

From Object to *Oikeios*

Environment-Making in the Capitalist World-Ecology

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*Words are like empty balloons, inviting us to fill them up with associations.
As they fill they begin to gain intrinsic force and at last to shape
our perceptions and expectations. So with the word 'ecology'*
(Worster, 1994: 191)

For nearly half a century, green thought has wrestled with a double question. Is nature exogenous to the essential relations of human history, for the most part playing roles as tap (raw materials) and sink (pollution)? Or is nature a web of life encompassing all of human activity, comprising taps and sinks but also much beyond this? Is nature something that humans act upon, or act *through*? The vast green literatures that have emerged since the 1970s – political ecology, environmental history and environmental sociology, ecological economics, systems ecology, and many more – have developed by answering “yes” (in one form or another) to both questions. On the one hand, most scholars agree that humanity is indeed part of nature, and reject the Cartesian dualism that puts society (without natures) in one box and nature (without humans) in another. On the other hand, the conceptual vocabularies and analytical frameworks that govern our empirical investigations remain firmly entrenched in the *interaction* of two basic, impenetrable units, “nature” and “society.” This “double yes” poses a real puzzle: How do we translate a materialist, dialectical, and holistic philosophy of humans-*in-nature* into workable (and *working*) conceptual vocabularies and analytical frameworks of capitalism in the web of life?

The arithmetic of nature plus society has been the bread and butter of environmental studies since the 1970s. Far from a weakness, establishing this arithmetic as a legitimate domain of scholarly activity has been green thought’s greatest contribution. By the dawn of the 21st century, it had become increasingly difficult to address core issues in social theory and social change without *some* reference to environmental change. The environmental humanities and social sciences brought to light the other, previously forgotten or marginalized, side of the Cartesian binary: the world of environmental impacts. No small accomplishment, this. “The” environment is now firmly established as a legitimate and relevant object of analysis.

About this signal accomplishment, I would make two observations. First, the work of adding nature to society in the study of global change is now largely complete. Green scholars will add that there is still much to be done, but the legitimacy of the

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enterprise is no longer in question. Second, the reproduction of that binary today obscures, more than it illuminates, humanity's place in the web of life. The Cartesian arithmetic appears especially unsuited to dealing with today's proliferating crises – not least those linked to climate change and financialization – and also with the origins and development of these crisis tendencies in the modern world-system.

Is it now necessary to move beyond the environment as object? Can the project of writing environmental histories *of* social processes adequately capture the manifold ways in which these processes are not only producers of environments, but also products of them? The idea that social organization carries with it environmental consequences has taken us far, but it is unclear just how much farther the arithmetic of “society” plus “nature” – of humans without nature and nature without humans – can take us.

But if the arithmetic of nature plus society can't get us to where we need to go today, what can?

My response begins with a simple proposal. Needed, and I think implied by an important layer of green thought, is a concept that moves from the interaction of impenetrable and independent units – nature and society – to one that seeks to reveal the dialectics of the messily bundled, interpenetrating, and interdependent relations of human and extra-human natures. Needed, in other words, is a concept that allows a proliferating vocabulary of humanity-*in*-nature rather than one premised on humanity *and* nature.

The Oikeios: Dialectics in the Question of Nature-as-Matrix

I propose that we begin with the *oikeios*.

Oikeios is a way naming the creative, historical, and dialectical relation between, and also always within, human and extra-human natures. The *oikeios* is a shorthand: for *oikeios topos*, or “favorable place,” a term coined by the Greek philosopher-botanist Theophrastus. For Theophrastus, the *oikeios topos* indicated “the *relationship* between a plant species and the environment” (Hughes, 1985, 1994: 4, emphasis added). Properly speaking, *oikeios* is an adjective; but in the long journey towards a vocabulary that transcends the Two Cultures (the physical and human sciences), I ask the reader to excuse a few liberties with the language.

Neologisms come a dime a dozen in green thought, and we needn't look far for concepts aiming to fuse or combine the relations of human and extra-human nature.² And yet, after decades of vigorous green theorizing and analysis, we still lack an analytical approach that puts the *oikeios* at the center. Such a perspective would situate the creative and generative relation of species and environment as the ontological pivot of historical change. This reorientation opens up the question of

² Surely amongst the most imaginative conceptualizations (cyborg, natureculture) have come from Haraway's important work (1991, 2008), whose particularizing thrust ought not to distract us from their world-ecological implications.

nature – as matrix rather than resource or enabling condition – for historical analysis; it allows the reconstruction of humanity’s great movements, from warfare to literature to scientific-technological revolutions, as if nature matters to the whole of the historical process, not merely its context, or its unsavory consequences.

This is the intended contribution of the *oikeios*. It spotlights the elusive species-environmental relation (Levins and Lewontin, 1985). It a multi-layered dialectic, comprising flora and fauna, but also our planet’s manifold geological and biospheric configurations, cycles, and movements. Through the *oikeios* form and re-form the relations and conditions that create and destroy humanity’s mosaic of cooperation and conflict: what is typically called “social” organization. Nature-as-*oikeios* is, then, not offered as an additional *factor*, to be placed alongside culture or society or economy. Nature, instead, becomes the matrix within which human activity unfolds, and the field upon which historical agency operates.

From the perspective of the *oikeios*, civilizations (another shorthand) do not “interact” with nature as resource (or nature as garbage can); they develop through nature-as-matrix. Climate change is a good example. Civilizations develop by internalizing extant climate realities, favorable and unfavorable. Climate itself is an actor whose agency derives from its relations with humans and the rest of nature, unevenly refracted through particular historical-geographical formations. Climate change (and climate is always changing) is a fact, what the historian E.H. Carr calls a *basic* fact (1962): the raw material of historical explanation. Basic facts become historical facts through interpretation. Since not all facts are created equal, the selection of basic facts changes according the paradigms and conceptual frames that we employ. It was not so long ago that virtually all narratives of human history were organized as if nature – even in a Cartesian sense! – didn’t matter. Today, a broadly conceived environmental history perspective has triumphed. Any attempt to interpret the broad contours and contradictions of world history without due attention to environmental conditions and changes is, quite rightly, perceived as inadequate.

This is a major accomplishment. The achievement necessarily poses a new challenge: Is the “agency” of human and extra-human natures ontologically independent of, or interdependent with, each other? Here I take agency as the capacity to induce historical change (to produce ruptures), or to reproduce extant historical arrangements (to reproduce equilibrium). To say that nature is a “historical protagonist” (Campbell, 2010) sounds very snazzy. But what does it really mean? Are we simply adding nature to a long list of historical actors? Or does recognition of nature’s agency imply a fundamental rethinking of agency itself? We now can read many, many studies that seek to elucidate nature’s agency (e.g. Steinberg, 2002; Herron, 2010). But it is by no means clear how nature’s agency – whether conceived in Cartesian or dialectical terms – might clarify the history of capitalism, and its governing crisis tendencies. Does climate “have” agency in the same way that classes or empires “make” history?

If nature is indeed a historical protagonist, its agency can be comprehended adequately only once we step outside the Cartesian binary. The issue is emphatically

not one of the agency of nature *and* the agency of humans, for these are unthinkable without each other. Rather, the issue is how human and extra-human natures get bundled: for sure, diseases make history, but only as epidemiological vectors bonded to the machineries of trade and empire. This is what is so often left out of arguments of nature's agency: the capacity to make history turns on specific configurations of human and extra-human actors. Human agency is always within, and dialectically bound to, nature as a whole – which is to say, human agency is not purely human at all. It is, rather, bundled with the rest of nature.

The world-ecological alternative takes these bundles of human/extra-human activity as its starting point. Civilizations are big, expressive, examples of this dialectical bundling. From the large-scale and long-run patterns of human-led environment-making, we can discern the practical infinitude of basic facts from historical facts. Climate change, in this scheme of things, becomes a vector of planetary change woven into the very fabric of civilizational power and production (class, empire, agriculture, etc.). Far from a recent phenomenon, this socio-ecological fabric stretches back millennia (Ruddiman, 2005). This is the spirit, if not always the letter, of much climate historiography (e.g. Davis, 2001; Fagan, 2008; Chakrabarty, 2009).³ When climate changes, so too do the structures of power and production. However, this is not because climate *interacts* with civilizational structures, causing problems at some point in these structures' otherwise independent lives. We might do better to reorient of vision, to see climate conditions are present at, and implicated in, the birth of these structures. Civilizations are unthinkable in the absence of climate – itself a shorthand (yet another) for a diversity of atmospheric processes that co-produce relations of power and production. As such, climate is but one bundle of *determinations* – not *determinisms* – that push, pull, and transform the rich totalities of historical change. When climate has changed dramatically, the outcomes have often been dramatic and epochal, if nevertheless contingent. Consider, for example, the eclipse of Rome after the passing of the 'Roman Climatic Optimum' around 300, or the breakdown of feudal civilization with the coming of the Little Ice Age a thousand years later (Crumley, 1994; Moore, 2013). But consider also those climate shifts favorable to the ascent of Roman power (c. 300 B.C.E.) or the dawning of the Medieval Warm Period (c. 800-900) and the rapid multiplication of new "charter states" across Eurasia, from France to Cambodia (Lieberman, 2009).

World-Ecological Imaginations: Towards Capitalism-in-Nature

Although Theophrastus seems to have used the *oikeios topos* in a fairly conventional way, to signify what we would call an ecological niche, a dialectical alternative is suggested by nearly a century of holistic thought (Smuts, 1926; Capra, 1982; Foster, 2000; Harvey, 1974, 1993; Levins and Lewontin, 1985; Odum, 1971, 1977; Ollman, 1971). In this dialectical and holistic alternative, the *oikeios* informs a perspective on historical change in the web of life as simultaneously *enfolding* and *unfolding* (Bohm,

³ Scholars addressing the contemporary dynamics of capitalism and climate have been willing to go further, advancing distinctive world-ecology syntheses whose paradigmatic implications remain, at least for now, underappreciated. Here I am thinking, above all, of Larry Lohmann's analyses of carbon markets and financialization (see 2012, *inter alia*) and Christian Parenti's interwoven narrative of climate, class, and conflict in the early 21st century (2011).

2003). This alternative is what I have called the world-ecology synthesis (Moore, 2003a, 2003b, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; also Böhm, et al., 2012; Deckard, 2012; Leonardi, 2012; Leitner, 2007; Mahnkopf, 2013; Niblett, 2012; Oloff, 2012). Like many other green perspectives, the world-ecology approach offers a philosophy of history premised on humanity-in-nature (e.g. Capra, 1982; Folke, et al., 2010). World-ecology's distinctiveness lies in its attempt to translate the philosophical premise into world-historical method, emphasizing the bundling of human and extra-human natures through the *oikeios*. Such bundling necessarily carries us far beyond the (so-called) "environmental" *dimensions* of human activity. Our concern is therefore human relations as always already interpenetrated with the rest of nature, and therefore always already both producers and products of change in the web of life (Williams, 1980). The manifold projects and processes of humanity-in-nature – including imperialisms and anti-imperialism, class struggles from above and below, capital accumulation in its booms and crises – are always products of the *oikeios*, even as they work to create new relations of power and production within it.

World-ecology therefore offers a framework for theorizing those strategic bundles of relations fundamental to capitalist civilization. These strategic relations – above all value/capital as abstract labor-in-nature (Moore, 2011a, 2013b; Araghi, 2009) – are typically viewed as social relations: as relations between humans first, and, only subsequently, as interactions with the rest of nature. Environmental history, from its origins, sought to resolve this social determinism in a new formulation. Four decades ago, Alfred Crosby argued that humans are biological entities first, before they are Catholics, capitalists, colonizers, or anything else (1972: xiii). Alas, Crosby's groundbreaking argument did not resolve the problem of social determinism so much as invert it. For humanity's biological existence is collective and collaborative, turning on species-specific capacities for symbolic production and collective memory. Biology and sociality are not separate, and to suppose so is to opt for a Hobson's choice of biological determinism or social reductionism. Happily, the *oikeios* gives us a real choice. Here we take "the first premise[s] of all human history" as producer/product relations in the web of life (Marx and Engels, 1970: 42). Thus food-getting and family-making were (and are) affairs of culture/sociality as a ways of negotiating biological and geographical relations, but as ways of bundled environment-making. They are not the "natural base[s]" in a mechanical base/superstructure model of historical change, but rather the constitutive relation "with the rest of nature" through humans produce (and are products of) "definite mode[s] of life" (Marx and Engels, 1970: 42).

The observation applies not only to the relations of everyday life but also to the large-scale patterns of power and production in the modern world-system. The idea that capitalism acts upon nature, rather than develops through the web of life, is of course prevalent in critical environmental studies today: it is the working ontology of most environmentally-oriented work in world-systems analysis, as well as in political ecology (e.g., respectively, Foster, Clark, and York, 2010; Peet, Robbins, and Watts, 2011). We now have a robust political economy *of* the environment, but few reconstructions of capital accumulation as a way of organizing nature-as-matrix (but see Burkett, 1999; Moore, 2011a). This has allowed for all manner of neo-Malthusian tendencies to creep their way into left ecology. In the Cartesian approach, resources

tend to be conceived as things unto themselves, endowed with special powers to shape history – nowhere is this more clear than in the literature on “fossil capitalism” (e.g. Altwater, 2006). The view that resources are things unto themselves – and that the limits of capitalism are external constraints rather than internal contradictions – is of course not new to our era, and was not even new in the 1970s. It is a view that locates the taproot of capitalism’s limits not only outside of the strategic relations of capitalism, but importantly, outside of historical change. Social limits, in this scheme of things, are historical, flexible, open to revision; natural limits are, effectively, outside of history. Amongst the consequences of this neo-Cartesian model of nature and society is a pronounced tendency towards neo-Malthusian analyses – and even more problematic, the neo-Malthusian framing of world-historical problems: one in which the strategic relations of capitalism are conceived as ontologically independent of the web of life, and one in which the dominant relations of society and nature is that of the foot and the footprint. Is the image of nature as passive mud and dirt – a place where one leaves a footprint – really the best metaphor to capture the vitality of the web of life?

The world-ecology perspective therefore challenges the dualism of capitalism *and* nature by situating the meta-drivers of “social” change as socio-ecological. The ambition is to rethink capitalism as world-ecology... and not capitalism only. We can, through the *oikeios*, implicate the widest range of meta-processes in the modern world as socio-ecological, from family formation to racial orders to industrialization, imperialism, and proletarianization. From this perspective, capitalism does not develop upon global nature so much as it emerges through the messy and contingent relations of humans with the rest of nature. There is no question that, for most of us, these great processes of world history look like hybrids or fusions (terms that make sense only if we presume that society and nature were separate to begin with): energy regimes and agricultural revolutions, yes, but also nationalisms as “imagined communities,” developmentalisms, literatures, financializations. In fact, once we start to look more closely at these strategic bundles, we begin to see just how deeply rooted in the *oikeios* they really are. What is finance capital today but a symbolic accounting and material practice of reshaping global natures in a way favorable to the endless accumulation of capital? Through this movement of *oikeios*-bundling, we may encompass the concerns of environmental history and social science – writing environmental histories *of* social processes – while demonstrating that the social processes, too, are products of the web of life. This is the transition from environmental histories *of* modernity, to modernity *as* environmental history. It is in this sense that the modern world-system can be understood as a capitalist *world-ecology*, joining the accumulation of capital, the production of nature, and the pursuit of power in a “rich totality of many determinations” (Marx, 1973: 100).

Environment-Making

In this way of seeing, the task of theory is one of excavating the fundamental interpenetration of human activity within the web of life. It follows, then, that the “ecology” in world-ecology is not a noun modified by a geographical adjective, much less a synonym for interactions within extra-human natures. Rather, the “ecology” in world-ecology derives from the *oikeios*, within and through which species make – and

always remake – multiple environments in the web of life. As such, environment-making is the decisive concept. Nature can neither be saved nor destroyed; it can only be transformed. In this way, the *oikeios* represents a radical elaboration of the dialectical logic immanent in Marx's concept of metabolism (*stoffwechsel*) (Marx, 1977; and esp. Foster, 2000). *Stoffwechsel* signifies “a metabolism of nature... in which neither society nor nature can be stabilized with the fixity implied by their ideological separation” (Smith, 2006a: xiv). In this dialectical elaboration, species and environments are at once making and unmaking each other, always and at every turn. All life makes environments. All environments make life.

For this reason, environments are, and are not at the same time, the object of analysis for world-ecologists. This is the shift from environment to environment-making: the ever-changing, interpenetrating, and interchanging dialectic of humans and environments in historical change is the focus. We are looking at the *relations* that guide environment-making, and also the processes that compel new rules of environment-making, as in the long transition from feudalism to capitalism (Moore, 2003b, 2010a, 2010b). And at the risk of putting too fine a point on it, “environments” are not only fields and forests; they are homes, factories, office towers, airports, and all manner of built environments, rural and urban.

To say that capitalism is constituted through the production of nature, the pursuit of power, and the accumulation of capital is not to identify three independent blocks of relations that may then be interconnected through feedback links. Rather, these three moments interpenetrate each other in the making of historical capitalism – and in its unraveling today. Easily misunderstood, the production of nature is no facile assertion of Promethean constructivism (Smith, 1984; 2006b). Yes, there is a nature that exists outside of what we think of it. And no, the contradictions of capital are not indeed the “will of capitalism writ” onto the rest of nature (Robertson, 2004). In world-ecological perspective, the production of nature signifies the emergence of definite historical relations that bring together (bundle) definite human and extra-human activities and movements. With the production of nature we are, then, foregrounding the strategic relations governing the birth, life, and death of specific civilizations.⁴ If it is useful to readers, one may think of the production of nature as *co-production*. A unified view of co-production is at any rate implied in any dialectical reading of production, or evolution for that matter. When Marx observes that humans “act upon *external* nature, and in this way... simultaneously changes his *own* nature” (1977: 283, emphasis added), he is making a point about the centrality of labor process as bundled in the world-ecology sense of the term. “External nature” is not outside the labor process but constitutive of it. The point I wish to underscore is not that “the environment is generated (in part) by humans” (Wallis, 2001), but that the decisive relation, in turns liberating and limiting, is one between human and extra-human natures through the *oikeios*. Environment-making is a human activity,

⁴ At a time when no serious Marxist would argue that the production of value represents the untrammled power of capital to (re)shape classes of labor, it remains acceptable to characterize the production of nature thesis as an idealized and unidirectional reading of capitalism's socio-ecological contradictions.

and also an activity of all life; humans, too, constitute environments “made” by extra-human agencies.

To be sure, humans are unusually effective at environment-making: reconfiguring the web of life and its geological substrate to accommodate, and to enable, definite relations of power and production. (And, not least, the expanded reproduction of human populations.) In world-ecological perspective, civilizations do not act *upon* nature but *develop through* the *oikeios*. I would even go so far as to say that civilizations are not human constructs at all. They are, rather, bundles of relations between human and extra-human agents. These bundles are formed, stabilized, and periodically disrupted in and through the *oikeios*. Humans relate to nature as a whole from within, not from outside. We are, of course, an especially powerful environment-making species, but human activity is hardly “exempt” from the rest of the nature. Above all, we are hardly exempt from the environment-making activities of extra-human life, for whom humans (individually and collectively) are “environments” to be made, and also to be unmade (Dunlap and Catton, 1994; Levins and Lewontin, 1985). “To say that man’s physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature” (Marx, 1969: 112). It may, therefore, be something of a mistake to speak of modernity (or capitalism) *and* nature, as if one can adequately think of capitalism or nature in the absence of the other! But would it not be more fruitful to speak of civilizations-*in*-nature, capitalism-*in*-nature, modernity-*as*-environmental history?

If all relations between humans, all human activity, unfold through the *oikeios* (which itself enfolds), it follows that these relations are always and everywhere a relation with the rest of nature. It is a dialectic that works simultaneously inside-out and outside-in: the earth is an environment for humans, and humans are environments (and environment-makers) for the rest of life on planet earth. The usual approach to these questions, in history and social sciences, is to view the dialectic of human and extra-human natures as one of interaction. But the interactionist model is premised on a grand – and I think today unwarranted – reductionism. Humans, in themselves, are complex webs of biophysical determination: we are, amongst other things, an “environment” for the trillions of microbial symbionts (the micro-biome) that inhabit us, and that make our life-activity possible. We are dealing, in other words, with “worlds within worlds” (Ley, 2008).

Thus, interaction is not dialectics. The difference may seem trivial. I suggest that it is anything but. The difference is one with major implications for how we see civilization, modernity, and sharpening contradictions of capitalism detonated by the Great Recession. Even amongst radical critics, the Cartesian binary of Society (humans without nature) and Nature (environments without humans) holds sway (e.g. Foster, Clark, and York, 2010). From the perspective of the *oikeios*, the Cartesian view is theoretically arbitrary and empirical misleading. Try drawing a line around the “social” and the “natural” in the cultivation and consumption of food. In a rice paddy or a wheat field, in a cattle feedlot or on our dinner table, where does the natural process end, and the social process begin? The question itself speaks to the tenuous purchase of our Cartesian vocabulary on the everyday realities that we live, and seek to analyze. One can say that we are social and natural beings, but this

merely begs the question: When are humans “social” beings, when are we “natural” creatures, and what are relations that govern these shifting boundaries? When it comes to food (and not just food), every step in the process is bundled. The question becomes not one of “Is it social or natural?” but one of, “How do human and extra-human natures *fit together*?” I suggest that any adequate response to the question must flow through some form of dialectical-*oikeios* reasoning.

Environment-making registers a triple transformation: of species, environments, and *oikeios* (see esp. Marx, 1977: 283; Levins and Lewontin, 1985). The same is true of civilizations across the very *longue durée*. Civilizations are producers/products. They not only *produce* environmental changes; they are *produced by* the manifold agencies of the biosphere. Even more to the point, in the very act of imposing new logics of power and production, emergent civilizations are transformed in their defining rules of reproduction. In generalizing the manorial form of production across Europe’s diverse landscapes, early European feudalism created a civilization premised not on centralized imperial power (the Carolingian *project*), but on the profound geographical fragmentation of power (the feudal *process*) (Moore, 2013). Likewise, Charles V’s ambitious project to create a world imperium in 16th century Europe ended up creating a polycentric states system of competing state-capitalist alliances, a process that had everything to do with the cellular and civilizational impress of uneven commodifications from Potosí to Danzig (Wallerstein, 1974; Moore, 2010a, 2010b).

While civilizations – capitalism above all! – have tended to regard extra-human nature as external, this is only partly true. On the one hand, the *projects* of humanity’s collective actors – one thinks of globalization, or developmentalisms, or financialization in our era – confront the rest of nature as external obstacles, and also of course as sources of wealth and power. On the other hand, these projects are also co-produced through *processes*, the unruly movements of bundled natures, through which civilizational projects discover spectacular contradictions: global warming in the 21st century, or the mid-14th century confluence of agro-ecological exhaustion, disease, and (yet again) climate change. In this light, civilizations internalize the relations of nature as a whole in contingent, yet quasi-linear, fashion within the processes and through the projects of (so-called) human history.

The world-ecology synthesis therefore differs from a broadly Cartesian approach, which sees humans as degrading *the* “global environment,” without however understanding that the relations signified by the term “global environment” are not only partial *objects* of human activity, but also *subjects* (agents) of historical change. Cartesian green thinking denies the interchangeability of subject/object, organism/environment, cause/effect in favor of the hubris that humanity’s environment-making may be reduced to an “ecological footprint” (Wackernagel and Rees, 1996). Is nature as passive mud and dirt really the best we can do? The world-ecology alternative views nature as a generative and dynamic relation. It is here that historical agency forms, on the knife-edge of the *oikeios*.

Here we see that the capacity to make history is an expression not only of internally-differentiated conditions and relations within human populations, but also of the differentiated conditions and relations of the biosphere. Humanity, too, is an object

for the historical movements and fluxes of life and the geophysical movements of our planet. Thus, these capacities to make history may be turned outside-in *and* inside-out. Does anyone today seriously doubt that diseases, or climates, or plants make history as much as any empire? At the same time, is it possible to articulate the role of diseases, plants, or climate abstracted from accumulation, empire, or class? This line of questioning allows us to go beyond a view of nature as a place where one leaves a footprint. It encourages a way of seeing nature as an active movement of the whole, one comprising deforestations and toxications and all the rest but not reducible to these. It is through the *oikeios* that we can see – and reconstruct historically – nature as far more than an aggregate of *consequences* (deforestation, soil erosion, pollution, etc.). The movements and cycles of extra-human natures are producers/products of historical change, *internal to the movements of historical change itself*. Nature-as-matrix is cause, active condition, and constituting (bundled) agent in the history of civilizations – precisely because civilizations unfold within the web of life.

It is already quite challenging to make these arguments on the terrain of philosophy and regional history. Constructing narratives of the *longue durée* as if nature matters – as producer no less than product – is more challenging still. This is the challenge that world-ecology meets head on. If nature matters ontologically in our philosophy of history, then we are led to engage analytically the human-biospheric dialectic's double internality. Humans simultaneously create and destroy environments (as do all species), and our relations are therefore simultaneously – if differentially through time and across space – being created and destroyed with and by the rest of nature. From this optic, “nature's” status undergoes a radical shift in our thinking: a transition from nature as resource to nature as matrix. This means that nature can be neither destroyed nor saved, only reconfigured in ways that are more or less emancipatory, more or less oppressive. But take note: our terms “emancipatory” and “oppressive” are offered not from the standpoint of humans narrowly, but through the *oikeios*, the pulsing and renewing dialectic of humans and the rest of nature. At stake now – perhaps in a more salient way than ever before in the history of our species – is exactly this: emancipation or oppression not from the standpoint of humanity *and* nature but from the perspective of humanity-*in*-nature.

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