

Simon P. James, 'Introduction' from *The Presence of Nature: A Study in Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy* (2009, Palgrave Macmillan), reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan

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Environmental philosophers have had a great deal to say about nature as it has been conceived by scientists. They have had much to say about nature as it has been conceived by other philosophers. But they have had comparatively little to say about nature as we experience it in the living of our lives. In the following, I argue that this lack of attention to nature-as-experienced is a cause for regret, and not just for rhetorical reasons, not just because it makes the discipline of environmental philosophy seem disagreeably abstract and high-flown. I contend that this inattention to experience is a bad thing because environmental philosophy that fails to connect with our lived experience of nature is, more often than not, bad philosophy.

If the first general aim of this book is to challenge a popular, overly abstract approach to environmental philosophy, its second is to show, through example, the merits of an alternative approach. My second general aim, then, is to do environmental philosophy by paying close attention – closer than is usual – to how we experience the natural world. Accordingly, I engage not just with the works of philosophers, but also with the testimonies of a diverse collection of naturalists, scientists, poets and explorers - from the writings of J. A. Baker to the poetry of William Wordsworth, and from the passionate prose of Henry David Thoreau to the more sober reflections of modern-day scientists.

Taking such an experience-focused approach, I develop original accounts of (1) what the natural world *is*, and (2) how we *ought* to act towards it. And along the way, I hope to cast new light on some of the key problems in environmental philosophy: What is our place in nature? Do any nonhuman animals have minds? How are we to conceive our moral relations with the natural world? Does the natural world exist independently of our understanding of it? These are all familiar topics, of course, but this will be environmental philosophy seen from the ground up, starting from our lived experience of nature.

If these are the book's aims, its subject matter is the natural world as we experience it in the living of our lives. So this book is about the many faces of nature-as-experienced. It is about nature's familiarity and what Iris Murdoch once called its 'sheer alien pointless independent existence' (2007: 83). It is about those parts of the natural world to which we find ourselves drawn, and those from which we feel repelled. In the most general terms, it is an attempt to understand what it is like to inhabit a world that is in various senses and to varying degrees 'natural' rather than 'human' - a world of roots, soil and leaves, and not just of plastic and tarmac.

Expressed in more technical language, this book is about 'the phenomenology' of our relations with the natural world. Yet the word 'phenomenology' denotes not just the object of this study but also its method, for in examining what it is like to experience the natural world I will adopt a phenomenological approach.

I will have more to say in a moment about what it means to adopt a phenomenological approach to our relations with the natural world (and in particular, I will clarify what I mean by 'nature' and 'the natural world'). First, however, I ought to say a few words about what it means to adopt a phenomenological approach to anything.

In very general terms, to take a phenomenological approach is to do philosophy by attending to and reflecting on one's experience. At first sight, this might seem an odd way to go about doing philosophy. After all, it is commonly thought that it is not the philosopher's job to reflect on what it is like to experience phenomena. To be sure, some cursory observations about how things present themselves to us in experience may provide a fitting *hors d'oeuvre*, but it is often supposed that, once she has made these observations, the philosopher should proceed fairly quickly to the main course, a set of reflections on more abstract and general topics. So, for example, having briefly registered the fact that she seems to be surrounded by various material objects, the philosopher should feel perfectly justified in moving on to consider the more interesting question of whether those objects are really there. Or having made some quick observations about the apparently conscious behaviour of her fellow humans, she should feel free to consider the meatier philosophical question of whether those apparently conscious beings really are

conscious and not mindless automata or ‘zombies’. This is simply the vaguely Platonic way in which philosophical inquiry is thought to proceed: away from the confusion and ambiguity of the phenomenal world and, as quickly as possible, onwards and upwards towards a clearer, cleaner realm of pure abstraction.

The worry, then, is that to the extent that the phenomenologist focuses on experience, she won’t be doing anything philosophically interesting, and that to the extent that she does anything philosophically interesting she won’t be focusing on experience. But this worry is unfounded (as is the general conception of philosophy on which it rests). For it is a mistake to suppose that describing what presents itself to us in experience is an easy task and one that can (and should) be quickly got out of the way before proceeding to the main business of doing philosophy. On the contrary, as one phenomenologist points out, it requires ‘much time and effort’ to ‘lay bare’ ‘the world which is revealed to us by our senses and in everyday life’ (WP: 39). Time and effort is needed because we – philosophers and to some extent non-philosophers too - are subject to certain entrenched prejudices which lead us to misconstrue what presents itself in experience. This is not to say that we tend to misunderstand *why* things present themselves to us in experience in the way they do (although we are no doubt prone to do this). It is to say that we tend to misconstrue *what* presents itself to us in experience. That which seems so clear and obvious, the world revealed to us by our senses and in everyday life, is not what we think it is at all. So, for instance, it is often supposed that experience presents us with what Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls an ‘objective world’, a realm of determinate objects arrayed in Euclidean space according to an absolute and quantifiable measure of time, and related to one another by various external relations. But does the world really present itself to us in this way? It might seem obvious that it does, but to be certain, one way or the other, one must interrogate one’s experience. And to interrogate one’s experience, or at least to do it thoroughly, one needs to employ a phenomenological approach. In order to discover ‘the phenomenology’, one needs to do phenomenology.

To do phenomenology is not merely to catalogue the content of experience. For one thing, phenomenologists are not primarily concerned with *what* one experiences, but with *how* one experiences it. Their primary concern is not with the object of experience but with one’s experience of it. And here their chief aim is, by attending to and reflecting on what presents itself to us in experience, to discover general truths about how anything is experienced. This is philosophically significant

in two respects. First, phenomenological inquiries can have a deconstructive or therapeutic effect. In particular, they can (and have been used to) undercut a variety of pernicious sceptical doubts. So, for instance, a phenomenological approach can be used to undercut sceptical doubts about the reality of the external world or the existence of other minds. Second, and more positively, phenomenological inquiries can yield new and interesting philosophical insights. In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger uses a phenomenological approach to investigate what it means for anything to be (his famous ‘question of the meaning of Being’). Through careful reflection on what presents itself to us in experience, Merleau-Ponty develops an original conception of what it means to be embodied. Proficiently employed, the tools of phenomenology can be used to shed light on the deepest and most important issues in philosophy. So if phenomenological inquiries can dispel a variety of philosophical confusions, they can also open our eyes to new philosophical truths. Either way, when it is done well, phenomenology can transform the conceptual landscape of philosophy.

Φ

I have been referring to how we experience the world, but of course all this applies to the *natural* world as well. In fact, interest in environmental phenomenology or ‘eco-phenomenology’ has been rapidly growing, with the result that it is now a recognised genre in the environmental literature. This rise in interest owes in large part to the influence of a few treatises. Here several works could be mentioned: Erazim Kohák’s *The Embers and the Stars*, a beautiful paean for our lived experience of natural things, inspired chiefly by the works of Edmund Husserl; Lorne Neil Evernden’s *The Natural Alien*, a critique of technocratic, managerial approaches to environmental problems and a sustained argument for an approach that takes seriously our pre-reflective encounters with nature; David Abram’s *The Spell of the Sensuous*, a call, inspired by the works of Merleau-Ponty, for us to reacquaint ourselves with what it is like to inhabit the natural world ‘from within’ (1996: 65). The list could be extended, but there is no need: we will engage with many of the seminal treatises in environmental phenomenology in the following chapters. For the moment, I would like instead to consider what exactly it means to do *environmental* phenomenology.

The first thing to note is that environmental phenomenologists seek to elucidate what is often referred to as our *lived* experience of nature, nature as it discloses itself to us in the living of our lives (see Kohák 1984: 22). To do this, they seek to bracket or put out of play certain entrenched second-order or theoretical conceptions of what nature is, notably the widespread assumption that the world is not only an objective world, in Merleau-Ponty's sense, but also one that is fundamentally material in composition. As one environmental phenomenologist explains:

Far more than we ourselves usually realize, when we make seemingly obvious assertions about 'nature', we are no longer speaking about the natural environment of our lived experience... Our statements are far more likely to refer to a highly sophisticated construct, say, matter in motion, ordered by efficient causality, which is the counterpart of the method and purpose of the natural sciences rather than an object of lived experience. (Kohák 1984: 12)

In lived experience, however, a commitment to materialism is difficult to sustain, for in the living of our lives we are presented with a world that is deeper, richer and in many respects stranger than materialists would have us believe. Pre-reflectively, the beechwood does not reveal itself as a collection of determinate material objects arrayed in Euclidean space. The place is suffused with meaning and value. In Roger Deakin's nice image (2008: xiii), one looks up at the canopy as if to the shallows from a seabed; the darkness in the forest's depths is not merely an absence of light but a haven for hidden creatures; this or that branch discloses itself as one that could be grasped or thrown or snapped; that path reveals itself as the one leading to such and such a place. Space is not experienced as metres and centimetres, but as ground to be covered, as a felt sense of expansive freedom or a stifling sense of its lack. Time here is congealed in the trunks of trees, or it is failing sunlight filtered through their branches. It is the rise and fall of the sun and the moon, the turning of the seasons.

Just as phenomenology can 'awaken our experience of the world' (PP: 206), so environmental phenomenology can awaken our lived experience of the natural world. I shall argue that this is a good thing, ethically, aesthetically and (for want of a better word) spiritually. But it is also radical philosophy. First, phenomenological inquiries have the potential to undercut certain dogmas of environmental philosophy. So, for instance, in Chapter 2 I show that a prevalent form of scepticism regarding

animal minds rests on an implausible account of how we relate to nonhuman animals in the living of our lives. In Chapter 3 I argue that the perennial debate about the metaethical source of natural values presupposes a false ‘subjectivist’ picture of the relation between human beings and the world. Furthermore, while these debates and problems are undercut, new avenues of philosophical inquiry are opened up. Environmental phenomenology is not just a new approach to the old issues. It is a way into a host of new issues as well.

Φ

I have been referring to ‘nature’ and what is ‘natural’. But what exactly do I mean by these terms? The question must be asked since both terms are used in a variety of ways. The natural is sometimes contrasted with the supernatural. And if one has no time for talk of gods, angels and demons, nature (the set of natural things) may be thought to encompass everything that exists. In other contexts, nature is opposed to culture (as in references to ‘nature versus nurture’), yet in others it is taken to refer to the essential characteristics of a thing, such that individual things (and kinds of thing) are thought to *have* natures. To complicate matters further, ‘nature’ is often thought to have normative connotations – for instance, to say that an act is *against* nature is usually to say that it is morally wrong.

The list could doubtless be extended. But there is little point in trying to provide a comprehensive account of all the ways the terms ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ have been used. And it would certainly be unwise to try to come up with a definitive, one-size-fits-all definition. Nonetheless, since we need to have *some* idea of our subject matter, let me offer the following, very provisional definition:

- A thing is natural to the extent that its current state is relatively unaffected by human agency.

On this definition, Astroturf and human footprints come out as non-natural, since both are produced by humans (the fact that the footprints may not be *intentionally* produced is of no account). Birds’ nests and beavers’ dams, by contrast, count as natural (they’re not the products of *human* agency). Hedgerows come out as natural, for although human beings originally created them, their *current* makeup typically

owes more to natural forces (the weather, colonisation by wild plants, the local wildlife) than to human ones. For similar reasons, the Scottish Highlands may be considered natural because, although they were in large part formed through human action (clearances and the like), their current state is, by and large, the product of nonhuman forces. As Robert Macfarlane suggests, ‘despite the human influences in their making’ these places have ‘become wild’ - become natural, one might say (2007: 80).

Three points of clarification. First, I am using ‘thing’ in a very broad sense to denote, not just solid material objects but, more broadly, any part of the biosphere that can be named – so not just trees and pebbles, but clouds, and not just entities, however solid or insubstantial, but also substances (like fresh water) and even places, habitats and environments. Second, although I will discuss the various ways that our experience of nature is conditioned by social and cultural factors, I am not impressed by claims that nature (or the natural world - I will use the terms interchangeably) is nothing more than a social construction, or something of that order. (I explain why I think this sort of constructivism is false in Chapter 5.) Third, I allow for degrees of naturalness. So although I am willing to concede Bill McKibben’s point (1990) that, due to the influence of anthropogenic pollutants upon the weather, no part of nature remains entirely independent of human influence, I’m also happy to affirm that the rainforest on the eastern slopes of the Andes is *more* natural than London’s Hyde Park, not because the rainforest is not managed at all (it might well be), but because it is managed less intensively than the park.

In relation to the last of these points, it should be noted that allowing for degrees of naturalness does not invalidate all talk of what is natural. There are degrees of baldness, yet (unfortunately for men like me) it still makes sense to say that one man is bald while another is not. The same holds true of naturalness. Perhaps nothing on earth is entirely unaffected by the actions of *Homo sapiens*, yet some things are sufficiently uninfluenced to warrant the ascription ‘natural’. There is no good reason to suppose that the only nature is pristine nature, untouched by human hand. Furthermore, when it comes to classifying something as natural (as being more natural than not) I am inclined to be accommodating. So, as I said, I am happy to affirm that hedgerows or the Scottish Highlands are natural. And for similar reasons I’m willing to call some gardens natural as well – particularly ones of a wilder sort.

It is not my intention, here, to trace out a conception of the natural that is in any way unfamiliar or controversial. On the contrary, my aim is to approximate the way the term is used in references to natural history. After all, one would not be surprised to tune into a TV programme called ‘The Natural History of Britain’ to find the presenter discussing badgers or old growth oak woodlands. One would not be surprised to find her saying something about hedgerows and gardens. She might even have something to say about ecological cycles or cosmic ones, especially their influences on life on earth. It is unlikely, however, that the presenter would devote much time to urban environments, save for the purpose of examining the nonhuman animals that live there or, perhaps, for drawing some analogy between human social behaviour and that of some nonhuman species.

Φ

The general aim of this book is to develop a phenomenology of the natural world, an environmental phenomenology. On the one hand, I develop a new phenomenologically-based account of what the natural world is, one that does justice, or at least is meant to do justice, to its richness, ambiguity and depth. On the other, I set out an original phenomenologically-based account of how we should (ethically, aesthetically and ‘spiritually’) relate to nature. My conclusion, in brief, is that when it is done well phenomenology necessarily involves the exercise of a particular (ethical, aesthetic and spiritual) virtue, which I call ‘attention’. This counts as an *environmental* virtue because in modern capitalist societies it is readily developed and exercised with respect to specifically natural objects.

In making my case I focus on the tradition of existential phenomenology, as exemplified by the work of thinkers such as Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.¹ Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are the main players, though other phenomenologists (‘existential’ and otherwise) play bit parts, as do a number of contemporary thinkers, such as Ted Toadvine and Iain Thomson. My primary aim is not the exegetical one of interpreting what the textbook list of phenomenologists had to say about the natural environment (with the exception of Heidegger, they didn’t say a great deal). Instead, I shamelessly plunder their work in the hope of shedding light on the natural world and our relations to it. To make one point I might refer to Heidegger’s work; to make another I might draw upon that of Merleau-Ponty.

This is a risky strategy, of course. Phenomenologists frequently disagree with one another, often markedly. One only has to compare Husserl's early conception of the phenomenological reduction with Heidegger's analysis of being-in-the-world, or the picture of human relations set out in *Being and Nothingness* with that defended by Levinas. The risk, then, is that in drawing upon the works of a number of phenomenologists I might produce a Frankenstein's monster of a thesis, formed of a hotchpotch of incongruous parts. And this would of course be no thesis at all, at least no *coherent* thesis.

But this danger can be averted. For one thing, on many points – and on most of the important ones – existential phenomenologists are in agreement. So, for example, one is justified in speaking of 'the phenomenologist's' rejection of Cartesian dualism because, despite their various disagreements, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre et al are all of a piece in rejecting this conception of what it means to be human. When the differences between the views of different existential phenomenologists are very great, I sometimes opt for one phenomenological view over another, calling the position I endorse 'the phenomenological one'. For instance, I believe that on the topic of embodiment, Merleau-Ponty's account is more illuminating than that of Heidegger. So in Chapter 1 I endorse a conception which is close to that of Merleau-Ponty on this issue, and refer to this position as 'the phenomenological view' on the understanding that this is not a view that would be accepted by all phenomenologists. In other cases, the approach I develop is of my own design and so genuinely mine, rather than someone else's.

Outline of Chapters

The first aim of Chapter 1 is to introduce some prominent phenomenological themes – notably, that of being-in-the-world. Its second, more specific aim is to bring a phenomenological approach to bear upon the broad question of our place in nature. That question is often thought to imply a dilemma: either we are material through and through, material parts of a material nature, or there is some soul- or mind-like part of us that is supernatural. But this dilemma is, I suggest, false. Adopting a phenomenological approach, I show that we may be considered parts of nature in at least two distinct senses, neither of which is either materialist or dualist.

I begin by arguing that we can be in nature in the sense of being *involved* with it. This is to say that the natural world can (and typically does) show up for us in the light of our lived concerns, that it matters to us. To make my case I refer to a specific kind of involvement - practical involvement - and in doing this I draw upon Heidegger's account of concern, as developed in *Being and Time*. I pay special attention to some of the questions raised by a particular kind of practical involvement, namely the phenomenon of being at home in a natural environment. Are anti-modernist writers right to think that we are becoming an increasingly rootless species, alienated from the natural world? Can nonhuman animals be at home in an environment? And, if they can, do they inhabit their environments in the same way that we inhabit ours? Does the phenomenon of being at home in nature have any moral significance? Must someone who is at home in a particular natural environment be inclined to treat it well?

Having responded to these questions, I proceed to outline the second sense in which we may be considered parts of nature. My contention here is that we *inhere* in nature, which is to say that we are in nature in a compositional sense, made of the same stuff as the things we encounter. To explain what this involves, and to distinguish my account from materialism, I refer to Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment, as set out in *Phenomenology of Perception*. Having explained how, according to that account, our perception of the world is indelibly conditioned by our bodies, I move on to consider how our embodiment conditions our perception of specifically *natural* things.

In the final pages of the chapter, I argue that, given our involvement with and inherence in the world, a certain kind of scientific naturalism, and thus a certain kind of naturalistic approach to environmental philosophy, ought to be rejected.

Φ

I begin Chapter 2 by arguing that we can be regarded as parts of nature, not only in terms of *involvement* and *inherence*, but also in the sense that as subjects amongst nonhuman subjects we inhabit a multi-species *intersubjective* world. To justify this claim, I begin by examining Heidegger's conception of being-with (*Mitsein*), before moving on to investigate the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, and what is, in my

view, the basis for a more plausible and less anthropocentric account of intersubjectivity.

In the second section, I turn my attention to a question raised by this account of ‘cross-species intersubjectivity’, namely: What reasons do we have for thinking that nonhuman animals are conscious? In tackling this question, I begin by setting out the various ways a phenomenologist might respond to the sceptical claim that *no* nonhuman animals are conscious. I concede that none of these responses can *refute* scepticism regarding animal minds: despite the phenomenologist’s best efforts, it remains logically (and perhaps metaphysically) possible that all nonhuman animals are bereft of phenomenal consciousness. However, I contend that a phenomenological approach can *undercut* this kind of scepticism by rendering problematic the general conception of interpersonal relations on which it rests.

Having addressed the problem of scepticism, I turn to the question of how one can determine whether particular animals (and by implication, particular kinds of animal) are conscious. Here I examine some of the methods employed in the study of animal behaviour, particularly those of cognitive ethology. The first of my two conclusions is that if one is to discover whether a particular animal is conscious it will, in many cases, be unwise to proceed on the assumption that the animal must, so to speak, prove itself through its behaviour to be conscious. My second conclusion is that ethological methods are often interpretative rather than inferential, which is to say that if a study yields a positive result, a particular behaviour will typically have come to disclose itself to the investigator, not as *evidence* of conscious, but as a *conscious behaviour* – as an angry swish of the tail, perhaps, or a contented purr.

In the third and final section I consider how in the light of this account we are to understand those cases when ethological investigations make no headway. In some cases, I suggest, we are faced with a failure of interpretation: the animal’s life is mysterious not because it is the outward sign of an unobservable mental cause, but because we cannot decipher it. In other cases, however, the consciousness of the animal is called into question. In such cases, it might seem that we are presented with two options: either the animal in question is conscious in much the same way that we are conscious, or else it is entirely non-conscious, like a rock. Drawing upon Heidegger’s work and that of Merleau-Ponty, I argue that this dilemma is in fact false, and that matters are more complicated, and more interesting, than is conventionally supposed.

Φ

In Chapter 3 I turn to the question of how we are to understand the various ways in which nature matters to us in the living of our lives. Taking my cue from Heidegger's account of involvement (*Befindlichkeit*), I suggest that something can matter to us without our valuing it, and to support this contention I examine the testimonies of a selection of unfortunate individuals who hate or are indifferent towards certain parts of the natural world.

My main concern in this chapter is, however, with the notion of an environmental *value*. In examining this notion, I begin with Heidegger's claims that 'values-thinking' is inherently 'technological', a manifestation of a domineering and exploitative comportment towards the world, and the natural world in particular. I suggest that these bold claims cannot be justified. Against Heidegger, there is nothing *inherently* pernicious about talk of value. Nonetheless, I contend that there is something problematic about the notion that *all* the many and various ways in which nature matters to us – and, moreover, all the ways that it matters to us *morally* - can be cashed out in terms of environmental values. In support of this claim I refer to Christine Swanton's criticisms of 'value-centred monism', as set out in *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*, and to Alan Holland's recent argument that environmental ethicists ought to be more concerned with the preservation of meaning than the promotion of value. I conclude by tracing out the contours of a radical moral pluralism, radical in that it postulates, not merely a host of incommensurable values, but a variety of different morally relevant factors, including different sorts of bond, need and meaning.

Φ

Chapter 4 is concerned with moral normativity, the question of how we should act with respect to the natural world. I begin with the allegation that phenomenology is merely a descriptive exercise which might be able to open our eyes to the manifold dimensions of our moral lives but which will not be able to recommend any particular course of action. In response, I draw upon the work of Iris Murdoch to argue that expertise in phenomenology involves the development and exercise of a particular

moral virtue, namely *attention*. Hence a training in phenomenology is to some extent a moral training. Or, to be more precise, attention is a moral virtue, not only for eudaimonistic reasons, not only, that is, because it benefits the attentive agent, but for what might be called world-directed reasons as well. It is, I propose, a virtue because it enables us to ‘see’ things fairly or justly, as they really are.

Having set out my arguments for this conclusion, I turn to the question of how this bears upon the natural world. My argument here is based on the general claim that the development and exercise of attention partly depends on one’s material circumstances. Mass-produced objects, I suggest, tend not to invite attention. By contrast, natural things do. Hence, in modern capitalist societies, the presence of nature tends to foster the development and exercise of attention. In conclusion, I argue that we ought to conserve nature in two senses. On the one hand, we ought to conserve physical nature: we should take steps to curb pollution, to protect natural habitats, to conserve endangered species, and so forth. But on the other hand we should try to conserve the meaning nature has for us as a realm independent of our practical concerns. In Heidegger’s apt phrase, we should let it be.

Φ

In the fifth and final chapter I consider what my phenomenological approach (or indeed any such approach) might be able to say about the notion that the natural world exists in itself, independently of human concerns. Many phenomenologists would regard any such notion as incoherent. Yet such a stance – ostensibly one of metaphysical anti-realism – is unlikely to be welcomed by environmental thinkers. For if nature is to command our respect, then surely it must present itself to us as existing independently of our ‘merely human’ concerns?

The charge, then, is that the phenomenological position on these matters is both anti-realist and anthropocentric, and hence at odds with an attitude of respect for nature. I respond to it in three ways. First, I concede that, according to the phenomenologist, no sense can be made of a world that is not ‘lit up’ in terms of our interests, practical concerns, and so forth. However, I contend that this thesis does not amount to anthropocentrism, since, in this context, the set of interests, practical concerns, etc. that we designate as *ours*, includes the interests, practical concerns, etc. of at least some nonhuman animals.

Second, I accept that phenomenology cannot accommodate the notion of a world that is radically independent of our concerns, but I suggest that this is no cause for regret, since any such notion is incoherent. Indeed, once one relinquishes the notion that there is a way the world is ‘in itself’, it becomes clear that phenomenological investigations are especially well suited to elucidating the various ways in which nature discloses itself to us as an independent reality. To illustrate this, I examine (1) the disclosure of the world as an object, not just for us, but for nonhuman subjects as well, and (2) its disclosure as a realm indifferent to (and in this sense independent of) human concerns.

In developing my third response to the charge of anthropocentrism, I begin by investigating the claim that, although whatever presents itself to us in experience necessarily does so in the light of our concerns, the ‘process’ by which anything presents itself at all is partly transhuman – an event of Being, perhaps, or an intertwining of a ‘flesh’ that ‘traverses’ us. I argue that, heard in the right way, claims of this sort can awaken us to the presence of that more-than-human ‘nature’ which moves within us when we perceive anything.

Φ

I hope these arguments will demonstrate the benefits of a phenomenological approach to environmental philosophy. But as they say, the proof of the pudding is in the tasting. So with this in mind, it is time to turn to our first topic, the question of our place in nature.

¹ Hence the approach I take is not ‘transcendental’, ‘constitutive’ or ‘hermeneutic’. On the different kinds of phenomenology, see Moran 1999.