – the mentality of *homo faber* – including its pitfalls. The Romans, who partly inherited the Greek creations, were more perceptive when it came to the qualities required to *take care of them*. Taking care and cultivating, obviously, is not the same as making – hence, both Greeks and the Romans kept their distance from the virtues of *homo faber*. *Homo faber* builds the world, but without the audience capable of using the faculty of judgment or exercising their "cultured" or "cultivated" spirit, this

35 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 139.
36 Hannah Arendt, *Thinking without a Banister. Essays in Understanding, 1953–1975* (New York: Schocken Books, 2018), 166, 174.
37 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 209.
38 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 138–139.
39 E.g. Patchen Markell, "Arendt's Work: On the Architecture of 'The Human Condition,'" *College Literature* 38, no. 1 (2011): 15–44; Peg Birmingham, "Worldly Immortality in an Age of Superfluity: Arendt's The Human Condition," *Arendt Studies* 2 (2018): 25–35; Steven Klein, "'Fit to Enter the World': Hannah Arendt on Politics, Economics, and the Welfare State," *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 4 (2014): 856–69; Laura Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature? On the Politics of Science* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

world cannot continue to exist. On this, the two classical periods concurred. Pericles praised the Athenian love of beauty (*philokaloumen*) moderated by judgment (*euteleias*). In Arendt's interpretation, this is a highly political capacity that "makes man fit to take care of the things of the world" and links to Cicero's *cultura animi*[40]. Importantly, Kant would further argue that the fact that we are affected by beauty *in nature* "proves that [the human being] is made for and fits into this world" – a quote McCarthy invokes before having her Kant declare the death of nature.[41] This politically-moderated love of beauty (including natural beauty), I suggest, has important repercussions in a context where "endless forms most beautiful" (Darwin) are dying at an alarming rate.

At the same time, the role of *homo faber* in the emergence of the Anthropocene as well as in the politics of ecological reconstruction add their own layers of complexity to these questions. Before discussing the notion of cultivation in more detail, then, a quick detour is necessary to the genealogy of the Anthropocene, its relationship to the modern concept of nature, as well as the role of *homo faber* in all this. I mentioned above the increased genealogical and constructivist sensitivity as a contributor to the "death of nature" in the Anthropocene. Although writing before the rise of contemporary constructivism and the popularization of genealogy by Foucault, Arendt displays a notable interest in the historical changes in the human condition. For the purposes of the present essay, the changing concept of nature in modernity is of particular interest, because it helps us to shed light on the emergence of the Anthropocene. Furthermore, it also gives us tools for critically assessing whether the dominant framing of the Anthropocene in the scholarly literature invites *colere*.

The modern concept of nature

Central to understanding Arendt's genealogy of nature is the essay "The Concept of History", which elaborates the conjoined character of our concepts of history and nature. For the Greeks, the notion of history corresponded to their experience of nature as an ever-present entity that appears by itself. Nature was not only the unchanging backdrop of human activities, it was also the measure of their greatness – through history human beings strived for immortality reminiscent of nature itself. The products of *homo faber*, too, although violent towards nature, "borrowed" their durability from nature and the natural materials worked by human hands.[42]

Modernity, in turn, has from its inception onwards been defined by the dominance of those *homo faber* attitudes that the Greeks wanted to exclude from the *polis*: an overall instrumental and utilitarian disposition towards the world and nature. Capitalist modernity, as thinkers as diverse as Marx and Bergson noted, thinks about the non-

40 Arendt, *Between Past and Future,* 210–211; 221–222.
41 The quote is from "Reflexionen zur Logik" (1820a), quoted in Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 30 and alluded to in McCarhy, *The Birds*, 306.
42 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 41, 44, 47–48.

human nature as a passive object of our domination, ”purely a matter of utility” or “an immense piece of cloth in which we can cut out what we will and sew it together again as we please”.[43] It is exclusively the *homo faber* whose attitude towards the world is defined by a “Promethean sovereignty over the materials worked with” and who “conducts himself as lord and master of the whole earth”.[44] This code of conduct has obvious and immense ecological consequences. For many, it is exactly this modern utopia of human beings separated and raised over the natural world that lies at the root of the Anthropocene. Indeed, it is difficult *not* to think of Arendt's description of the violence inherent in *homo faber*'s productive activities when looking at pictures of mountaintop removal mining sites or the toxic legacies of Shell in the Niger Delta area. If non-human nature has indeed become an object in modernity, it is not an object we treat with care.

In the realm of sciences, too, it was the rise of technology from its lowly position as *banausia* to the center of knowledge and discovery, the instruments and tools built by *homo faber,* that helped to revolutionize the modern worldview. The telescope, in particular, set the path towards the modern “universal science”. Modern science, in Arendt's view, is freed from the “shackles” of terrestrial spatiality (*geo*metry) and considers the Earth and earthly nature from an extra-terrestrial Archimedean viewpoint on *all levels of operation* from the microscopic to telescopic.[45] If capitalist production objectified non-human nature in a Faustian manner, modern science relatedly objectified the whole planet. Both processes were centrally driven by *homo faber*, and led to a problematic “object” view of nature.

For Arendt, however, the story is more complex. We have come to realize that “man is never exclusively *homo faber*, that even the fabricator remains at the same time an acting being, who starts processes wherever he goes and with whatever he does”. Anticipating the current Anthropocene consciousness, she writes that our world is not anymore molded by human being as a maker of things, but rather “by man *acting* into nature”.[46] In other words, we have acquired an ability, not to *make* nature, but to start new natural processes. When this occurred, human beings not only increased their aggressive hold on nature and the “given forces of the earth”, but erased the boundaries between non-human nature and the human world.[47] Whether this happened with the splitting of the atom (as Arendt holds) or when we began moving the economic machinery with carbon fuels (as we may now phase it), is of little consequence. What matters is that the whole image of modernity and the long history of the Anthropocene starts to appear as multi-layered fabric, in which the objectification of nature represents only one strand of the whole.

In Arendt's work, the phrase “acting into nature” refers to the capacity of the modern sciences to release new natural processes. From the viewpoint of the Anthropocene, it is

43 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 1993), 410; Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: Random House, 1944), 172. The latter is quoted in Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 305.
44 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 139–140.
45 Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 257–260, 291–294; Arendt, *Thinking without a Banister*, 408.
46 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 59–60.
47 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 60.

the transformation of labor in modernity that appears similarly revolutionary. The modern economic formations – ways of organizing our metabolic relationship with nature – created by racial capitalism are central to understanding the present predicament. Arendt herself follows Marx in focusing on the appropriation of cheap labor-force in early industrial economies. The process was also decisively dependent, however, on "expropriation, appropriation and distribution of brown and black bodies and Nature". The plantation, in particular, was a testing ground for a total capture of both nature and racialized workforce, without which capitalist wealth extraction would not have been possible.[48] This development, tending towards overextraction of natural resources and later the economy fueled by oil, can be seen as a part of what Arendt famously referred to as the "unnatural growth of the natural", in which the "natural" cyclical metabolism between human beings and nature is appropriated by the economic processes. Labor no longer appears as simply "circular" attending to daily necessity – it feeds an ever-expanding process which eventually produces a "metabolic rift" with the natural environment, too.[49]

Several aspects of the current environmental havoc can be described as "unnatural growth of the natural". Human consumption of animal products, for example, has a considerable impact on ecosystems around the planet. Currently, humans and livestock together constitute a greater portion of the global biomass than all other vertebrates combined (excluding fish).[50] The number of cows, pigs, and poultry on the planet, a result of an economic system created by human beings, can be conceived as an aspect of "unnatural" growth of the natural. The same logic applies to greenhouse gases. There is nothing "unnatural" in them. They are not even "toxic" strictly speaking. They have only become a problem due to the dizzyingly fast pace we have released them from the terrain by burning fossil fuels from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The rise of carbon dioxide concentration from the pre-industrial annual average of 280 particles per million (ppm) to 410 ppm in 2019 is then a potent example of "unnatural growth of the natural", although admittedly not exactly in the sense meant by Arendt.

Releasing processes – the "unnatural growth of the natural" – is not something we can understand in terms of work. No matter how violent, work qua work is *limited* in its consequences. The ecological processes released by labor and science, on the contrary, are potentially unlimited. Even if justified in the instrumental terms native to fabrication, and aided by technology built by *homo faber*, the concrete outcome is not understandable as a result of a fabrication process, but rather as an unpredictable effect of *action*.[51] We are still dealing with violence towards nature, but of a different sort – perhaps more akin to violence applied in human affairs than to the violence of *homo faber*.

48 Eduardo Mendieta, "Edge City: Reflections on the Urbanocene and the Plantatiocene," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 7, no. 1 (2019): 90.

49 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 47; On the notion of metabolic rift, see e.g. Saito, "Marx in the Anthropocene."

50 Yinon M. Bar-On, Rob Phillips, and Ron Milo, "The Biomass Distribution on Earth," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115, no. 25 (2018): 6506–11.

51 See Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen, "Labor as Action: The Human Condition in the Anthropocene," *Research in Phenomenology* 50, no. 2 (2020): 240–60.

The phrase "unnatural" also suggests that it is not an undefined, abstract "closeness to nature" that is the problem. It is not exactly the case that "the closer Nature got to the human, the uglier it could be" as McCarthy puts it.[52] Neither should we overemphasize "the political and cultural institutions that separate humanity from nature", or Arendt's criticism of the attempts to reduce humans to the level of nature, and the link between barbarism and the "imagined closeness to nature".[53] The problem is that "closeness to nature" can mean many different things. It is perfectly plausible to call for a closeness to nature in the sense of tending to the natural environment with "loving care" without representing human beings as the executioners of the laws of nature. As we have seen, the point of political and cultural institutions is not exactly to *separate* humanity from nature.

If neither objectification of nature nor our abstract "closeness" to it hit the mark as the central problem of modernity, then, what does? For Arendt, the answer relates to the modern concept of nature which, like the modern concept of history and the modern societal imagination, is understood as a process. Whether we think about energy, economic growth, historical developments, evolution, or the flow of planetary "deep time", we think in terms of processes. As processes, they are also per force invisible. You might be imagining the most exquisite displays of bird plumage – but it is not evolution as such. The "solid objectivity" of all things has dissolved into invisible processes. Bruno Latour argues that we can escape the Archimedean viewpoint of universal science by paying attention to nature-as-process.[54] Arendt would instead suggest that the two are complementary, two sides of the same *modern* notion of nature. Both contribute to an understanding that parts ways with human experience. Both invite us to think in abstractions.

Arendt was concerned "with the risks of natural displays of diversity disappearing from public view". Modern science is sometimes complicit in the creation of these "spaces of disappearance", organization of our perceptual apparatuses so that the earthly nature can only come to view from an experientially narrow perspective.[55] The issue becomes particularly acute with the questions of climate change and the Anthropocene. It is often noted that the current crisis is not directly available to experience. We only ever experience parts of it, but the crisis – especially climate change – itself is nonlocal, what Tim Morton calls a "hyperobject": a massive, invisible thing whose vastness transcends our comprehension.[56]

52 McCarthy, *Birds of America*, 300.

53 Dana Villa, "Genealogies of Total Domination: Arendt, Adorno, and Auschwitz," *New German Critique*, no. 100 (2007): 34, 45.

54 Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), 71–75. See also Belcher, Oliver, and Jeremy J Schmidt. "Being Earthbound: Arendt, Process and Alienation in the Anthropocene." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 39, no. 1 (2021): 103–20.

55 Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature?*, 36–37.

56 Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2013), 1, 48, 60; See also Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History*, 44.

It is worth asking if the very phrasing of the current crisis may also – ironically – contribute to the disappearance of nature from the public view. The Anthropocene itself is an ”invisible process” that has “engulfed every tangible thing” so that nothing particular seems “meaningful in and by itself, not even history or nature taken each as a whole, and certainly not particular occurrences in the physical order or specific historical events”.[57] The very debate about the proper name of our era, and the wordplay with different *-cenes* (“it’s the Anthropocene! No, capitalocene! Urbanocene!), risks ascending on an intellectual level that has little to do with the concrete and pressing issues (which are a plethora). No wonder that the concept of the Anthropocene has been accused of being politically passivizing.[58]

Hence, while the Anthropocene pushes contemporary political theorizing to ask fundamental questions, we must also keep the focus on concrete particularity over the abstract frame of “the planetary”. Science, the abovementioned tendencies notwithstanding, is of course indispensable here – in tandem with political judgment. It is useful to remember, for example, that not all issues under the umbrella of the Anthropocene are global/planetary in the same sense as the climate is. Although linked to the global economy, biodiversity and freshwater resources are always also entangled in characteristically local dynamics. While similar problems occur across the globe, there is no “one size fits all” solution to them.

Colere, or A Material Culture of Care

> *Vladimir*: “…To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not.” (Beckett, *Waiting for Godot,* 90)

When we ponder the prospects of a material culture of care, the political principles that have traditionally guided political action – such as justice, equality, or glory – are important, but only get us so far. It seems that we need additional orientation in the attempt to conjure up an adequate response to the ecological crisis. The goals we need to set for ourselves require a cultural, political, and economic transformation that can only be achieved by applying new principles in our actions as well as restructuring the basic infrastructure of our societies. While we must certainly look elsewhere as well, I find some promise in Arendt’s reflections, presented at the end of the first edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* on “a fundamental gratitude for the few elementary things that indeed are invariably given to us, such as life itself”. Such gratitude grounds itself in an affirmation of the “tremendous bliss” of plurality.[59] Relatedly, as the consequences of our own actions rebound on ourselves, one is reminded of a warning Arendt sounded in the manuscript for her unpublished *Einführung in die Politik*. Annihilation of a particular

57 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 63.
58 Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History*, 176–177.
59 Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 435–39.

group of people, she argued, always takes with it a unique perspective. A portion of the common world is destroyed irreparably, making the world poorer and ultimately taking the annihilator with it.[60]

In both passages, Arendt still operates within the horizon of the human world. While politics is not about human beings as such, it nevertheless relates to the world that stands between *them*. These two passages open up from a new perspective, however, if read from the viewpoint of her late reflections on the diversity of life's appearances in *The Life of the Mind*. The visual, olfactory, aural, tactile, and gustatory diversity of the natural world, Arendt suggests there, "is matched by an equally astounding diverseness of sense organs among the animal species". Each species has a world of its own, but we share "appearance as such".[61] Perhaps one is not stretching Arendt's argument too much when noting that in the case of species annihilation, too, the world becomes objectively poorer, less diverse in the spectacle of appearances it offers. As with strictly inter-human affairs, a politics that causes destruction in the interspecies realm turns on its culprit, leaving them with a world that is impoverished aesthetically and in terms of ecosystem services, threatening to annihilate the annihilator in the most literal sense.

Not only life and physical survival but also politics relies on the cultivation of nature and promotion of natural diversity. My suggestion, then, is to expand Arendt's notion of gratitude – and with it, political responsibility – to include the biosphere as a whole. By the same token, our solidarity must, at least tentatively, extend to non-human species as well.

Inspired by the principles of gratitude and affirmation of life's plurality, then, the material culture of care helps humans find their place in the broader web of life. So far, however, the culture I have been describing may sound like an abstract ideal. Principles are not worth much unless embodied in concrete practices. As a think tank describing one possible path towards a sustainable society notes, ecological reconstruction requires taking care of "ecological systems, communities and cultures", and these elements "are not abstract but concrete: water, food, warmth, parents and other educators, friends, neighbours, language and thought all need constant care and upkeep in order to guarantee the continuity of individual and social well-being".[62]

While I cannot provide blueprints for action, I will conclude my argument by pointing out different ways in which the idea of tending and cultivating our interdependencies with the non-human nature may take more concrete forms. I mentioned above that the culture of care must involve both labor and work, and I will particularly focus on those two activities. In the interest of bringing Arendt to dialogue with broader tenets in the

60 Hannah Arendt, *Was Ist Politik?: Fragmente Aus Dem Nachlass* (Munich: Piper, 2003), 105–106. Let it be acknowledged that the cited passage concludes with one of the most blatantly Eurocentric statements to be found in Arendt's ouvre on the "worldlessness" of Native Americans.

61 Arendt, *The Life of the Mind; One: Thinking*, 20; Here, my reading is inspired by Laura Ephraim, *Who Speaks for Nature? On the Politics of Science*, 39.

62 BIOS, "Ecological Reconstruction," accessed June 24, 2021, https://eco.bios.fi/.

literature on ecological reconstruction, I will orient my discussion by drawing from a broad range of sources.

From the viewpoint of the material culture of care I have been developing, two things are particularly important. First, to quote Richard Sennett: "In coping with the climatic crisis, the variant of Hamlet's question which would run 'to build or not to build…' has a clear answer: build."[63] The building of new infrastructure and architecture is central for ecological reconstruction. This, obviously, does not mean that *homo faber* alone would be in charge. Guided by *political* judgment, we must incorporate the activities that the Greeks deemed prepolitical, and Arendt acknowledged as "essentially political" – such as city planning – to the core of our political culture. Second, the role of "caretakers and guardians"[64] also requires more attention. Cultivation, *colere*, involves tending and taking care of the nature as much as of the world. As an activity, it is closely connected to labor. Here, I am particularly thinking about the "second task of laboring" Arendt discusses rather passingly in *The Human Condition*. This task consists of defending the world from the ruin to which natural processes would lead it to without human intervention – cleaning, maintenance, renovation, and so forth.[65] Although Arendt here presents this maintenance as a fight against natural processes, thinking beyond the letter of her thought it should be clear that this type of labor is not violent against nature either. In fact, it is one the key components of a sustainable approach to living and dwelling. We do not want our houses to rot, for example, for both ecological and human-centered reasons.

Both of these aspects of caring, cultivating culture can be grasped more concretely if we consider them at the level of the city. In addition to adding to the concreteness of the question, the city is an important locus of ecological reconstruction. This is so for many intertwining reasons. First, cities are a major contributor to climate change and other environmental problems. Indeed, the emergence of the Anthropocene is closely connected to the process of urbanization and driven by the urban logics of capital, i.e. cities as sinks for capital and main sites for the realization of profit.[66] Second, they are also the site where the consequences of these problems become visible for a big part of humanity. It is estimated that in ten years, 60 percent of the world population will live in cities, and nearly ten percent in mega-cities – most of which are located in the "global south". Hence, as Eduardo Mendieta argues, "if the Anthropocene is to serve as prism for social critique, then it should focus our attention on how the coming cities of the megaurbanization of humanity are at the forefront of struggles for social, racial, and gendered justice".[67]

63 Richard Sennett, *Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 278.
64 Arendt, *Thinking without a Banister*, 166.
65 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 100.
66 Mendieta, "Edge City," 87, 94–95.
67 Mendieta, "Edge City", 96–98.

Particularly what Saskia Sassen calls "global cities" are key hubs in the global flows of capital.[68] This gives the cities a kind of political power they did not possess in the global economy premised solely on the interactions among nation-states. Cities can act independently of the state, when national leaders fail to assume responsibility for the ecological reconstruction – as was witnessed for example when several US cities (e.g. Pittsburg and New York) openly dissociated themselves from President Trump's withdrawal from the Paris agreement. At the same time, turning this promise into a real strength would require reorganization of power in the cities as well. Cities in the current global economy are not planned by democratic assemblies as much they are "developed" by international core investors and high finance firms. The city is by no means an unequivocal "answer" to the challenges of ecological restructuring. Rather, it is a key locus of political struggle. The first task is to resist the increasing commodification of both buildings and the surrounding natural landscapes, which – as the Italian archeologist and art historian Salvatore Settis notes – are part of the same process. Hence "the right to the city and the right to nature aren't merely complimentary: they're the same thing".[69] Cities are not the antithesis of nature, but completely dependent upon it. Besides, Ashley Dawson notes, "they also structure our increasingly chaotic natural world".[70] And while restructuring the global economy is obviously a key challenge, the political struggles towards this end are often fought in the cities, too.

Kenneth Frampton, an architectural theorist influenced by Arendt, has reflected on ways to resists "the endless processal flux of the megalopolis". A key notion in his thought is the idea of tectonic, indicating an anti-processal principle based on cultivating the site, the natural environment in which a given building is erected. In his vision, building and city planning involve an interplay between natural constraints and cultural work, or cultivation, in a way that does justice both to ecological requirements and the need to erect a properly public space.[71] Building, he argues, is situated in the "interface of culture and nature": "Close to agriculture, its task is to modify the earth's surface in such a way as to take care of it".[72] This obviously is in complete contradiction to modern builders, such as New York's Robert Moses, an embodiment of the Faustian tendencies of *homo faber*, who preferred to iron out the natural topographies and ecologies of place in order to build his highways.

In her book rethinking the basics of economy, Kate Raworth cites Janine Benyus's vision of 'generous cities': urban areas that nestle within the living world. Something like an expanded version of Arendtian-Framptonian cultivation, Benyus's first step is to build

68 E.g. Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, Fifth edition (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2018), 6–7.

69 Salvatore Settis, *If Venice Dies*, trans. André Naffis-Sahely (New York: New Vessel Press, 2016), 51, 117.

70 Ashley Dawson, *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* (London: Verso, 2017), 9.

71 Kenneth Frampton, *Labour, Work and Architecture* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2002), 85–86, 103, 248–253.

72 Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*, ed. John Cava (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2001), 27; See also Markell's commentary, which focuses on the idea that architecture could organize visibility to the labor and social relations involved in the erection and maintenance of buildings. Patchen Markell, "Political Tectonics," *OASE Journal for Architecture / Tijdschrift Voor Architectuur* 106, no. July 2020 (2020): 50.

the city *into* the surrounding ecosystem. One of the finest examples of a material culture of care, the idea includes

> "Rooftops that grow food, gather the sun's energy, and welcome wildlife. Pavements that absorb storm water then slowly release it into aquifers. Buildings that sequester carbon dioxide, cleanse the air, treat their own wastewater, and turn sewage back into rich soil nutrients. All connected in an infrastructural web that is woven through with wildlife corridors and urban agriculture."[73]

If successful, such a city would be both more sustainable, more resilient, *and* a stage of increased diversity – both human and interspecies plurality.

Our cities are built for cars with concrete and steel. All three are ecologically unsustainable, but changing this aspect of cities is not a minor tweak. The modern cities were largely built in the interwar and postwar years with massive public investments. Moses built with a steady flow of New Deal money. Some of the changes needed today are of the same scale as the projects of Moses in New York and Georges-Eugène Haussmann in Paris. Effective responses to the Anthropocenic crises require a whole array of infrastructure projects. As Sennett argues, we cannot remain enchanted by the incremental, local ethos of Jane Jacobs's vision of the city.[74]

That said, this does not mean contemporary societies should engage in a building frenzy. In general, maintenance and development of existing buildings is more ecological than their replacement with new ones. Here, we find ourselves somewhere between the Greek and Roman mentality. We have inherited the works of the late modern petroculture. We must bricoleur our way towards an ecologically sustainable infrastructure without building everything from the scratch. In line with the "second task" of laboring that I discussed above as a modality of the material culture of care, attention must be focused on activities such as renovating, preserving, and maintaining.

We must also be careful with the imagery of "cities" that we operate with. As mentioned, most urban population dwells in the "global south", and moreover, third of this population lives in "slum-like conditions". For Mendieta, the key is to focus on edge city, e.g. the slums and favelas – parts of the city that represent the threshold to the opportunities opened up by cities, while often being also the parts that are the most vulnerable to extreme weather, diseases and other maladies. I follow Mendieta in arguing that, suspended between "repeating plantations" and the contemporary spatialization of the Arendtian "right to have rights", the edge city is key for restructuring societies to the Anthropocene conditions.[75] If the promise of urban, socially fair ecological reconstruction is not realized in the "edge cities", the idea will not carry us very far.

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73 Kate Raworth, *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist* (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2018), 223–224.

74 Sennett, *Building and Dwelling*, 15, 87.

75 See Mendieta, "Edge City," 98–102.

Outside the cities, an example of the material culture of care can be found among the native peoples. Wapner notes that for many Indigenous groups, nature or wilderness does not stand for the absence of humans, but for a particular – I would say caring – set of relationships between human beings and the non-human nature. The laborious task of preserving wilderness thus requires maintenance of salmon beds, harvesting certain plants, intentionally burning terrains, and so forth. There are many examples around the world, such as the Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, and the Mursi in Ethiopia, of Indigenous groups taking active steps in protecting and promoting biological diversity.[76] It is not very surprising, from this angle, that a considerable percentage of remaining biodiversity is found from Indigenous lands.[77] Recognizing their right to the land, and learning from their practices of cultivating nature, is thus key for effectively meeting the urgent needs of protecting biodiversity, balancing nutrient cycles, and mitigating climate change.

Justin Pack has recently argued that there is a connection between Arendt's thought and Native American philosophy in the notion of *amor mundi*. For him, the Native American love of a place, which includes both living and non-living aspects of nature, is "radically different" from Arendt's love for the world, yet related to it. If the reading I am pursuing in this essay is correct, the distance between the two might be even shorter than allowed by Pack – without, however, collapsing one into the other.[78] For both, in the words of Wapner, "wilderness is not a state or condition from which people separate themselves, but something to be cultivated within a broader socio-biophysical context".[79] Perhaps *amor mundi* and *amor tellus* were never so far apart after all?

Conclusion

In the aftermath of the totalitarian horrors, Arendt wrote that "[t]o follow a non-imperialistic policy and maintain a non-racists faith becomes daily more difficult because it becomes daily clearer how great a burden of mankind is for man".[80] Similarly, nationalistic chauvinism, blame-shifting, persistent failure to acknowledge the racial underpinnings of the Anthropocene, and other unproductive, dangerous responses increasingly define contemporary politics.[81]

76 Wapner, "The Changing Nature of Nature," 45.

77 Edwin Ogar, Gretta Pecl, and Tero Mustonen, "Science Must Embrace Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge to Solve Our Biodiversity Crisis," *One Earth* 3, no. 2 (August 21, 2020): 162–65; Stephen T. Garnett et al., "A Spatial Overview of the Global Importance of Indigenous Lands for Conservation," *Nature Sustainability* 1, no. 7 (July 2018): 369–74.

78 Justin Pack, "Amor Mundi: Reading Arendt Alongside Native American Philosophy," *Sophia* 60, no. 2 (2021): 285; Lucy Benjamin's interpretation of the multifaceted resistance to the Standing Rock pipeline comes closer to my argument, see Benjamin, "Earthly Births," 86.

79 Wapner, "The Changing Nature of Nature," 45.

80 Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 131.

81 Axelle Karera, "Blackness and the Pitfalls of Anthropocene Ethics," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 7, no. 1 (2019): 32–56; Nancy Tuana, "Climate Apartheid: The Forgetting of Race in the Anthropocene," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–31.

This article has drawn inspiration from Arendt in articulating a positive vision of taking responsibility for the burdens our age places on shoulders – a material culture of care. Premised on the idea of culture as "cultivation of nature", it serves to expand the Arendtian notion of care, usually associated with more narrowly political activities, to human interaction with matter – matter understood both as material worked by *homo faber* and the living material in nature. Caring as a modality of relating to the non-human nature involves all three human activities. It acts as an interface where labor, work, and action come together and organize our relationship with nature, inspired by the principle of plurality that extends beyond the scope of human communities.

Focusing on care can also transform the discussion on climate change and other ecological questions into a more productive direction. Studies suggest that in terms of public support for climate policies, *worry* seems to represent the most felicitous affective framing, especially in comparison to fear or guilt.[82] Escaping guilt may sometimes be easy ("It's all China's fault!"), but worrying about something squarely falls into the register of care and *shared responsibility*. And unlike guilt, care sticks. It makes us more receptive to facts, to factual truth taken as the starting point for political debate, not its technocratic end.

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82 Nicholas Smith and Anthony Leiserowitz, "The Role of Emotion in Global Warming Policy Support and Opposition," *Risk Analysis* 34, no. 5 (2014): 944.